

BFF411 What does a Homeschool Dad Look Like?

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I'm well. How are you?

Scott: I am in rare form, buddy.

Steve: Uh-oh. Where's my seat belt? I'm looking for a seat belt.

Scott: No, I'm good. I had the worst allergy day of the season yesterday. I cleaned out my gutters in the process, so it's a fun time.

Steve: You still sound a lot better than a few weeks ago when you had that bass voice going.

Scott: I'm getting closer to my normal register again. I'm not quite second tenor, but I'm good.

Steve: Well, we're going to talk about something a little different today. We're going to take a little pause in our lessons on the Holy Spirit and talk about what does a homeschool dad look like? I've been asked that a lot lately. I've never given a whole lot of thought to it.

I'm hoping that we can help each other since we're both homeschool dads. I think that whoever is listening, you'll find benefit, whether you're a homeschool dad or a non-homeschool dad, you're still a dad. There's a lot of overlap, obviously. Let's pray. That'll give you a few minutes to get your mind thinking and your heart responding. Father, in Jesus' name, we draw near to You. You're our dad. You're a homeschool dad, because regardless of what we do with our children's education, You're tutoring each one of us. You're mentoring each one of us. You're discipling each one of us, and You're a great homeschool dad.

I pray that you'll help us to flesh that out a little bit today. 2024, what does a homeschool dad look like inside and out? I pray that You'll lead us by your good Spirit. We've been reading about the Spirit and being edified by the work of Your Spirit who teaches us, who points us to Jesus, and who's with us always, forever, friend. I pray that You'll help us, Spirit of God, today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: A few weeks ago, I was introduced to a young, homeschool dad. He and his wife go to a large church and have become the glue for several of the homeschool families in the church. They've now started meeting together.

The neatest part of this story is that the dads have also begun meeting together for a dinner. It's once a month. I thought this is a great idea, because dads need encouragement, fellowship, etc.

Then they reached out to me, because a lot of these guys, have just started homeschooling. They're younger families. What does a homeschool dad look like? That was the question that was asked.

Then I was asked to do a podcast on this topic with Demme Learning. Same thing. I'm making notes and I'm thinking through this. It's a little bit difficult. It's almost like asking me what it's like to be tall.

I don't think about being tall, but I am tall. I've been a homeschool dad since 1984. Been a dad since 1980. To me, the two of them go hand-in-hand. To step back and look at what characteristics or mindset or whatever of a homeschool dad is different than I would be if I wasn't, I don't know.

That set the playing field. I do have notes, and I did have a podcast on this. Now, this group of guys who I met with a couple of days ago, have decided to have a Saturday at the end of June, where we're going to open it up to homeschool dads all over the county.

They're all invited. We're going to talk. If there's traction, we're going to start meeting together on a regular basis. What does it look like to be a homeschool dad? How's that?

Scott: That is a great idea. I think dads need this.

Steve: I think that too. Surprisingly, after all these years, I'm just being asked this.

Scott: Well, we are lazy, us homeschool dads. Speaking only for myself.

Steve: I'm going to ask you that. I'm going to quiz you first before I go into my notes. What led you and your wife to homeschool?

Scott: I was actually a big part of that catalyst. The seed was planted by...It was a focus on the family broadcast that we heard way back in the 80s, before we even had kids. Dr. Dobson and whoever it was that he had on...

Steve: Raymond and Dorothy Moore, two-part episode.

Scott: There you go. We still have it on cassette somewhere, I know. I had recorded it. They basically at that time said, we need to treat public schools like a building on fire and just get your kids out of there now. That was just the seedling for my brain anyway.

I was like, huh, homeschooling. I didn't even know that was really a thing. That might have been a rerun, now that I think of it. It might have been early '90s. The first homeschool memory I have was somebody that spoke to our college men's small group. He wasn't there to talk about homeschooling, but we all got excited about this homeschooling thing.

What's that? None of us had ever heard of it before. Anyway, I latched onto the idea. When Jen and I got married and started talking about having kids, I was like, "Maybe we should think about the homeschooling thing."

When we started looking into it, it seemed like we could give it a shot. For any homeschool dad, it would be helpful to think that first year, you're going to be a cheerleader.

That might be one of your main roles for the whole time you're homeschooling. That was definitely my role. Making sure my wife felt like she could do this. Lots of homeschool moms feel they can't do this, and they're inadequate and want to give up. It's pretty much every year in the fall.

Then about February, my wife wants to give up. I have to encourage her and remind her, no, this is good. We're doing important stuff here. It's worth it. Anyway, that's a longer answer than you were asking for.

Steve: No, that's good. What year did you start then?

Scott: Oh, mercy. Abby was born in 1999. I don't know. It was probably 2003 or '04 whenever we officially called it. She did go to a local preschool -- that was a private preschool thing -- for a couple of years. That was just a couple hours a week.

Steve: Thank you. You said that you start off as a cheerleader. What did you develop into?

Scott: It would be interesting to hear the group of homeschool moms, the wives of the men that you're meeting with. See what they have to say about this. They would probably give very different answers than their husbands would give.

As it went along, I would teach certain things at certain times. Most of my teaching doesn't look much like teaching. Even when I was officially a teacher at our homeschool co-op, my classes didn't look much like regular classes. I wasn't teaching math and stuff like that. I taught the more obscure stuff.

Steve: Like?

Scott: Well, at our co-op, I did a business and entrepreneurship class, which is funny because I haven't really been that successful in that. Apparently, I was helpful with one of my students who's now going crazy with his business in college.

He was a college athlete. When they allowed college athletes to start making money, he instantly started a business helping those guys monetize their brands, and is killing it right now.

Steve: Wow. Good for him.

Scott: He would credit me. I'm not trying to pat myself on the back. He just credits me with having helped him think about business and stuff like that in a different way. Anyway, that was fun. I did a worship band class, teaching these kids not to try and be rock stars, but to actually connect with God and worship and lead others in worship. Those were my classes.

Steve: Good for you.

Scott: The other stuff is just life lessons, movies, and history. I interrupt my wife when she's trying to teach stuff. Again, that's part of the answer you might get from her. I just derail what she's trying to do sometimes.

Steve: Well, I did think about that. If this was like one of these "Focus on the Family" or "FamilyLife Today" broadcasts, we'd have two couples in here. Then we would ask the men their view, and then we would ask the women their view. Now we go back and forth. There would be lots of laughter. Maybe we should do that sometime. I'm not sure how to do it.

Scott: I wonder what my kids would say. I bet at least one of them would say, "Dad's homeschool teaching usually is just..." It all evolves into some sort of conversation about World War II eventually. We always seem to end up there. I don't know how.

Steve: Well, these are good answers. It's interesting to me that you were the motivator of this. In many situations where I'm at conferences, I talk to moms who wish their husbands were the instigator and the one that took the initiative to consider homeschooling.

Scott: That might be a way where we were a little different. She was valedictorian and pretty much liked school. I did fine in public school, but I didn't like it. When I heard about this homeschooling thing, I would have given anything for that. I was really motivated to give my kids a chance to not have to put up with public school.

Steve: My wife was the president of the National Honor Society.

Scott: There you go.

Steve: I could talk about her, because she obviously did the bulk of the home education, the academic parts. I feel in my circumstance, what got me started was I did a class when I was in seminary on education. The class was supposed to be...When you think Christian education, you think Sunday schools and youth groups. The professor got us thinking more about the principles of education and the history of education. I found out that the Puritans played a big role in what American education looks like. One of their motivating things was they wanted to teach children to read.

After harvest and before other agricultural needs of the family, which everybody did together, they would sneak in some little portions of the year for school. The focus was on teaching them to read. If they could read, then they could read the scriptures, which I found fascinating. Then it evolved into a whole big thing.

The professor taught a second class on Christian schools, which were just getting started in the '70s. Some reformed denominations have had Christian education for hundreds of years. For the evangelical world, it's only been since the '70s after prayer and reading of Scripture was taken out of the public schools in the '60s.

A friend of mine was starting a Christian school. He said, "I've noticed that a lot of the Christian schools being formed are just trying to get back to what we used to have in our public schools, Being able to read the Bible and pray. Talk about God."

He said, "I'm looking for a vision. What is education?" That stirred me. I thought, yes, if you don't have a vision, if you're not pursuing something, you just meander. You need to have a focus.

I thought, where am I going to get a focus for biblical education? Obviously, I looked at the Bible. I looked up every word in the Bible that I could think of that had anything to do with education -- teach, teacher, teaching, instruct, instructor -- with my concordance in front of me, before computers. I did this big study of Scripture.

I noticed that it looked like parents were the ones that were supposed to be teaching their kids. The curriculum should be based on God's Word. The key passages...There was a bunch of passages all through the Bible. Joshua, :As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." "Train up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," in Ephesians.

The big ones were in Deuteronomy. There was a bunch in Proverbs. Deuteronomy was the one that impacted me the most. I felt I had a biblical foundation of what education should look like. This is before I was even married and had children.

Then we moved to our first church assignment in Georgia. There was a member of the church that we were attending that said, "Have you heard about homeschooling?" I hadn't. We went to our first conference in '84.

That very couple that you listened to on Focus on the Family were there for two days, Raymond and Dorothy Moore. We sat in the second row and drank it in.

Scott: Wow.

Steve: We were together from the beginning. This was going to be a joint effort, home education. I remember going to a one-day event on how to teach phonics. I read two books, "Why Johnny Can't Read" and "Why Johnny Still Can't Read," talking about phonics.

Then we went to a one-day event on how to teach unit study, KONOS was the one that we used. Jessica Hulcy was amazing in her teaching. We trained ourselves how to be teachers, and we did it together.

That's the thing that my wife would tell you to this day. She likes to do things together. She doesn't want it to be: this is what dads do and this is what wives do. We want to have mutuality. That's a big word for her.

We were doing this homeschool journey together. I was involved from the beginning and still working on that. What's your response to my journey?

Scott: I keep having more thoughts popping into my head of things along the way. I remember Jen's aunt and uncle had homeschooled our generation. They were among the earliest homeschoolers. As I started to run into people like that, who had really done this...

By saying earliest, I mean the modern movement of homeschooling, of course. They homeschooled their kids, who are my age and even a little older, back when you were afraid you were going to get arrested for homeschooling in some states.

I just marvel at how far it's come now. I was just just thinking I don't know how we ended up hooking in with our homeschool co-op that we went to for years. My wife must have found it somehow. It's so funny. It just seems like God was really doing something.

The biggest impression I got, the more I connected with people is that this wasn't just a thing that was a reaction to public school stuff. This was a movement of God. It still is, I think. Even though it's branching out into other communities at this point.

God was doing something through homeschooling. I still think that if there is a chance for this country to be anything great again, it's going to be through the homeschoolers that have come up through the last generation or so. That might save us.

Steve: Well, that's a very wise and astute observation. This is a God thing. I agree. I've felt since the beginning that this was a fulfillment of Malachi 4, "But before the great and terrible day of the Lord," which we haven't experienced yet. God help us when we

do. God's going to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and children to the fathers.

That's one reason I want to talk to dads right now, because it's a hard thing. It's not something that you can just do. If you had asked me this question, what does a homeschool dad look like twenty years ago, I would have given you a list of how-tos. How to have family worship. How to be pro-family. How to get involved in your homeschool environment. Typical guy talking about things to do.

More and more, if I'm going to answer that question now, I'm going to talk about the heart, because you know my story. Way back in 2012, I'm speaking on how to have family devotions. I'm doing the talk, The Family That Stays Together Stays Together. All these things that we did to be intentional about building our families, all of which are legitimate. They're not wrong.

I'd never read the two verses that preceded Deuteronomy 6-7, which is, "You shall love God with all your heart." Boom. "And then his word shall be on your heart." Verses five and six, before you're supposed to teach them diligently and be with them when you sit in your house, walk by the way, etc., your heart has to be right.

Your heart has to be right with God. Your heart has to love His Word. This is where I'm starting more and more when I'm talking to men. I said, your relationship with God is going to be the most important factor in your relationship with your wife and your kids.

I never saw that for a long time. We first, as men, have to love God with all our heart, mind, and strength. I'm still working on that. The other day, I went into the Hebrew on each of those words, heart, mind, strength.

Do you know what the word for strength was? It was defined in the Hebrew, but in the English, it was muchness, M-U-C-H-N-E-S-S, muchness. I don't think I've ever heard that word before.

In other words, we're supposed to love God with our heart and mind to the nth degree, muchness with everything in us. That's what that Hebrew word is trying to communicate. We're supposed to have muchness love for His word.

When we are fully loving God in His Word, and we're fully engaged, then I believe God can turn our hearts towards our families. It starts with a heart that is fully engaged, muchly loving Him. It's much easier for God to then turn our hearts toward our family. I don't think men are nurturers by trade. We're builders. We're creators. We want to build stuff, make stuff, and be significant.

Moms are natural nurturers. Mom's hearts are already turned towards home in most situations. That's why I think God needs to turn our hearts. When our hearts are involved, then we can talk about the how-tos. The how-tos are the cart before the horse, as far as I'm concerned. What do you think of that?

Scott: I'm just surprised you're still working on all that. I figured that out back in 2010. Just kidding. Our buddy, Todd Wilson, I can tell you what he would say a homeschool dad looks like. I'm pretty sure I will get this right. He would say a

homeschool dad looks like a dad. You're just living, loving being the dad, and that your kids will learn.

Steve: I just feel I was trying to do other stuff. In some ways, my heart was turned towards my family way back, but my relationship with God needed to take it up a notch in 2012. That changed our family after it changed me. Our family's in a better place in 2024 than we were in 2011.

Scott: That's a great point though. I don't think a lot of dads think about that. Now that you mentioned it, we're in a better place than we were 10, 12, 15 years ago too, in, in terms of the overall, how are our kids turning out?

How are we growing in Christ and developing as people? It is better. It's easy for me to get bogged down and just feel we're never making progress. We're still in the same house we didn't mean to be in for 25 years. We have progressed. Things are better. That's good.

Steve: Well, let's wrap this portion up with prayer. We've got some more territory to cover next time. Father, thank you for being our dad. Thank you for being a great dad and a patient dad. I pray that You will work in everyone that's listening, including my mind, work in our hearts.

Continue to work in our hearts so that we love You muchly, and we love You with everything in us, and we love Your Word. Then turn our hearts towards You and towards our families. You're the only one that's able to work that deep in a person's life and in my life.

Thank you for what You've already done. I'm still staying open to what You might do continually, that Your good Spirit is able to make our hearts soft and teachable, and You can write on our hearts the things that we need to learn. Turn us today afresh to You, to Your Word, and to our families. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.