

## 275 Homeschool Convention Report, part 2

I've always felt that home education was way more than academics. I believe it's what God said he would do in Malachi 4 when He would turn Father's hearts towards the children and the children's hearts towards their father.

I just got back from Missouri. This is the second homeschool convention I've been to in two weeks. The schedule is similar to the schedule of the first one that we started talking about last time. This conference seemed deeper. It was a good time and rich. It was special being together for two weeks with kindred spirits encouraging each other, and pressing forward.

Let's pray.

Father, thank You for allowing me the privilege of going to this convention. It's not so much where it was, it was with whom. Thank You for these dedicated families who are seeking to serve You in this way and follow Your leading in their lives. It was awesome to be a part of what You're doing in these days. I pray that You'll help us today as we contemplate what we did experience and process it, and may this be encouraging to all who listen. In Jesus' name, amen.

In the last podcast we talked about the first two talks that I did at the conference. They were, "Parents are uniquely qualified to home educate our kids" and not to "Fear math." As I walked into the convention on Thursday night, a mom came up to me and told me and said, "It was math that was keeping me from homeschooling my children. Thank the Lord for Math-U-See which removed that obstacle."

She is completing 16 years of homeschooling with her final child. This was her last convention that she was going to attend and she was reflecting and reminiscing how math almost kept her from this experience of home educating our kids. She looked at me with tearful gratitude.

Then she wrote a letter which I read the next morning. It really touched my heart. I used to wonder how teaching math was impacting the kingdom of God. I do believe that if we can help people to learn math, especially if that's happens to be their obstacle, then we're doing God's work. This mom went on to say, she would have missed so much as she so appreciated the home education journey.

Home education is not limited to moms and kids and curriculum. It's a family affair. I did a talk on Friday evening for dads and husbands, and I call it, Tips for Husbands and Fathers. It's not really tips, it's the essence of 40 years of my life put into a one-hour talk.

This is a family dynamic. Home education is not just curriculum, this is a journey for the whole family. In this workshop I ask husbands, "What is the number one

commandment that you think of when you think of your responsibilities as a husband to your wife?"

If you're a homeschooler, you might say, "Well, I'm supposed to support my wife. I'm supposed to help her buy curriculum. I'm supposed to help with discipline, whatever like that." But I encourage them to put that all aside and just think, "As a husband, what is your responsibility to your wife, as your bride?"

Scott, you are going to represent all the husbands out there. Give me one scripture that jumps out to you in the New Testament as a husband?

Scott: Well, I'm to love my wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Steve: Perfect, Ephesians 5:25. You did a beautiful job.

Scott: Thank you.

Steve: You're totally consistent with most of the men that I talk to on this topic. There's only a few passages directed to the husband-wife relationship but that one. Paul, in Ephesians 5, which is this wonderful, I think is the Magna Carta.

This section begins in Ephesians 5:22, and goes all the way down to the end of that chapter and then the first four verses of chapter six are for parents. I used to wonder where did Paul get that passage about loving your wife as Christ loved the church. What's he building on? I know that Paul builds on what Christ has already taught him, as his ministry is consistent with Jesus' ministry.

I believe the root of Ephesians 5:25 is found in John 15:12 which says, "Love one another as I have loved you." I'm not supposed to love my wife as the world tells me or as a psychiatrist tell me. I'm supposed to love my wife as Christ loved the church, which I am a part of.

Three verses earlier, I think we even get the root of that expression, and here it is. It's not the first time you've heard this on this podcast. "As the Father has loved me." I'm going to stop right there. Jesus is speaking to his disciples, and he says, "Just as my Dad loves me." Again, I'm going to stop. How did his Father love him?

The whole thing is captured in his benediction at his baptism. "You are My beloved Son who brings Me great joy." Those three components. Instead of taking those apart, I want you to see that Jesus was loved well. His Dad loved him perfectly, which then equipped him to love us perfectly.

The verse goes on to say "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." The more I've meditated on that dynamic, I realized that Jesus was a perfect savior. He was able

to lay his life down for the church because His Dad loved him to pieces. What I've taken from that is that is the qualification for me as a dad.

When I am loved well by my father, then I'm equipped to lay my life down for my wife and love her as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. What I see my present posture is, I need to do the rest of that verse and abide in his love. I need to drink it in.

I need to take a fresh draft daily. As the psalmist says, "Satisfy me in the morning with your steadfast love so that I can rejoice and be glad all the day." I need to draw near to God. I need to read His word. I need to be affirmed regularly. D. L. Moody said, "I'm a leaky vessel."

I need to sit under the fountain. I need to drink in God's love daily. Then, I can then love my wife as Christ loved the church. Our love comes from him. "Every good and perfect gift comes from above," so I have to take it in just like Jesus took it in before he could lay his life down. I need to take it in before I lay my life down for my wife.

Scott: It's funny that's what it always comes back to for pretty much everything in our lives. I remember hearing for years people talking like you're talking right now about how you need to be rooted and grounded in his love. It's almost like dieting and exercise.

Like, "Well, if you just eat less and exercise, you'll get in better shape," and people are like, "No, no, there's got to be some other thing that I can do. There's got to be a magic pill or something other than actually the hard work."

With the spiritual life it's like, "No, there's got to be some program I can do. Yes, that's true, but I'll figure it out some way. No, actually it is being rooted and grounded in his love."

Steve: Amen. I introduced the topic to the men by saying, for 30 of my 40 years of marriage I was just a combination of books I'd read on marriage. Actually, I didn't even think I needed to read books on marriage. When I first got married I thought, probably influenced by Hollywood, that if I could just find the right girl, like Tom Hanks finding Meg Ryan, then it would all be rosy.

Of course, that bubble burst pretty quickly in your marriage. I also thought, "I have another ace in the hole. I'm a committed Christian, and my wife's a committed Christian." We've got that going for us that we not only have found each other, and we're now Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks, but also we're Christian Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan.

I thought this marriage thing would have just, "OK, now let's just raise kids and raise them to be believers," not knowing that it takes work and energy and effort. Marriage requires being intentional

I began reading books, and I would go to marriage seminars, and I learned from watching others who have wonderful marriages, and asking them what their secrets are. I studied love languages, and learning our different personalities, all of these skills contributed and helped.

I'm not diminishing any of them, I think they're all tools, but I think the heart of it is, "I need to have my heart beating with His heart. My heart needs to be rooted and grounded in love, then I can love my wife as Christ has loved me." I'm a conduit of His love through me to her."

Once we completed the first portion for husbands, I thought, "Now we're going to address fathers." What I need to do is pass on how my Heavenly Father has parented me and how He has parented His Son. I need to get my eyes up again. I've always felt since way back in the '80s that home education was way more than academics.

I believe it's what God said He would do in Malachi 4, it is a turning of the Father's hearts towards the children, and the children's hearts towards the Father. I sometimes congratulate men for taking off a workday to come to a convention because that's what many of these men do.

I think this is extremely significant, because men are geared to work, and we're wired to build things, to be significant, while protecting and providing for our family. Those attitudes are hardwired into men. We were created in the image of God, and were created to tend the garden.

It takes a divine act to turn our hearts, which is the real us, the thing that makes us get up in the morning, the things that drives us, turned towards God and towards our kids. God has to turn their hearts toward us, and that's what Malachi 4 talks about.

I don't want dads to come to this workshop and pick up three tips so that they can be a better dad, or three things that Steve learned over 40 years of being a dad. What I want them to do is I want them to pray.

I'll often stop right in the middle of a workshop and say, "Now Father, turn our hearts towards You first, and then turn our hearts towards our family. Turn us from the inside out, let the transformation begin way down deep inside of us so that our actions towards our children are not religious duty, or what we think it takes to be a good dad.

"Let it come from our heart, because if our hearts are in it, our kids will sense that. Our kids know when we're going through emotions. They know when we're loving each other, as Peter says, fervently from the heart."

This is a prayer that I've prayed over and over for decades, that God would help me to love my wife well, and to help me to love my children well, and especially turn my heart towards my kids, because I really don't think it's natural.

I think that somehow in the birthing process, moms carry that child for nine months, and then nurture it, feed it, taking care of it, and there's a bond that's made there that is just amazing. It's why you see these 400-pound lineman standing on the sidelines, turning around and saying, "Hi, Mom," on the TV cameras. This is what happens, but dads, we need to have our hearts melted with our children's hearts, and only God can do that.

I did share again anecdotes, but the anecdotes were based on the same passage in John 15, "As the Father has loved me," and I thought again baptism, I want my children to know those three thoughts that God, the Father, expressed to His son, "You are My beloved Son."

I want my kids to know that they are my beloved son, and I'm extremely grateful that they're my beloved kids. I want them to know that they bring me great joy and that they are well-pleasing in my sight. If you recall, God, the Father, gave that benediction to His son before His son had done anything.

This was before he had entered into the ministry. He was just simply making His son know that he loved him for who he was, and not what he did. I don't want my kids to think I love them more if they're more successful, or if they have accomplishments by the end of their name. I want my kids to know that I love them all the time for who they are and not for what they do.

That's something, as you know, I've battled myself. I don't want my kids to have to go through life thinking, "Dad likes me more, or he likes my other brother more because they're doing more stuff." No, I want them to know I love them each for who they are and not for what they do.

The second talk, which is Saturday morning, was communication. Home education, is a family lifestyle change. When you decide to bring your children home, the whole dynamic of your home is going to change. You're going to be together 24/7.

You need to work on and be intentional about relationships because you're together all the time. If you're only together a little bit of time, you can learn to put relationships on the back shelf.

When you're together all the time, and you are learning together, eating together, working together, exercising together, whatever you're doing life together, it's important that you be careful with your relationships. I wrote a book, "Speaking the Truth in Love."

That book begins with the premise that there's nobody that can build up my wife and my kids like me. There's nobody that has the potential to tear them down like me. God has authorized men, especially to build up their families not to tear them down. Paul talks about that. The authority that he was given, he wanted to use it for building up.

Communication is central to building relationships. The primary principle is we're focusing on hearing the other person and understanding them instead of focus on how to respond to them, or how to fix them, or how to share resources with them? We're focusing on listening, and hearing their heart and providing a safe place where we can each learn to hear each other.

I gave this talk in South Carolina 10 days ago, and three days ago, in St. Louis. God met us. It was wonderful. The questions I had from the audience and the responses afterwards and looking at their faces, a lot of teary eyes there because I was quite open about my own journey and relationships are critical.

My wife and I now have a relationship that we never had before. My focus is on being rooted and grounded in God, not leaning on my wife to meet my needs. I'm leaning on God to meet my needs.

When I'm in a good place with God, I can focus on listening to Sandy and not taking things personally and spend energy framing responses. I can just listen to her, understand her, hear her heart, and she can hear mine. As a result, our relationship has blossomed.

We're trying to apply that in every area not just with my wife but with my kids as well. I like to get together with them for lunches once in a while. I just like to ask questions and hear their heart.

I'm not trying to fix them even though I was a fixer for most of my life. Now I'm learning to love people where they are, and hear their hearts, and it's been transformative.

While at the convention I met a young lady, who I'm hoping to call today, who caught me running between sessions, and she said, "I've listened to 200 of your podcasts." I said, "Wow. We need to talk," and I had other people tell me they were listening to these podcasts.

If you ever get a chance to send an email to let us know you are listening that would be wonderful because sometimes I have no idea who's out there. To meet people, who are listening and being edified by them, was a huge encouragement to me.

Let's pray:

Thank you, Father, that regardless of whether we're listening to Steve, help us to listen to You, and help us to respond to the movings of Your Spirit, I know that You are working, and You are turning the hearts of fathers to the children, and You are helping people to assimilate grace because that's what You do, and You love us to pieces.

Help us to take it in so that we can love each other like You've loved us. All these things, Father, we're intent on doing because this is the way You designed us. We want to be in step with what You're doing in these last days rebuilding, restoring, and encouraging families. In Jesus' name, amen.