

you for your task, as iron sharpens iron.

If this is you, take a good look in the mirror. By the grace of God, your years of faithful work and experience in the homeschooling community have shod your feet with strength and a confidence in the God who led you to this place. **You too have something to pass on to younger women: The Gift of Experience in Community.** You can tell them not to worry if their 5-year-old isn't reading well yet. You can tell them that the curriculum doesn't matter as much as the character formation, so don't sweat it. You can tell them that the work they are doing is possible—yes, even through high school! You can tell them that their choice to obey God's calling on their life is going to change the world.

Now, here we are. The trail has been blazed, the country settled. And now there is a new generation of homeschooling parents coming to settle in this now-chartered territory.

These new homeschooling parents come from all kinds of backgrounds and homeschool for all sorts of reasons, but the need for mentorship is the same for every generation. Older Moms, we need you.

It's easy to look at fresh moms who are thinking about buying \$1,000 in kindergarten curriculum, and throw up your hands, and say, "They are beyond hope!"

But hearken back to the beginning of your journey... How many of you set up a school room in your basement, complete with the alphabet border, American flag, seasonal themed billboard, and single-seat desks in an attempt to imitate school-at-home, only to later learn that homeschooling is a lifestyle of loving learning, not a classroom environment?

You can laugh about it now, but it was a serious matter for you then. There is nothing wrong with setting up a classroom in your home, but some of you were trying to legitimize your decision to homeschool (to yourself or to other family members) by overhauling your spare room into a technicolor-map-plastered learning center. You had to learn how this homeschooling thing worked for you and your family. And wouldn't it have been nice if you'd thought that through and learned this truth before you purchased all those desks?

Every generation needs to work through the same questions of how and why to homeschool, but every generation does not need to do it alone.

Older Moms, we need you to come alongside us and ask us questions to help us think through how to homeschool our children in such a way that we are loving them, loving our husbands, keeping our homes well, and looking to King Jesus for approval. Remember that what might seem like an easy question to you is a serious question, nonetheless, and needs to be met with listening ears and answered with grace and kindness.

If younger homeschooling mothers are not already reaching out to you as a mentor in their life, then I encourage you to try reaching out first. Though it might seem like some new homeschoolers don't care about having a mentor, that is generally not the case. Take a look at the number of questions asked on social media by new homeschooling mothers! We are desperate for mentors, but some women just don't know who to ask.

Invite these young mothers into your lives and offer yourself as a resource of advice and encouragement. I personally have had

several older women do this for me, and my life is richer for it!

As you approach younger women, remember the challenges that different seasons of life present. Try to adapt so that you can best serve and connect with these moms. Is it easier to invite her to your home and let her kids play while you talk? Could you come to her home during naptime? Would it help to have her meet you at a coffee shop when the kids are back home with Dad? See what the needs are and reach out to help. Sometimes people need to know you care before they will let you share.


If you're a younger mom who is reading this and shouting an emphatic, "Yes!" (or perhaps are still offended at me for poking at your at-home classroom), I have a message for you too. Veteran homeschooling moms aren't sitting around twiddling their thumbs with nothing on their schedules. Many of them are entering a new stage of caring for aging parents, investing in grandchildren, or working in other ways. We need to respect their advice, their schedules, and their season of life.

As new homeschooling mothers, we need to have the humility to ask for help, to listen to the advice that is offered, and to not be offended when the advice that is given isn't what we wanted. Sure, just because someone has experience in homeschooling doesn't mean they have all the right answers. Every family is different. New resources are added every day. But maybe those mentoring moms do have the right answer. Maybe you shouldn't buy that \$1,000 kindergarten curriculum. Listen, ask questions, pray for wisdom, and apply what you've learned in a way that will bless your family.

If you're wondering who to ask, look for who you want to emulate. Don't ask the women who are constantly complaining about their work, who make excuses for laziness, or who have given into the trap of self-pity. Look for the women who are doing it well: loving their husbands, loving their children, working joyfully, who have hope and can laugh at the future, and who can laugh at themselves as well.

Older Women, I'm so thankful for your past work, and pray that you'll continue that good work as you teach the younger women! Young Homeschooling Moms, press on with the good work you've begun, and remember that: "Where there is no guidance, the people fall, but in abundance of counselors, there is victory." (Proverbs 11:14, NASB) Whatever stage of the homeschool journey you're in, may we encourage one another to continue always onwards, always upwards.

Elizabeth Bailey has been married to Joe since 2012 and they have five children. As a second generation homeschool Mom, Elizabeth is passionate about teaching her children at home and encouraging other homeschool moms around the state.



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