

## Homeschooling That's Relational with Diana Waring

### The Most Important Lesson I Learned About Homeschooling

Dear Friends,

When I was a young homeschool mom with three children, I tried my best to succeed in the challenging task of teaching my own kids. But it was hard! They were not taking to the new demands of sitting still, being quiet, and filling out worksheets.

But, that was not my only struggle! There was the constant issue of how to get laundry off the table and dinner on the table – while teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic to kids who weren't eager to learn. And, how on earth did other moms find time to fold clothes?

Which brings me to another point. Why were others so successful in coping with homeschooling and housework – making it look EASY – while I couldn't make it work, no matter how much energy I exerted?

Between you and me, I came to a point in the first year where I quit trying. After a month of "school," I quietly put away the books and went back to doing what we had been doing before: reading fun books aloud, making play dough, taking walks in the woods, singing together, counting spoons, and marching around the house.

My kids LOVED when I did that. They really enjoyed hearing stories, and they were thoroughly engaged when it came to play dough, counting, marching, and taking walks.

The next year, I tried it again, determined to make it work. I looked for brighter pictures in the textbooks, thinking that would help. I gathered up all my enthusiasm, told my kids this was going to be a FABULOUS year, and started in on our school schedule. Sigh. Despite my best efforts, it wasn't any better than the year before, so, after a month of trying, I again threw in the towel. And, we went back to the things my kids loved to do.

They were thriving, by the way. Bright, interested in everything, curious, constantly on the move, they were happy and well adjusted. But I wasn't! I felt an incredible burden of guilt as I kept failing year after year at homeschooling.

This takes us to Year Three. Once again I had plotted out how to succeed in homeschooling. New books, new schedule, new year. Everything seemed possible! But, as we went from the planning into the actual experience, it was soon crushingly familiar. I knew that I could not keep trying and failing like this, despite my deep desire to have my kids "homeschooled."

So, I went to my husband (who was a public school teacher) and told him that I was an utter failure as a teacher. I explained that I couldn't homeschool anymore because I could not make it work.

His reply changed our lives. And that's the reason I am writing this article today. Do you know what he said that so dramatically affected us?

*"Diana, why don't we pray and ask the Lord how to do this?"*

Prayer. Heartfelt and sincere. Prayer to the God who designed us, who knew all of my issues and desires, who knew my kids better than I did.

Looking back, it seems funny that we hadn't ever prayed about how to homeschool before. I mean, we prayed a lot about all kinds of things. We prayed for our kids, our neighbors, our marriage, our country. We prayed about our finances, our health, our purpose. We constantly sought the Lord in prayer. But, with sixteen years of experience being in school (including college), I thought I knew how kids learned. With my husband's education degree, he knew a lot about classroom management, setting goals, and teaching a room full of other people's children. That's why we didn't think to ask. We thought we knew how to bring the classroom into the house. . .

When it came to education, somehow we missed the fact that God was intimately involved in how our kids were wired to learn, that He had actually designed them with curiosity and questions and a hunger to

know. It had simply never dawned on us that the God of the universe would be interested in the teaching of our children.

Shortly after we began to pray about how to homeschool, we started hearing of books to read (like “For the Children’s Sake” by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay), meeting people who became homeschooling mentors, and discovering information on how different learners best learn new information.

So, twenty-eight years later – with three children who loved being homeschooled through high school – I am sharing with you the *most important lesson* I learned about homeschooling: Prayer changes things.

Remember, stay relational!

Diana

SAMPLE