

Our Home Schooling Story

By Sharon Killion

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It all began in the early 80's when I listened to Christian talk radio: Marlin Mattox, James Dobson's Focus on the Family, and others. These programs spoke often about the home schooling movement and the challenges of public school education. I was convinced that this "new" movement was valuable at this time especially for Christian families that wanted to train their children according to Christian principles and not follow in the secular, politically-correct path that is promoted in public schools.

Unfortunately I was working outside the home, busy with all the pressures of life in the home and found that when my children were of school age it was simply easier to put them in the public school system than to take on the responsibility of training them myself.

The cookie cutter mentality of public education was quickly apparent. Every child in a particular grade was expected to function at the same level. There was no room made for the "readiness" factor.

Tyler, my youngest son, began reading when he was 4 years old. He learned at home with me. In kindergarten, however, he had trouble with rhyming words and teacher's notes were sent home to me every few months stating, with great concern, his lack of understanding the rhyming concept. I would work with him for a few minutes and could see that this information was just not making sense to him. I've always believed that we grow at our own rate of speed, and that we all "get it" when we are developmentally ready to. Tyler's teacher was not a believer in this concept and made it clear that Tyler was, somehow, deficient. I was unmoved by her assessment and continued to make light of the "problem".

Joel, my older son (2 years older than Tyler), went to public school from kindergarten to 2nd grade. He was always a happy child, open to learning. Reading was never easy for him. In 1st grade he participated in the "book it" club. He would read at home and get credit in school for the books he finished. If the whole class read the required amount of books, the class could go out for pizza. Unfortunately the teacher was not crediting Joel for all the books he was reading and because of this, his class did not qualify for the pizza. Understandably this was a blow to Joel's sense of worth. This happy child was becoming more and more sullen.

In second grade we discovered that all the text books had been bumped up to the next grade level so that now Joel was not reading at his level but was reading one year behind. He was now in the lowest reading group in his class. I went to school to spend a morning there to see what was happening in the classroom. Reading groups were spread out through the morning hours. The highest reading group was the first to read. (I would have thought that the lowest reading group would be first because they would be fresh and alert at the beginning of the day). Unfortunately the lowest reading group never read that day because the school had a "hands around the world" (We are the World) program on the playground just before lunch when Joel's reading group should have read. Sad to think that the poorer readers were having their reading time after a full morning of boring seat work. This was also the time that these extra programs were scheduled and, so, the poorer readers missed more of their reading times than the other reading groups. This I was told by one of the teacher's assistants.

The paper work that the children did that day had to do with letter sounds. I took one of the worksheets to follow along. The hard and soft sound letters were being discussed. If the word

started with a hard “G” sound, color it purple, soft “G,” pink, hard “J,” blue, soft “J,” green, etc. It’s no wonder the kids were zoning out. I had trouble keeping it all straight myself.

Needless to say, I was not impressed with what was going on in his school. However, I still was not ready to make the sacrifice that home schooling would demand.

It was in April of Joel’s 2nd grade year when I had a wake up call. I always took the children to school and picked them up. They were both usually happy and cheerful when they got in the car. Joel got in the front seat and as we pulled out of the lot, he began to cry. I said, “What’s the matter?”

He said, “I’m so stupid I could blow my brains out.”

Wow! I was shocked, but I didn’t show it. Where would he even have learned such a horrible thing? I said, “Baby, there is nothing stupid about you. You are a very smart boy.”

I don’t remember exactly when this happened, but it was very shortly after this incident that I heard the Lord inside me say, “Get them in the ark.” I knew what this meant.

Within days a friend of ours told me about Debi El-Ramey, a woman in Wilson, NC that was home schooling her children. She was the first one in Wilson to have done this. I called her. She told me how to go about registering with the state and making the move. We became good friends and remain so to this day.

Mike and I never told the children what we were going to do. On the day we went to their school I remember sitting on the steps in the den and being aware of my Mom’s presence. I felt like she was saying that this was the right thing to do. In the natural, my Mom would not have approved of this decision. She was, in life, one to go with the way of the world. She had passed away a few years before and I really believed that she was one of the great cloud of witnesses that was cheering me on to do the will of God. Home schooling was a big sacrifice for me. I liked my free time and had a lot of selfishness to overcome. Mike and I went to the school and talked to the principal. We had all of the papers we needed to take them out. We received the children’s files and took them home.

Just a side note... Tyler did learn his rhyming words but not until the last half of the first grade. I guess he was ready to get it then.

Also, let me say that the sullenness that was creeping into Joel’s life was gone in no time and his joy was restored.

Many would say that home schooling stifles children’s social skills. Our local home school families formed a support group that met regularly at parks. There our children played and moms had opportunity to encourage each other with ideas and suggestions. We shared curriculum and expertise on various subjects. It was extremely helpful to be with others of like mind.

Debi and I co-oped teaching when our children got older. She tutored them in writing skills and I tutored them in math. She did a great job! Joel is an avid writer to this day. It’s his passion. [In fact, he’s published a number of articles and booklets over the last many years, and, in July of 2010, he published his first book, “*Jesus, Unleashed*,” through his publishing company, *Inner life Media* (To purchase your copy, go to InnerLifeMinistries.com)]

I often wonder what would have happened to Joel and Tyler if I hadn't obeyed God. Where would they be today? What kind of men would they have grown up to be? I just thank God that He gave me the grace to obey Him.

As the years went by I remember every year I would ask the Lord if He wanted me to continue home schooling. I never got an answer so I assumed that it meant "continue full steam ahead." I will not say it was always easy. I can say that I often felt inadequate and wondered if I was doing all that I could to give them a good education, but God was faithful and sustained me year after year.

Today both of my sons are grown. They are avid readers and learners. They are aware of the world and the issues of the day. They are very articulate in sharing with others the importance of our country, it's founding, and it's principles. They have a good work ethic. They are caring and compassionate. Both are counselors in their own right. People come to them for advice and they are governed by common sense and biblical principles.

I am so grateful to God for the years I had with them, pouring into them both curriculum and the Word of God. I learned a lot alongside them. I was processed spiritually as well. We all grew and learned through these productive years.

Thanks be to God!