

Getting Started Home Schooling, Part 1

Knowing Why You Are Doing It

by Steve & Carol Ryerson

The decision to begin home schooling is a huge step. Even when a person is just considering it, there are a lot of questions about what is involved. The entire process of what to do first can be overwhelming.

Several veteran homeschoolers have told us they are helping other families in their local assembly get started. That is great ~ we want to see more of that happening.

Sometimes people come to homeschoolers with a comment ~ only half joking ~ that goes something like this, “I don’t know what you are doing to get such good children, but can you home school mine too?” We used to get the same question. Be advised, though, that if you take other people’s children into your home to teach, you are no longer a home school, but a private school with a totally different set of laws to follow. When someone asks you to “home” school their children, it is best to encourage them to do it themselves and help them along.

This is the first of four articles about getting started in home education.

Are you just starting, or just thinking about starting? These articles are for you.

Are you helping others get started? These articles are for you.

Have you been home schooling but need to review some basics? These articles are for you.

People begin home schooling for a variety of reasons. It may be the negative atmosphere of the institutional environment. It might be that the parents believe they can do a better job with the academics. It might be that the parents are evangelizing and have no other alternative if their children are to travel with them. It could be that there was a problem with a teacher or fellow student and the parents pulled their children out of the school. It may even be that God has given the parents a conviction that they are the ones who are to teach their children.

Whatever the reason, it is important to know why we are home schooling, and to put that reason in writing. Thinking through your reasons for starting and putting those reasons on paper will help you to clarify your purposes. That written statement then becomes part of the foundation on which your home education will stand. When people question what you’re doing, you have your purposes in mind, and it’s easier to explain why you are home educating.

When we first started home schooling, we did not have the convictions about it that we have now. Even though at first it was just a one-year commitment, we knew enough to realize that our number one priority was that our children grow up walking with God. Our commitment was a one-year kindergarten stop-gap measure until our oldest son could enter our church Christian School, of which Steve was principal. We didn’t understand that God has given parents the responsibility of training their own children. We didn’t understand the academic advantage of the tutorial method. We didn’t understand the many possibilities for unit studies, and hands-on activities that are not possible in the institutional setting. We didn’t understand the implications of daily peer pressure that takes place in the group setting; yet, we are so thankful we did understand that if our sons do not walk with God, nothing else really matters.

Most people have fears when they begin that they won’t be able to handle the job. Some are

even reluctant because they know God is calling them to the task. Haven't you ever become nervous when you realize the Lord is calling you into unfamiliar territory? You know that He will bring the provision along with the vision...but you're still nervous. Home education is no different from any other major task in life in that respect.

If you are a little unsure of yourself, start with something simple. It may just be that "God told me to do this and I'm being obedient." That's okay at first if that's the only reason you know. Praise God for your obedience!

Write that statement down. When the rough days and weeks come (and they will ~ do I hear an amen?), you can look at that piece of paper and say, "God told me to do this and I'm not going to stop. I'm going to keep doing what He says."

As you get farther down the road, you will see the many benefits of home schooling and will be able to expand upon that one sentence. Then comes the question, what form should such a statement take?

One possible plan is as follows: Start with your statement of purpose or philosophy. This could be written as a list or in a paragraph form. These are broad statements that tell what you are trying to accomplish and why. This could be titled, "Statement of Purpose for Smith Home Academy." You could have items such as, "We desire that our children honor God in all they do." Continue in that vein until you feel that you have covered all the basic things that are reasons why you are home educating and the general things you want to accomplish. You would be wise to use Scripture references where you can.

From your purposes, you will take your objectives. These give more detail than the purposes and are starting points for what you are actually going to teach. As you can see below, objectives are more specific and measurable than purposes.

Having this down on paper allows you to go back and look at it each month or year, know where you want to go, and ask yourself if you are heading in the direction of accomplishing your long-term goals.

If you started home schooling for a negative reason such as getting your child out of the peer pressure he was in at his school or because there was a problem with a teacher, that is not enough to keep you going for the long haul. You must come to see what God has for you. Otherwise, when the perceived problem is past, such as a new school year with a new teacher, or you find another school where you think the student relations will be better, you will give up home schooling.

Don't get nervous. You don't have to have ALL your purposes and objectives on paper from day one. Many successful home educators don't, and they do just fine. What we ARE saying is, "Get started on the process of thinking through what you are doing and why." Start with something simple and come back to it periodically as you ~ the husband, wife team ~ think about and discuss what you are doing.

To help you understand what we are talking about and get started, we are printing our philosophy and objectives that we wrote when we began in 1983. Again, don't worry if yours is very simple. Remember Steve was the principal of a Christian school, so it came naturally for him to write something like this. We discussed this and together came up with what you see below.

We do not encourage you to just adopt our philosophy, but you are welcome to adapt it to your own need.

Ryerson Christian Academy

Philosophy

We feel that it is necessary to be established upon a set of underlying principles of truth. There is a direct connection between the philosophy which undergirds an institution and the direction that that institution takes. Having a clearly stated philosophy aids in consistently implementing that philosophy. With these thoughts in mind, the following precepts shall constitute the philosophy of life and education of Ryerson Christian Academy:

1. The Bible is the Word of God and therefore is the primary source of all knowledge of truth (Pro. 9:10, II Tim. 3:16)
2. All things were created by God for His pleasure (Rev. 4:11)
3. God loves us and He has a plan for our lives.
4. It is our responsibility to submit ourselves to the Lord.
5. Our children are a gift from God and it is our responsibility to train them (Deut. 6:4-7)
6. Our children are sinful by nature and need to be directed in the way they should go (Pro. 22:6)
7. Our children must not be conformed to this world, but must recognize their responsibility to God (Rom. 12:1-2, Pro. 19:27)
8. Our children's home, church, and school experience should be preparation for a life of service to God and man.

Objectives

1. To teach the necessity of repenting, being baptized in Jesus' name, and receiving the Holy Ghost with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:38)
2. To teach the necessity of following the leading of God daily (Rom. 8:14)
3. To teach the necessity of living a holy, separated life (Heb. 12:14, II Cor. 6:17)
4. To teach the necessity of daily fellowship with God through prayer and Bible study out of love.
5. To teach that all Truth comes from God and applies to all areas of life and study.
6. To develop a thorough basic knowledge of all important academic areas from a Biblical perspective.
7. To teach the necessity of thinking for oneself and standing up for one's convictions even in opposition to peer pressure.
8. To develop our children's abilities to the fullest.
9. To teach our children to work independently to find answers to their questions.
10. To teach the necessity of winning souls to the Lord.
11. To teach that we are strangers and pilgrims in this world (Heb. 11:13-16, Rom, 12:1-2)
12. To teach that we must not listen to anything that would cause us to turn from God (Pro. 19:27)

So, discuss as a family the reasons you will home school and what you hope to accomplish. Then write your own statement that reflects your beliefs and convictions.

