

Top Ten Tips for Homeschool Dads

By Christopher Klicka

As a father of seven very opinionated children, ages 4 through 14, I have my hands filled with just keeping up with them. Of course I also need to hold down my job and provide for my growing family. And my wife Tracy and I homeschool.

I could simply delegate all the tasks of training my children to my wife. Some homeschool fathers do. But such an arrangement is a recipe for failure. We fathers need to be seriously committed and involved in our homeschooling to truly fulfill our responsibility before God, adequately demonstrate love to our children, and unconditionally love our wife.

In Ephesians 6:4, God makes it clear. "Fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The command is to us fathers - not to mothers. The responsibility is on us "to bring them up." This requires action on our part. We can delegate the authority to train and bring up our children to someone else but never the responsibility.

One day when we stand before God, we fathers will have to answer for how our children were trained. Homeschooling happens to be the best way to fulfill this responsibility and the commands that God has given us. But we must realize that homeschooling is not the end in itself - it is a means to the end. The end we are aiming for is that our children will be "arrows" carrying God's truth to this world and one day living with us in heaven.

The responsibility of nurturing these never-dying souls is great. As you read in this article about the time and tasks required to fulfill this responsibility, you will feel overwhelmed! It truly seems impossible that we can ever be adequate fathers who please the Lord.

But remember, when you feel weak, then you are strong. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. (Philippians 4: 13). God wants us to realize that we can not accomplish these things by our own strength but by His.

Here are "10 tips" I believe will help us be faithful homeschool fathers.

1. **Be the Principal in your Homeschool.** Your wife is sacrificing a great deal to teach your children at home. She is giving up much of her own time and possibly a career. You need to generally lead in your homeschool and also come alongside your wife in the area of academics. You may not have time to teach many classes, but as you are able, make the time. It takes commitment and scheduling. We just need to make it a priority.

I am in charge of teaching current events. I assign reading World magazine to my older children and regularly discuss current events at the table. I check my older children's Bible work and have begun teaching Gary Demar's "God and Government" series.

Be available to grade papers and answer questions. I assign a couple of short papers each month to my older children for them to describe what they learned on a recent field trip or project. The more children write the more successful they will be in college or the work place.

Talk to your wife about the academics and discuss the educational plan and schedule for each of your children. Most importantly, make certain all topics are taught from a Biblical perspective. For example, I use The Encyclopedia of Bible Truths for School Subjects, by Ruth Haycock, to provide the biblical foundation for my children for each subject. It is a tremendous resource.

(Continued at this point from the Print version of the Newsletter)

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2. **Administer Discipline when you are at Home.** I make it a practice that when I come home I am in charge of all discipline. This way I am demonstrating support for my wife. I don't want to be known simply as the dad who is all "fun and games" and my wife known as the "bad guy" because she has to do the disciplining. I want my children to respect my wife and realize that I will enforce the same rules. The message is clear: my wife and I are one.

Many times my wife is very busy during the day teaching all of the different children and keeping up with all the tasks of our household. It is often difficult for her sometimes to administer discipline when a child is acting up. So I've created a system where she can write "marks" down by the child's name with a note of what they did wrong. Then when I come home I look on the refrigerator to see if there are any "marks" and I dispense the spanks accordingly. My children begin to understand that they will not get away with the disobedience or bad attitudes. This support to my wife enables our homeschooling to run much more smoother.

3. **Control Your Time on the Job.** This requires balance. I know a man of God who was a Christian historian and author. He would travel all over the country speaking. He and I were both on a radio program together one time and the radio talk show host asked the same question: "How do you balance your family and your ministry?" This man's response was a simple "You don't," which he said with a chuckle. It showed. Approximately six months later, his wife and children left him. He had become "married" to his ministry and was neglecting nurturing his own children as he encouraged others to do it.

If your job is keeping you away from your family too much, you need to change it. God will honor those who honor Him. God will enable you to faithfully fulfill your role as a father if you simply trust Him. Furthermore, we must never worry more about material goods than in our children's spiritual training. It must remain a top priority.

4. **Go through Proverbs with your children.** I believe this is the best method of spiritual training and instilling moral values. As fathers, you should be in charge of teaching Proverbs to your children. If you're not able to do anything else mentioned in this article, but you teach your children Proverbs, you will be teaching them wisdom and teaching them life.
5. **Nurture Your Own Soul.** The most important thing you can do for your children to bring them up is to nurture your own soul. Matthew 6:33 tells us, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." The condition of our own soul and how closely we walk with the Lord will directly influence your ability to train your children. I don't believe we can lead our child closer to God than we are. So we need to walk closely with our Lord, surrendering daily to His will and begging for his mercy. Matthew 22:37-38 commands: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind." Jesus says this is the greatest commandment.

Loving God whole heartedly is more important than anything else. We cannot let the business of our lives squeeze out our daily communion with the Lord, to read the Bible, which is His word to us and to pray, which is our words back to Him. Jesus wants a personal relationship. This requires a daily commitment of time. The time we spend or do not spend with the Lord each day will infect or affect the effectiveness of our homeschool.

6. **Shepherd Your Child's Heart.** It is important that we shepherd our child's heart and not just control his or her actions. Our children can't see just rules - they have to be covered with our love. We need to come alongside our children and take time to understand them and to know their hearts.

One thing we can do is to have a regular time scheduled with each of our children. My schedule is as follows: I read nightly Bible stories or directly from the Bible to my children between the ages of 4 and 7 years old. I'll often read the Bible with a flashlight, with all the lights turned out. I've found that children, especially my twins, will completely quiet down and listen to the Word of God this way. I'll ask

them questions and we'll interact. They actually beg for me each night to read the Bible to them or some Bible story.

For some of my other children I'll spend a few minutes reading the Bible in their rooms with them before they go to bed. My son Jesse, who was 6 at the time, stated that: "My favorite thing I like to do with my dad is read the Bible with him." That's where I want my children to be, now and throughout their lives: lovers of the Word of God.

In addition, I schedule appointed times early in the morning four days of the week with my older children. On Tuesday morning, I meet with Jesse, my 9-year-old son. On Wednesday morning, I meet with my 11-year-old daughter Megan. On Thursday morning, I meet with my 14-year-old, Bethany. And either Monday or Friday mornings I meet with my 8-year-old, Susanna. For each of them I go through a book that directs them on how to develop godly character.

For instance, each of the girls has gone with me through the book *Beautiful Girlhood*, edited by Karen Andreola. This is a wonderful book because throughout its chapters it deals with many character traits of a girl and issues that they face transitioning from girlhood into womanhood. It is especially helpful for a dad to use this book since there are many things discussed that, as a man, he would not have realized or discussed with his daughter. For my son who has had trouble with conflicts with his sisters, I've been going through the "Peacemakers" Series for children. This is an easy to read series of booklets with many illustrations that summarize the Biblical principles of dealing with conflict and applying them to siblings and friends. I have several other books that I have gone through with my children, which I provide for you in a list of resources at the end of this article.

7. **Love Your Wife Unconditionally.** One very important way to make your homeschool successful and train your children is to unconditionally love your wife in a visible way before your children. Here are some ways.

You need to support her 100 percent and never argue with her in front of the children.

We need to die to ourselves when we come home from work. Multiple sclerosis puts me in much more physically weakened condition than the normal father. After putting in a full day of work under highly stressful situations and driving my car in a long commute, I am tired. But I've committed myself to come home and take over caring for the children each night. My body is longing for rest and relaxation, but I discipline myself and cry out to God for strength to supervise dinner clean up, inspect bedrooms, pick up the "stuff" throughout the house, and administer all discipline.

I also make certain that I have family devotions with them all at least five times a week. This is a "must" for all fathers to teach your children in the Lord and to show them how much a priority God is to you. If I come home late and miss dinner I go right to family devotions and eat my dinner later at night when the children are in bed.

Another way to love our wives is to honor her before our children. We need to praise her before our children and verbally and physically support her. Our children need to understand that although our wives are under our authority we treat them with the love of a fellow heir of salvation. We also need to regularly communicate with her so that we don't assume anything about each other, but it must be verbally expressed so as to avoid conflict. I give my wife one overnight a month to a conference, with a friend, or just on her own to relax, worship, or do lesson plans. I also give her one night to herself each week. These times recharge her and help her keep on.

We need to love our wives so our prayers will not be hindered, as it says in I Peter 3:7. We want our children to be godly and we pray to God that he will transform their hearts. We don't want to these prayers for our children to be hindered because we don't love our wives! Ephesians 5:25 sums it up: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her." This is unconditional. We cannot condition our love for our wife on how she performs or how well she homeschools. Jesus loved us while we were His enemies and He gave His life for us. This is how we must love our wife. There can't be any higher love than that, which is demanded of us.

8. **Control the TV Set and Sports.** In my experience working with many fathers across the country, I've found that there are two weaknesses. Most fathers tend to like watching sports and others like to watch the television set in general, especially the news. Of course, the news nearly always leads to watching other useless shows and programs. Now, nothing in and of itself is wrong with this. However, experiencing multiple sclerosis, I realize how important it is for us to redeem the time with our children (Ephesians 5:16). I've also received many letters from parents whose husband, wife, or child has died suddenly and tragically in one way or another.

My point is simply this: our time is too precious to waste in watching television and most sporting events. Life is too short. We need to make every day with our children count. There is so much training to do - so much molding and shaping their character. There is so much we can do with this time to homeschool our children. We unplugged our television 10 years ago and I have not missed a thing - but I have gained thousands of hours of quality time with my children, wife, and in ministering! Let us make certain our priorities are in order. One day we will be standing before our Creator and Judge to answer for how we spent our time with our children.

Our culture is obsessed with these sports and T.V. Let us not open the door of our children's hearts to these idols.

9. **Teach Your Children to Develop the Habit of Personal Devotions.** As homeschool fathers, in order to be truly spiritual heads, we must teach our children how to have their own private devotions with the Lord God Almighty. It is important that we make them accountable to us as father and as spiritual head. I've learned a method that really seems to help my children form a lasting habit of having regular, daily, personal devotions in communion with God. I want my children to learn to nurture their own soul and develop a close, personal walk with the Lord.

The way I keep them accountable is I have each child who can read and write, read a particular passage in Scripture. I prearrange with them as to which book of the Bible or chapters they should be reading. Then each day they must write a verse assigned for that day of the week in a notebook. They must also write a sentence or two describing in their journal what this verse means to them. At the appointed weekly time I meet with each of my children. I review the Bible verses they wrote from their personal devotions and their comments from the past week. What a joy it is to pedal through the Scriptures and review what they have already been reading for the past week! If the child diligently has their personal devotions every day for a given month, they get a special treat from Dad or breakfast out with him. These incentives help particularly the smaller children as they begin developing their habits. The incentives are not needed as much with the older children as they are generally motivated from their heart to have daily personal devotions with the Lord.

10. **Provide Protection for Your and Other's Homeschools.** As the sole exception to her usual policy forbidding writers to promote their own work in this magazine, publisher Mary Pride has encouraged me to urge you to make sure your family is a member of Home School Legal Defense Association. As Senior Counsel of the Home School Legal Defense Association since 1985, I have seen how God has used HSLDA to literally change the legal landscape across this country. In 1985 when I started working at the Home School Legal Defense Association, it was only clearly legal to homeschool in about five states. After many years of work before the courts and legislatures of this land, God has blessed our efforts with many victories. We can now state with great thankfulness to God that it is legal in all 50 states. This was not always so, and there is no guarantee that it will always be.

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. Your investment in the Home School Legal Defense Association not only will enable you to protect your family if you ever get an unwanted knock at your door by a truant officer or a social worker, but more importantly your investment will help the many thousands of families who are members of HSLDA that we help each year who do have legal troubles and conflicts. Many homeschool moms have told me how their membership has given them piece of mind to concentrate on their homeschooling.

Believe me, the \$100 membership is worth it. Your right to homeschool is much too precious to lose. See pages 7-10 for an HSLDA application form.

Do You Feel Overwhelmed?

You might be saying to yourself, "There is no way I can do all this." You are right. You can't. I can't. But God can.

You also need to ask yourself, "How bad do I want it? How badly do I want to be a godly homeschool father?" Then put forth the effort, planning, prayer, and emotion to make it happen. Your children's souls are at stake.