

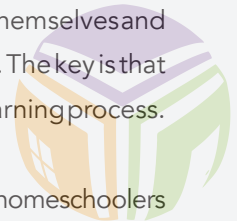
CHAPTER 3

WHAT IS HOMESCHOOLING?

Let's clarify homeschooling and break it down into comprehensible parts. There are many definitions that one can Google or reference, including one from the Merriam Webster dictionary: "to teach children at home instead of sending them to a school."¹¹ As a general description, the best definition we've encountered is from the current Chairman of the Global Home Education Exchange (GHEX), Gerald Huebner from Canada. He defines it as "parent-led, home-based education."

A homeschool parent takes responsibility for his or her child's education versus delegating this to an institution. Taking responsibility as a parent may involve utilizing tutors for certain classes, using DVDs or online courses, asking for help from other home school parents or relatives, or paying for instructors to teach specialized classes in music, art, and PE, and in some cases, even math and language arts. Generally, however, most home school parents plan out their child's coursework for the year themselves and see to it that goals and objectives are accomplished. The key is that the parents are "leading" or "steering" the whole learning process.

The phrase "at home" can be misleading because most homeschoolers



don't confine their learning experience to the home. Learning for homeschoolers can take place in church, in a club or organization, during meetings with other homeschoolers such as playgroups and coops, and while participating in field trips or traveling. Emancipated from the confines of classroom-based and teacher-led learning, homeschool families tend to see the world as their "classroom." Learning is a way of life.

While most homeschooling families have academic goals that serve as a guide for their "school year", they often pursue areas of study beyond curriculum requirements. They may also slow-down if necessary to master areas of weakness. This flexibility makes for a personalized learning experience, which is difficult to achieve with the common student to teacher ratio found in schools, as shared in Edric's Marketing 101 teaching experience.

Years ago, homeschoolers like ourselves received mixed reactions when we explained that our kids were home-educated. Some people would remark, "Homeschooling? What's that?" Or, they asked, "Don't you need to be a teacher?", not quite grasping how a mom or dad could effectively teach the range of subject areas that usually requires a "professional or licensed" person to do the job. Of course, we always got the one about socialization, the one that assumed that our kids had no contact with the outside world. "So what about socialization? Do they have friends?"

Some of our homeschooling friends were met with tactless comments like, "Homeschooling? Why? Do you guys need money? Is



there something wrong with your child?"

Today, we still get the common, "What about socialization" question that never seems to go away. However, impressions have certainly changed over the years from *I have no idea what homeschooling is to I have a general idea about what it is but I need more information and courage to try it myself.* Most people's queries about our homeschool lifestyle are now motivated by genuine interest. Usually, we hear, "It sounds ideal but I'm not sure if I can do it. I don't think I'm patient enough."

To the open-minded ones who grew up with Yahoo and Google, they are less likely to think homeschoolers are a bunch of weirdos and crazies. Unlimited access to information has changed the way people accomplish and realize their dreams. In an article by Entrepreneur.com entitled *8 Hugely Successful People Who Didn't Graduate College*, contributor Thomas Smale said, "In the information age, there are many ways to learn and develop the skills you need to become a successful entrepreneur. Home schooling may be a worthwhile option for many, especially if you have the desire to learn at your own pace, or if you have kids that are ambitious and independent thinkers."¹²

Even though homeschooling is still atypical for the average Filipino family, "it is gaining ground here in the Philippines as a viable educational option, with more parents choosing to explore it and 'take the plunge' into the 'road less travelled,' as many people call the homeschooling path."¹³



While homeschooling isn't completely free from resistance due to uninformed government agencies (particularly outside of Metro Manila), unsupportive family members (usually extended family), or general misconceptions, it has hurdled most of the negative labels that have been tied to its unconventionality. This is largely due to vocal homeschool advocates and organizations that have worked on partnerships with the Department of Education, and lifestyle writers who have featured home schooling in newspapers, magazines, blogs, television and various media platforms. Homeschool families tend to post their day to day adventures and activities on Instagram and Facebook, as well as chronicle their experiences online, too, which increases awareness.

All these efforts have generated positive press about homeschooling and made it easier for parents to be informed about homeschooling in the Philippines. Due to the plethora of content that abounds on the web that celebrates homeschool's successes and reveals its honest challenges, parents are emboldened to consider this counter-cultural approach for their own children.

Even though homeschooling is growing in the Philippines, most families are of the "traditional mindset" that assumes that their child will be better educated in public or private schools, with the latter being the more ideal. Schools are associated with an image of social status and economic ability, and well-meaning parents work hard to afford the finest education for their children to guarantee their future success.



“Filipinos have a deep regard for education, which they view as a primary avenue for upward social and economic mobility. From the onset of United States colonial rule, with its heavy emphasis on mass public education, Filipinos internalized the American ideal of a democratic society in which individuals could get ahead through attainment of a good education. Middle-class parents make tremendous sacrifices in order to provide secondary and higher education for their children.”¹⁴

However, conventional schooling is no longer the only way to meet the evolving needs of families who need more flexible and customized options for their kids’ schooling. Homeschool Global (one of the biggest homeschool enrichment programs in the country) has culled data that sheds insight into the top reasons why Filipino families choose to homeschool:¹⁵

1. They want to strengthen character and/or spiritual development.
2. They plan to move / relocate.
3. They are idealistic young parents looking for alternative learning methods.
4. Their children have had negative experiences in school.
5. Their kids have learning disabilities that they want to address in the home.
6. One parent or both parents have jobs or businesses that require them to travel a lot and they intend to bring their kids along.



Tina Rodriguez, homeschooling mom and writer, has penned many articles on homeschooling for *Smart Parenting Magazine* and her blog, *Truly Rich Mom*. She said, "Homeschooling seems to be gaining popularity here in the Philippines and in other places around the world for several reasons. Some parents cite values and religious beliefs as their main "whys" for homeschooling, while others cite flexibility and less pressure on the child. The reasons actually vary per family, and no homeschooling family is alike in that sense."¹⁶

According to the Homeschool Association of the Philippine Islands (HAPI), the number of homeschooled students in the Philippines is growing at 28% per year, over the last 10 years (from 2008-2017). Notably, this data is only from the homeschool organizations under HAPI, whose combined population is approximately 12,000 as of 2017. Rough estimates for the 2017 total, which includes independent homeschoolers and those under other homeschool organizations outside of HAPI is approximately 17,000 as of 2017. Demographics reveal that most families who start homeschooling tend to be families with children between the ages of 3 and 8. Most homeschooling families belong to the middle class. Their motivations stem from dissatisfaction with the Philippine school system, and a desire to imbibe character and values in the lives of their children. While a majority of homeschooling families are either Christian or Catholic, a growing number are of different faiths or have no religious background.¹⁷

As more and more parents are looking to take charge of their



children's education, homeschooling is becoming a top choice to meet the specific needs of their families, particularly younger families who are open to exploring options that veer away from conventional models of education. Filipinos place great value on education as well as parenting their children the right way, and homeschooling allows for the marriage of both these values.



CHAPTER 4

WHY HOMESCHOOLING IS RELEVANT TODAY

Joy:

In 2016 I sat through a seminar given by educator, author, and homeschooling mom, Dr. Debra Bell, at the Global Home Education Conference in Brazil, where she presented eight compelling reasons why children learn best at home. Based on her research, children learn best when:¹⁸

1. They believe their teacher and fellow students care about them.
2. They have opportunities to pursue their interests.
3. They can make choices and decisions about their learning.
4. They can observe other students who model what success looks like.
5. They have a teacher who is available to provide feedback and encouragement.
6. The work they are asked to do is matched with what they are ready to learn.
7. They can experience what they are studying firsthand.
8. They have plenty of physical activity, sunshine, and fresh air.

Dr. Bell has been noted to say, "If we could build a school from the



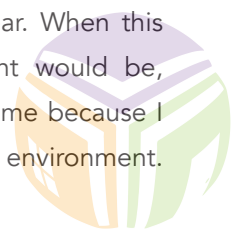
ground up based on what the research shows about how children learn best, we would build a home.”

I’ve listened to Dr. Bell speak at conferences on several occasions and I’m always encouraged by her research which continues to validate why homeschooling makes sense. If you haven’t yet read her book, *The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling*, get yourself a copy. It’s the most comprehensive book on home educating that I have ever read. I want to add two other salient points that I’ve observed as a homeschooling mom.

First, the amount of time I have with my kids allows me to know them thoroughly and prepare their hearts to receive instruction. During Edan’s 4th grade portfolio review with his academic advisor, I found out that he was tempted to run away several times. *Edan? My sweet son? Run away?*

I started to cry, but instead of panicking, I conferenced with Edric about this. (Yes, we have parent-teacher conferences!) Edric and I decided to take him out to lunch for fried chicken, mashed potatoes, and ice cream, some of his favorite food, especially the latter.

During this lunch, we asked him to explain what was going on in his heart. He confessed that he felt very angry inside. Sometimes, he was upset with Elijah, Edric, and me. Oh dear. When this feeling would surface, his predominant thought would be, *Maybe I will just run away*. This was shocking to me because I thought of our home as a pretty loving, stress-free environment.

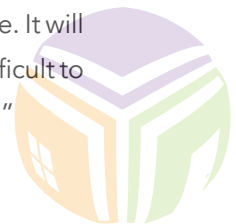


Apparently, Edan didn't always see it this way.

Unfortunately, he didn't handle conflict with his brother, Elijah, well. He liked to avoid getting into discussions when he was frustrated. Furthermore, he nursed hurt when Edric or I corrected him with a negative tone. He actually used the phrase, "When you get mad at me." (His love language is words so he is very sensitive to what people say and how they say it.)

Edric and I encouraged Edan by saying, "Edan, you can talk to us about anything. Anytime you are going through something, you can come to us. We want to listen to you, to help you. We love you and you are important to us." We also asked for his forgiveness.

I followed up this conversation with a story about a boy who grew up in a wonderful Christian home where he was deeply loved. "However," I continued, "this boy grew up and chose the wrong friends who invited him to do drugs. Eventually he got addicted and fell away from the Lord. When I interviewed the parents to find out what happened to this son of theirs, they revealed that he hid things in his heart. He didn't share what was going on inside. As a result, he listened to the lies of the evil one. It's the same way with any of us, Edan. Imagine a sheep on a field by itself. To a wolf, it will seem like vulnerable and easy prey. However if that sheep is beside the shepherd and with the other sheep, the wolf will think twice. It will be harder for him to attack the sheep. As a Christian, it's difficult to follow Christ alone, just like that sheep. We need others."



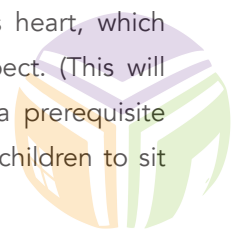
Edric and I continued to assure him that we loved him, that we were committed to changing where necessary. Furthermore, he could communicate with us his longings, desires, and frustrations. He didn't have to struggle alone. Edan smiled at Edric and me. He came away from our lunch feeling like he was treasured and special, that we loved him no matter what.

Periodically, when I ask Edan, "How are you doing?", he no longer feels the same isolation he once did. In fact, I appreciate that he now speaks openly about what's going on in his heart.

During one particular instance, he approached me to confess having broken a rule that we have about gadget time. Remorseful and embarrassed, he willingly admitted to his wrong and asked for forgiveness. It meant a great deal to me as a mom because he felt secure enough in his relationship with Edric and me to be honest.

Why is the heart so important when it comes to homeschooling? If my kids don't trust me or feel secure in my love for them (or Edric's), they will not listen to my (our) instruction. Furthermore, if their hearts aren't spiritually healthy, their minds won't be either. Homeschooling gives Edric and I a lot of time to get to know our children and to invest in their hearts.

There's another aspect to focusing on a child's heart, which is to help them internalize obedience and respect. (This will be covered in more detail later.) Character is a prerequisite to effective learning. Imagine trying to get five children to sit



down and do their work if they don't obey? What a *nightmare*. Some homeschooling families have ten or more children! If my kids don't obey or respect me, my focus will be diverted to behavioral management instead of valuable hours spent acquiring knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

It was challenging with my fifth child, Catalina, for a while because she was in obedience-training mode. Since Edric and I became intentional about disciplining her, she has changed significantly. I can tell her, "Catalina, sit down." Or, "Catalina, don't be fussy." Or, "Catalina, wait, because Mommy is still talking to your brother." She will listen.

I spent the last year doing quite a bit of homeschool work with her. She learned to read and pick up numeracy skills pretty quickly. Two years ago, it would have been futile to instruct her because her heart wasn't ready.

Another reason why learning happens best at home is more practical in nature. The skills needed for the 21st century cannot be achieved through the conventional methods of schooling. In Tony Wagner's book, *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need – and What We Can Do About It*, he describes 7 Survival Skills for the 21st Century for Work, Learning, and Citizenship. Academics are great but they don't rank as high with CEOs and owners of some of the largest and most profitable businesses in the world. Tony Wagner interviewed top CEOs and business owners and they revealed certain abilities that they



look for.

Interestingly, all these skills can be developed in the context of the home and through parental instruction. When I read Wagner's book, I got so excited! It made me realize that homeschooling isn't merely about creating an optimum environment for learning, focusing on their hearts, and providing the foundation of character and conviction in our kids. Homeschooling can prepare our kids for the very challenges they will face in future. It is not just some romantic ideal.

1. CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

We can teach our kids to ask questions, to be resourceful, and to find sensible solutions to learning challenges they face. It's not about memorizing facts or content mindlessly. It's about making logical and intelligent choices.

2. COLLABORATION AND LEADING BY INFLUENCE

We can teach our kids to work together, love and forgive one another unconditionally. We can also teach them to deal with personalities and engage people they may not naturally gravitate to. More importantly, we ought to remind them to pursue Christ-likeness and encourage others by their example. Good leaders inspire followers. They don't lord it over others.

3. AGILITY AND ADAPTATION

We can train our children to be flexible. Learning doesn't always happen in a predictable fashion. Everything doesn't always go



as planned in life either. Sometimes we need to pursue the same goal but change our methods in the process and our kids have to learn to adjust. For example, we need to learn about math concepts but if the book doesn't cut it, what other sources can we use? How about when a child doesn't get his or her way? We can teach them to respond with the right attitude. When a child fails at a task, we can gently push them to keep going.

4. INITIATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURIALISM

Many homeschooling families do home-based businesses or join bazaars and events where they sell their ideas and projects. Our kids have tried doing this several times. Currently, our sons are involved in a profitable slime business with their friends. They have a revolving cash fund to purchase supplies, and they have orders to support their enterprise.

With older children, we can apply initiative by making them responsible for their learning. We don't have to hover over them all the time. They have to take ownership of their learning goals and proactively improve themselves.

5. EFFECTIVE WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATION

This is self-explanatory but apparently, many students today have problems articulating themselves well when they write or speak. Our own kids can be prone to the same problem if we are not intentional about building these skills.

I have used Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW) to help my



older sons develop their creative writing skills. Boys tend to abhor writing. After using IEW, Elijah, a thirteen year old wrote a fifty-two paragraph narrative about his Mt. Apo climb. He did a great job, too. If Elijah displayed a negative attitude toward writing in school, I don't think the average teacher would be able to spend hours searching for a better way for him to learn to write. However, a parent is willing to do this for her child.

6. ASSESSING AND ANALYZING INFORMATION

With the overwhelming amounts of information accessible to children today through the Internet, we need to equip them to evaluate and process content. Will they take everything at face value or will they think twice about making decisions based on what they read and see online?

7. CURIOSITY AND IMAGINATION

Everyday our kids have time to play, explore, discover, invent and create. We don't cannibalize the hours of their day with school work. To my horror, I was told that some conventionally schooled students in highly competitive institutions have to study into the late evenings during the week then wake up ridiculously early to avoid the traffic to school. This makes me want to cry. These kids are missing out on the wonders of childhood which should include day dreaming, exploring, inventing, creating, and mastering their areas of giftedness.

Finland has been at the forefront of revolutionary education. In an article written by a 7th grade math teacher in the U.S. who



completed his Fulbright research assignment in Finland explained, “We (in America) can’t even stick to ONE philosophy of education long enough to see if it actually works. We are constantly trying new methods, ideas and initiatives. We keep padding more and more to our plates without removing any of the past ideas. Currently we believe “more” is the answer to all of our education problems—everything can be solved with MORE classes, longer days, MORE homework, MORE assignments, MORE pressure, MORE content, MORE meetings, MORE after school tutoring, and of course MORE testing! All this is doing is creating MORE burnt out teachers, MORE stressed out students and MORE frustration. Finland on the other hand believes less is more.”¹⁹

I also believe in less is more to give way to pursuits and activities that do more for kids. There’s a family in Cebu who encouraged their twelve-year-old daughter to study fashion design while she was homeschooling. She competed with students much older than she was. However, she turned out to be the most imaginative of them all, according to her teacher. She presented her first project in an unconventional way, displaying a 1920’s outfit to explain the uniqueness of that era in fashion design. At fifteen, she continues to study design and is excelling at it!

What’s her big advantage? Her parents didn’t choke the creativity out of her by cramming her mind full of academics. She spent many hours sketching and drawing before she ever took up fashion design. She did this during her childhood years, as a homeschooled kid.

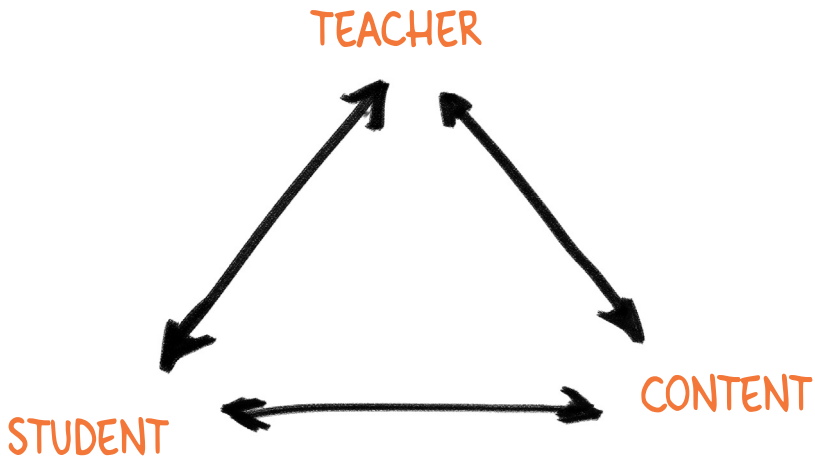


Knowing that learning happens best at home brings me great comfort as a homeschooling mom. The world is changing fast; educational models are becoming outdated; institutions and governments aren't able to adjust as optimally to these changes. Homeschooling parents may seem like they are taking a big risk to those who anchor their sense of security on school systems and on reputable school brands. Yet, all of us need to consider the reality that the future of education is headed in a direction that resembles the customized learning experience more so than what is offered in a traditional classroom.

Edric:

There is another model I learned at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) Certificate in Advanced Education Leadership (CAEL) Program called the Instructional Core that affirms how the learning climate is changing. The model looks like this:



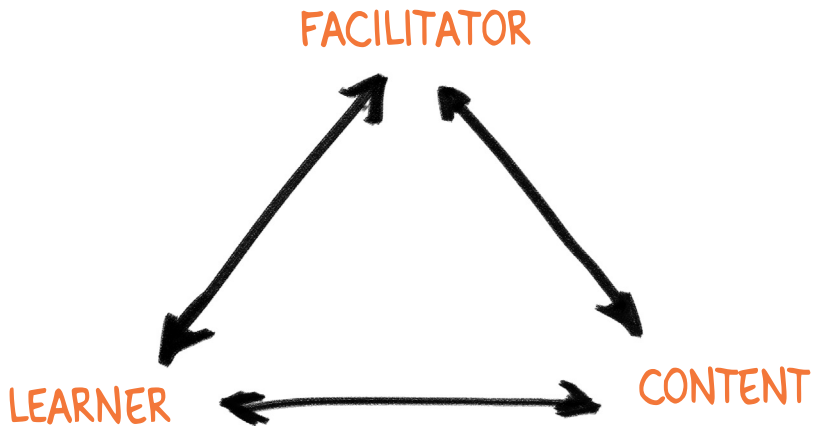


This model by Harvard Professor Richard Elmore essentially dictates how ideal learning takes place — through good instruction. Instruction is not affected by each of the components, but instead by the interactions across all three. The greater and more effective the interaction across all three, the better the instruction.

However, this was further updated by fellow Harvard Professor Dr. Liz City, as she proposed that today's learning is somewhat different.



The updated model should look like this:



As I looked at this model and Dr. Liz City's statements, I thought, *This is perfect for homeschooling!*

Why? The model shows that the burden is no longer on the teacher to know all the content and pass this on to the student. Instead, the job is to facilitate the interaction between learner and content. This fundamental shift means a homeschooling parent doesn't need to know everything to teach his or her child. Resourcefulness in finding content that engages and effectively helps her child learn is of greater value.



The reason homeschooling can be so effective is because the methodology itself enables optimal learning. It is not as dependent on the knowledge or skill of the teacher (now termed facilitator). As a support to this, Dr. Brian Ray conducted a study across the US which shows that "In public schools, there is a strong correlation between parents' education level and their children's academic achievement scores. However, in a large nationwide study of homeschool students in US, parents' education level was only weakly correlated with homeschool students' test score. Further, at every grade level, the average performance of homeschool students whose parents (both, if two) who have less than a college degree is higher than the mean performance of students in public schools. These homeschool students with parents having less than a college degree had average scores 30 percentile points or more above the public school average."²⁰

As I look at this data and the search for the kind of education that is most relevant to meet the learning needs of today, I wonder if we need not look too far, as the solution may literally be at home?



THE **RELATIONSHIP** WE HAVE
WITH OUR **KIDS** AFFECTS OUR
ABILITY TO INSTRUCT THEIR
HEARTS AND THEIR **MINDS**.
IF THEY CAN TRUST US WITH
WHO THEY ARE, THEY CAN
TRUST US TO TEACH THEM
WHO THEY SHOULD BECOME.



HOMESCHOOL
GLOBAL

CHAPTER 5

THE BENEFITS OF HOMESCHOOLING

Joy:

There are many benefits of homeschooling that make a compelling case for it, but I'm going to focus on the highlights that have mattered in our home, which are often echoed by parents who are in the trenches of homeschooling.

Learning as a lifestyle. Teaching and training my children can happen anywhere, for as long as my kids are attentive and engaged. Although we usually accomplish our lessons by 1 or 2 PM every day, our lessons aren't relegated to these hours alone. Furthermore, our study room isn't the only venue where learning happens either.

Learning happens naturally through dialogue and discussion, hands-on experiences, modeling, games, reading and telling stories, socializing with family members or friends, and lots of creative play. I do give my kids workbook and textbook time, as well as writing exercises and tests. However, these conventional learning methods don't dictate how, what, and when my children learn. In fact, it's common for us to do car-schooling. Every time we are



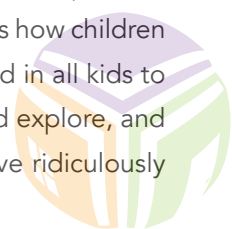
stuck in horrendous traffic with an hour or two to burn, I pull out the kids' history, Bible, and science books. I read through pages of content and engage my kids in meaningful discussions as we go through each book. We end up accomplishing a lot, thanks to the traffic!

During one evening when we did "car-schooling" for their history, the kids talked about Catherine the Great of Russia and the Boston Tea Party. It was a lively conversation over dinner about the conflicting perspectives of Catherine the Great, which encouraged me because their dialoguing proved that they were paying attention in the car!

Since my kids aren't used to equating learning with the confines of a classroom, they see learning as a way of life. Learning is what they do, everywhere they go.

I envy a friend of mine who takes her children traveling for extended periods of time to expose them to hands-on learning experiences. Even though her two daughters have home school lessons every day, most of their learning happens beyond books. As a family, they travel around the world engaging people from different cultures and professions.

Lots of time to play. One of the most heart-breaking aspects of the conventional school system in the Philippines is how children are robbed of the joys of play. I believe it is a need in all kids to have liberal amounts of time to invent, create, and explore, and be outdoors. Most kids who study in schools leave ridiculously



early to avoid traffic and come home dreadfully late after being tutored. It's no wonder why kids can't wait to be done with each school year. Summer is the time to binge on loss hours, days, weeks, and months of play.

In contrast, most home school families set aside the morning for instruction. They cover three to four subjects in a day. In our home, for example, we start at 8:30 or 9 AM. My older kids finish their work by 2 PM at the latest. The younger ones are done by noon. In the afternoons, they practice their musical instruments, have independent reading time, exercise, and ample time to play and explore their interests.

Learning alongside my children. I have never been excellent in math. I used to dislike it immensely until I started homeschooling my kids. When I became a "math teacher," I had to re-learn math from zero. From pre-school math to high school math (where I find myself now), I am both student and teacher to my kids, as Edric detailed in the "Learning Core".

When Elijah was in 3rd grade, I remember peeking at the answer key in the back of his math book when we encountered a word problem I was stumped on. (Can you believe it?! Third grade and I needed the answer key!)

Well, Elijah got really upset. He cried out, "Now you won't solve the problem with me!"



Interestingly, he enjoyed the fact that we solved the problems as a team. It didn't matter to him that I wasn't a math expert. This didn't keep him from learning, either. He wanted me to learn alongside him.

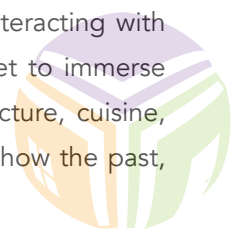
I call this approach to homeschooling the "teamwork" approach. It is experiencing the process with my kids, inspiring them to learn by learning alongside them.

There was another occasion when Edan and I had to look up *Greatest Common Multiple* because I couldn't explain it well to him. We went online and checked out videos until both of us got it. Later on in the week, he needed help with adding and subtracting fractions and we solved the problems together. Did he learn? Yes. Did I re-learn? Yes!

That same afternoon, he gave me a big hug and wanted to let me know how much he enjoyed solving fraction problems together.

"I like it when you are right beside me, mom. I learn so much more," he said.

The opportunity to travel. This may sound like a shallow reason. However, traveling allows my kids to learn outside of the context of books. They get to experience interacting with people who are different than they are. They get to immerse themselves in the language, culture, art, architecture, cuisine, and history of a country. Their understanding of how the past,



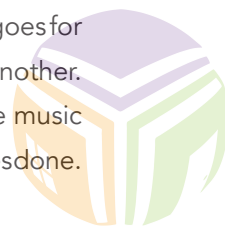
present, and future intersect becomes more apparent to them so they can evaluate why the world is where it is at today with its political, societal, and religious issues.

When we took a trip to Russia with the kids, they picked up some Russian in order to communicate with new friends they made. We also discussed the outcome of World War II, Hitler's inability to overcome Russia, and how communism stalled its growth. Edan also had a renewed desire to travel the world one day to talk about the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Traveling for homeschoolers is an advantage because of the off-season prices, too. We don't have to join the hordes of families who plan trips during their summer and Christmas breaks. Instead, we can travel when we want to and need to, creating breaks during the year as we see fit. We can also take our books and materials along with us if we are gone for extended periods of time.

Cultivating relational intimacy between siblings. *Adidas* used to have a tag line for basketball: *Basketball is a brotherhood.* Evidently, for my boys, *homeschooling is a brotherhood.*

Homeschooling has a lot to do with this because they are together so often and have to work out their differences, defer to one another, and love one another unconditionally every day. The same goes for my daughters. God has knit the hearts of my children to one another. They hold each other accountable for responsibilities like music practice, reading their Bibles, and getting their responsibilities done.



They have each other's backs.

Some years ago, Elijah told me, "I protect my brothers and I stick up for them."

Someday, they will benefit from each other's spiritual support and encouragement to weather the storms of life. Developing a loyalty to one another when they are young will have a lot to do with that.

I don't think they would share this relational intimacy if their loyalties were channeled towards their peers in school. After all, whoever spends the most time with my kids will naturally become their closest pals or confidants. I recall an instance when my kids were wearing matching shirts and someone smirked, "So your kids don't mind that you dress them alike?"

Hmm...I hadn't really given it much thought because it made shopping so much simpler for me. One design, several sizes. Regardless, I asked my sons, "Do you want to wear different shirts?"

They said, "No! We like wearing matching shirts. We're brothers."

They didn't care if other people thought it was corny because they were proud to be associated with one another.

In recent years, Elijah has grown too fast to keep up with. I can't always find shirts for my other boys that come in his size as well, so the matchy-matchy ideal has been less frequent.



TEACHING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Every worldview answers fundamental questions such as:

1. What is prime reality?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person when he/she dies?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know right and wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?
8. What personal, life-orienting commitments are consistent with this worldview?²¹

In our home, we espouse a Biblical worldview.

Edric and I try our best to protect our kids from the wrong kinds of indoctrination via the media, peers, and outside influences that are anti-theistic. It's not about isolating our kids from the world. It's about incubating them, as my mother likes to say, so they will be prepared to make wise choices that please God. Habitually exposing them to humanistic thinking and negative peer influences will conflict with our efforts. Conversely, habitually exposing them to a biblical worldview will strengthen their faith and resolve to live for the Lord.

As parents, we need to be able to answer the fundamental questions that will impact our children's belief system and determine their



choices and actions. Edric and I aren't willing to entrust this task to others. We can't play a supplementary role to the formation of their convictions. It's our role and responsibility to pass on a biblical worldview to our kids.

Experiencing the faithfulness of God. We chose to homeschool in faith, in obedience to the Lord. We continue to do so despite our limitations and imperfections to discover over and over again that God is faithful. Every year that I teach the kids, I look back and think, *how did we survive last year and manage to finish everything?*

I'm always in awe of how God comes through for us. He is the one who makes my kids excited about learning. He is the one who helps them to learn. They are doing well even if my incapacities confront me often.

Since Elijah is in high school, I struggle with moments of doubt. Will he really be prepared to thrive and be successful in life? Yet I think back on the year when I gave birth to my fourth child, Tiana. Busy breastfeeding and caring for a newborn left me little quality time to spend teaching Elijah. I showed up each day to be with my kids to teach what I could, but I feared that it had been an unproductive year. However, when Elijah took his achievement test, he scored in the 98th percentile across all areas of learning. In disbelief, I looked over his results again and again.

"Lord, this was all YOU!"



I couldn't take the credit for Elijah's performance at the end of such an imperfect home schooling year. God demonstrated His faithfulness to me. He reminded me, "I will supply what you lack. Do your part and I will faithfully do mine."

How precious that assurance was! I knew from that moment that God would faithfully get our family through each year of homeschooling. He hasn't failed us yet!

Protecting the relationship between parent and child. Allow me to quote Gordon Neufeld. As one of the foremost child developmental and clinical psychologists from Canada, his observations about homeschoolers are trustworthy. He made a very bold claim as he talked about *Why Home Education Works*. He stated, "It's not ever home educators that have to justify what they do, it is those who send their children to school that have to justify what they do...Years of research and study show that a child was designed to be raised and educated at home because the most important element in a child's development towards maturity is his attachment to those who are responsible for him (a.k.a. parents)."²²

Neufeld referred to a study that was done on 19,000 adolescents in the United States, explaining that the single most important factor in keeping them emotionally healthy was a strong attachment to a pairing adult.



Neufeld also added, "The great advantage of home education is not that children are being educated at home but rather that they are at home with those who are educating them. Their attachments to their parents are more likely to be fully developed and safeguarded, enabling the child-parent relationship to serve as a shield against wounding which provides the womb for true maturation."²³

If a child's attachment to his parents is developed and safeguarded, then the fruit of his development will be maturity. There are certain conditions that need to be present in order to foster maturation. At home, children have continuity of contact with their parents, preserving a deep attachment to them. In schools, children are not able to develop the same level of attachment to their teacher. They move from one teacher to another each year or have different teachers for each subject. There is no continuity of contact. Furthermore, schools separate children from parents and foster competing attachments with peers.

Children will attach themselves to someone. If it isn't the parents, the next best option for them is peers. At home, however, parents take on the responsibility of pursuing their child relationally. This gives a child rest from the work of attachment. He doesn't have to strive for the attention or affections of his parent. Only in a state of rest can there be growth.

Neufeld clarified that "our responsibility is to do the work of attachment, so our children can rest. All growth emanates from a place of rest. Emotional growth happens from the resting



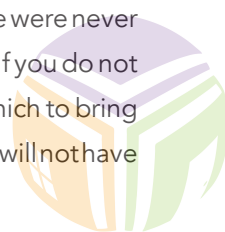
state. Unless an adult provides more than what a child is looking for, a child cannot grow. When we make children work for love or affection, they do not grow or mature."²⁴

Unfortunately, in school, children cannot rest. Their insecurities are exploited. Grades become more important than relationships. A child develops an addictive attachment to marks, grades, and rewards.

When a child faces less separation and experiences less wounding, his heart stays soft and pliable. In school, there is much wounding that occurs, especially among peers. Furthermore, when a child is continually separated from his parents, it triggers a flight from vulnerability causing a child to develop hardness of heart. At home, however, there is support for the maturity processes. Parents are better able and equipped to handle the stages a child goes through, the questions, and the struggles.

Children naturally seek those whom they are attached to. They want to be like those they are attached to; to be a part of and take the side of those they are attached to; to feel important and special to those they are attached to; to be known by and reveal their secrets to the ones they are attached to. Most importantly, they will give their heart to those they are attached to.

I was moved when Neufeld asked the question, "When did your child fall in love with you? When did your child give you his heart? We were never meant to deal with children whose hearts we did not have. If you do not have the heart of a child, you will not have the context in which to bring them to their full potential. If you don't have their hearts, you will not have their minds."²⁵



Although Neufeld's conclusion was that the most important determinant of maturity in human beings is their attachment to the adults responsible for them, I would like to add that we are also spiritual beings. Therefore, we must not only foster an attachment between ourselves and our children, but attach our children to the Lord. We cannot let our children remain dependent on us, as parents. While the attachment may begin with us, at home, the attachment must transfer to the Lord. Otherwise, our children cannot realize their fullest potential. After all, as Edric and I called out in the Higher Goal, their fullest potential must be considered in light of their Creator and His purposes.

I'm not disagreeing with Dr. Neufeld. His science is sound. Yet, we are talking of something more than emotional and physical maturity. There is such a thing as spiritual maturity, and spiritual maturity comes from our attachment to God and our relationship with Him.



CHAPTER 6

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HOMESCHOOLING

Is homeschooling for artistas (actors or actresses)? Will homeschoolers have any friends? How can I teach my child if I'm not a certified teacher? What if I am not patient enough?

These are some of the many questions we've been asked by parents who are considering homeschooling or doubtful about whether they can do it. To address these concerns, we decided to present the most common misconceptions in this section.

MISCONCEPTION # 1: Homeschooling is cheaper than conventional schooling.

Joy's Dad likes to say, "homeschooling is the most expensive education in the world, because you invest your whole life into it." This is so true. On a practical note, homeschooling is as cheap or as expensive as you make it to be. It can be cheaper because you eliminate costs like transportation, uniforms, daily allowances, and packed lunches. More significantly, you don't



pay high tuition for investments that schools have made on their facilities, faculty, and operating costs. Yet, as a homeschooler, you can also spend a lot on travel, field trips, music, art, PE classes, books and materials, or enrollment in a homeschool program. However, you get to decide on what is worth its cost.

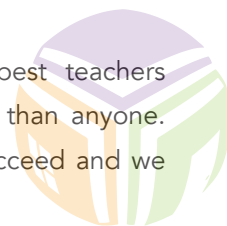
Our family spends primarily on travel, books, and classes, in that order. The priority of what you spend on is dictated by your children's learning goals and your family lifestyle, so figure those out so you can see what cost makes sense for your family. Some families, however, will spend even more. They will take their children on more frequent trips out of the country as part of their business, or enroll them in as many classes and teams so they get broad learning across art, several musical instruments, and different sports.

Therefore, it's really a matter of personal preference when it comes to cost. Spending more or less, however, does not spell the difference between a better education and a lesser one. A parent's involvement and teaching is what makes homeschooling a better education, not cost.

MISCONCEPTION # 2: Parents can't teach their children if they aren't professionally trained.

Joy:

Personally, I believe that parents make the best teachers because we know and love our children better than anyone. We have the motivation to help our children succeed and we



have the sensitivity to detect whether they are “getting it” or not. Besides, homeschooling is not like teaching in a classroom (teachers are better at this because they have been trained to manage large numbers of children). Academic instruction in the home, however, is done one-is-to-one. It is tutorial in nature.

A parent sits down beside her child to explain concepts, dialogue, interact, monitor, and encourage the learning process. She doesn't need to be an expert at every subject. The greater challenge is being patient, unconditionally loving, positive, flexible, and having the wisdom to address character and heart issues. Most of all, a parent needs to have a higher purpose for teaching. These are more important qualifications than having a teaching degree. While the grade levels increase in difficulty, most homeschooled kids also grow in their ability to self-educate if they have a solid foundation in reading, comprehension, critical thinking, and problem solving, thereby relieving homeschool moms or dads of the pressure to teach everything and be an expert at everything.

Furthermore, removed from the institutional learning environment where the pressure to excel and succeed is very high, it is actually easier for a parent to encourage the love for learning in the relaxed environment of a home. In school, a child must keep up with the pace of each class. A teacher cannot suspend the lesson plan to cater to the minority in the classroom who are falling behind. Each child is expected to learn the same way everyone else does and to cope. If he does fall behind, he must be tutored at home or by a professional, or he is put in another “section.”



In contrast, a parent is better able to respond to her child's learning needs. She knows when her child doesn't get a topic, when he is struggling through a lesson, or when it's too easy for him that he gets restless and bored. A parent is very much aware of the facial expressions, gestures, posture, disposition, and attitudes of her child. She can spend more time on a topic or go quicker through a lesson. Because she is the parent, she can prioritize the instruction of her child's heart and his character, which will, in turn, make him more receptive to her teaching.

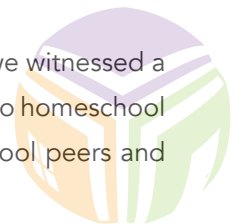
We need to keep returning to the question, "What is the goal of my instruction?" Is it merely to teach required subject matter? Is it to make sure they get a good job, profession or business that will provide for their needs and for their future family? All of us need to define what life success is for our children and teach them in that direction.

MISCONCEPTION # 3: Anyone can homeschool.

Edric:

This may be a controversial one, especially given the misconception we just debunked above. Yet, this needs to be called out. Here are a few situations I've seen where homeschooling should NOT be an option:

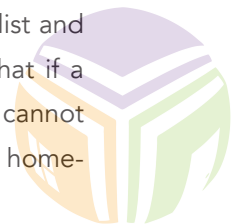
1. Where there is a family crisis. For example, we witnessed a couple whose marriage fell apart, and then chose to homeschool their child to protect them from the pressure school peers and



faculty would impose on the child and hurting parent. What ensued were lawsuits back and forth between the husband and wife because the wife pulled out their child from school without permission from her husband. Being homeschooled and out of a school environment clearly damaged the poor child. There are many similar instances where homeschooling was detrimental to the child, including extreme cases in the US where sexual abuse even transpired. Clearly, homeschooling will do more harm than good here.

2. When homeschooling is an “escape” from school. Some well-meaning parents want to protect their kids from taunts and teasing, or academic difficulty, or other similar challenges in school. They are worried about the child and want to cushion the blows. There comes a point, however, where it is no longer protecting but instead an unhealthy sheltering and easy “escape” that becomes detrimental. The child will think two things (a) when things get slightly uncomfortable in my life, I must escape instead of persevere and find ways to overcome, and (b) Daddy and mommy will always be there to “bail me out.”

3. When the family is destitute or the parent does not have a sufficient education to be literate. I have been asked if every Filipino family should homeschool. I used to be an idealist and say “of course!” But I have seen the sobering reality that if a parent cannot read and write themselves, then they cannot homeschool in the way we have defined: parent-lead, home-



based education. It may be best to send them to a system or institution that is better equipped in teaching the child. On the upside, what we have seen is that many well-meaning organizations (even homeschooling ones) have come alongside such families to take these kids into their own homes or village centers and in that context, “homeschool” them.

MISCONCEPTION # 4: Homeschooling is only for religious people or Christian conservatives.

In the re-birth of the modern homeschooling movement in the 80s and 90s, this would have been true. As the movement has grown, however, many families are choosing to homeschool because they believe homeschooling is a superior education, and not necessarily because of a biblical mandate. They want their children to learn outside the context of a four-walled institution, or they want to have control over what their children learn.

MISCONCEPTION # 5: My children’s academic future will be compromised.

Edric:

I can present data and facts about how well homeschoolers do academically, and we’ve done so in other parts of this book, but there are certain realities that parents also need to consider.

Academically speaking, homeschoolers do very well. They often excel when they enter the conventional school because they are



self-directed learners who are motivated to work hard and have acquired good study habits. Results borrowed from Homeschool Global's (HG) achievement testing, for example, show that nearly 50% of homeschooled kids perform at least two grade levels higher than their school-going peers in math, language, and science. Most of HG's students also get into their school of choice after being homeschooled.²⁶

U.S. homeschooling statistics show that...

- The home-educated typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests. (The public school average is the 50th percentile; scores range from 1 to 99.)
- Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents' level of formal education or their family's household income.
- Whether homeschool parents were certified teachers is not related to their children's academic achievement.
- The degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to academic achievement.
- Home-educated students typically score above average on the SAT and ACT tests that colleges consider for admissions.
- Homeschool students are increasingly being actively recruited by colleges.²⁷

A college professor from a prestigious university in the Philippines approached me during one of our homeschool graduation ceremonies and he said, "I want to affirm all that you've said about homeschooling." He then went on to share how every year



when final exams are about to happen, he gives students who are tracking a total grade of 90% and up in the class the option not to take the exams anymore. He adds that they still have the option to take it if they want to get a higher grade. However, if they do poorly, it can also bring their grades down. “Every year,” he stated with emphasis, “my homeschooled students will choose to take the final exam and bring their grades up.”

While homeschoolers don’t commonly have problems with their academics, the reality is that parents need to put in the effort to create structure, a conducive learning environment, and to customize their child’s learning experience.

MISCONCEPTION # 6: Homeschooling my children will mean giving up my job, career, or business.

Joy:

I’ve often been asked the question, “Can I work and homeschool?” If you are a supermom, then yes, but I will be honest with you, homeschooling is a full-time job. If I had an eight to five job, I wouldn’t be able to commit what is necessary to give my children quality instruction time. However, I have known some pretty incredible parents who homeschool and have a part-time job, or at least a flexible one that allows them to control their own schedules.

Still, I don’t think it is the ideal set-up. Something gets sacrificed in the process because it is not easy to manage homeschooling, work, parenting, spouse duties (for the marrieds), and give your



100%. It can be done but it is exhausting. For the moms, they tend to burn out and reach a point where they have to make a choice.

Therefore, a better option for a woman who wants to supplement her husband's income is to start a home-based business. This keeps her accessible and available to her children, and allows the children to contribute and help out in the business. I would encourage the same for a single parent. Another idea is to get a job that allows a parent to bring her child to work. The key is to find an organization that is willing to provide parents with a flexible set-up so they can give the time they need to homeschool effectively.

When Edric and I conduct pre-marital seminars or counseling, when we speak at marriage retreats, or when we address parents, we share a simple principle. PRIORITIES. Priorities will determine whether homeschooling + working is the best choice for a family. We encourage people to follow this order of priorities—God, spouse, children, work/ministry, friends. If work or ministry makes a parent unable to follow her order of priorities then something has to change. However, if she can efficiently manage homeschooling and work, without compromising her hierarchy of priorities, then why not?

MISCONCEPTION # 7: I'm not patient enough to teach my own children.

Joy:

Welcome to the club. Honestly, no homeschooling parent has perfect patience. I've interacted with hundreds of homeschool



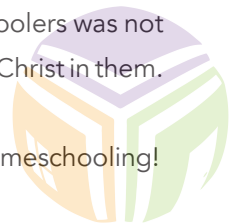
moms and dads. This is a common struggle.

In fact, I never realized I was impatient until I started homeschooling! Homeschooling my children exposed my weaknesses and failings. It made me want to be a better mom, to make the changes necessary for maximum impact in the lives of my children. However, this was not enough. I had to come to a point of recognition that I am limited in my capacity. If I do not walk with God or have a personal relationship with him that is deep and intimate, I do not have a reservoir of grace to draw from when I teach my kids.

A parent who enters into a personal relationship with Jesus experiences victory over weaknesses and sin, and receives His enablement. Some of the most effective homeschoolers I know are committed followers of Jesus who understand that parenting is a spiritual journey that requires spiritual empowerment.

In September 2011, Edric and I were able to attend the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) conference in Branson, Missouri. It is a gathering of homeschool leaders across America that happens yearly. I felt intimidated at first. Edric and I were much younger than everyone. I met and listened to families who have been homeschooling for over twenty years. Some had homeschooled for thirty years! (The average number of children per family was seven, too.) What made these parents effective homeschoolers was not their perfect attitudes or personalities, it was Jesus Christ in them.

That is the secret to good parenting and good homeschooling!



So can you homeschool? We definitely think so! However, it will take hard work and commitment. This is not a misconception. This is a reality.

