

Homeschooling Held Hostage

BY HEIDI ST. JOHN, 2018 HOMESCHOOL IOWA CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

I remember the day we decided to pull our daughter out of school. The day we “made it public”—this decision to homeschool.

I. Was. Terrified. Really. My knees were knocking as I walked into our oldest daughter’s grade school. I liked her teacher. I had no complaints, really, except that we knew in our hearts there was something missing. school

We longed for more. More shared experiences. More tailored education. A greater focus on the Creator of the beauty that surrounded us. A desire to dig deeper into family life. More story time. More field trips. Less rushing to go our separate ways every morning. More LIFE.

That was fifteen years ago. Our beautiful second grader is now a beautiful wife and is expecting her own child this year. Time goes by fast.

In the past fifteen years, we’ve seen a lot of changes in the homeschool community. There is much more pressure being put on homeschoolers to excel academically. We’ve gone from a few brave moms who, without access to mainstream “curriculum”, managed to give their children an excellent education—but we’ve forgotten what made it excellent.

It was excellent because these moms had a vision for homeschooling—they weren’t trying to re-create school at home. They were simply being obedient to the One who had called them to be different. They knew that if He had called them, He would equip them. And they were right.


When I was brand-new to homeschooling, I did the only thing I knew how to do: I set up a classroom in our home—complete with desks like the ones I had in school.

We soon began to understand that those desks, however, were not going to work over the long haul. What we really needed was a comfy couch, where we could curl up and read about the life of a hermit crab named Pagoo or discover the mysteries of the Island of Capri. Yes, a couch was what we needed.

For years, I notebooked with our children. We took nature walks and studied the seasons together. We did copy work and read stories of brave men and women who followed God with an abandon that most only dream about. And we spent a lot of time on the couch.

My husband (the patience of this man knows no limits) hauled the desks back up the stairs and out of the house. We sold them at a garage sale in the spring of 1999.

And today, as I look closely at our homeschool, I have to ask,



I don’t think God meant for us—or our children—to struggle under the weight of someone else’s idea of a “proper” education.

As parents, we are (or should be) free to choose what we deem best for our children.

-Heidi St. John

The Busy Mom
thebusymom.com

“What makes me different?”

It’s easy to be held hostage by the expectations of the world.

I see it all around me—and I feel it myself. The pressure is enormous. Why don’t my kids know Latin?

Am I doing enough?

Most of us took our children out of public school in search of something more, only to be hijacked by the world’s system—right there on the couches in our living rooms. We’re putting our kids into hyper-academic “homeschooling” programs and we’re allowing the pressure of the “what ifs” to determine what we teach our children. Yes. We’re falling for it. Does this sound familiar?

- We can’t read today, kids. We have too much math to do.
- Mommy would love to play with you; but you need to finish your schoolwork first. And don’t forget about yesterday’s work.
- We’ll do that later, after we do school.
- Where is your list of assignments from the co-op?

Our Bibles gather dust—or worse—become just another thing to check off of our curriculum checklist.

So many homeschool moms today are suffering from burn-out—and I get it. The pressure to do more is enormous. But I