

Homeschool Super Heroes

Speakers:

Ashley

Heidi

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Ashley: Welcome to the Homeschool Super Heroes interview. I'm so excited because tonight we have Heidi St. John with us. But before we get started I just want to remind everybody to go to our website, www.Homeschoolsuperheroes.com. That is where you can listen to all of our interviews and find all of our resources and cheat sheets and stuff for you to be able to look at. So don't forget and take a look at that.

So let's go ahead and get started. Tonight we have Heidi St. John. For more than a decade Jay and Heidi have been ministering to homeschool families. In 2010, Heidi drew from her experience as a busy homeschool mom to write *The Busy Homeschool Mom's Guide to Romance*, which was an extension of a class she'd been teaching at homeschool conferences for several years.

Thank you so much for joining us, Heidi. I really appreciate it.

Heidi: Hey, thanks for having me. I'm glad to be here.

Ashley: Well, if you wouldn't mind just sort of starting off and telling us a little bit about the family -- I'm sorry, about your family and the way that you guys homeschool.

Heidi: Well, we have seven children. The youngest is eight months old and our oldest daughter will be 20 in a couple of weeks. She graduated from our homeschool a couple of years ago. And we -- I would call myself an -- well, I'm an accidental homeschooler. That's what I tell people first because we never anticipated homeschooling. It was never something that was even on our radar and so we sort of fell into it partly out of just the Lord's conviction in my life and a few extenuating circumstances that allowed God to really speak clearly. Sometimes I need that like a fog horn, you know.

I think that we -- people ask us all the time how we homeschool and I'm kind of an eclectic homeschooler. I think I lean more toward a Charlotte Mason approach to homeschooling toward a delight directed learning. I tend to do a pretty structured approach for reading and phonics for the first three years of homeschooling, so probably grades kindergarten through second and maybe even third grade were pretty intensive focus on making sure they have a really solid foundation for reading and writing.

And then after that we tend to do a kind of a delight directed approach. I use notebooks with our kids. We've been notebooking now for about eight years and love to do that. And we love to do missionary stories. Those have been kind of -- I tend to write, not write really, but I tend to focus our curriculum around missionary stories, biographies of the lives of men and women who have been serving the Lord.

And those are great because then you can turn those into unit studies and then we can if for example if I'm studying William Carey then we're going to study the area that he grew up in, we're going to study the time period in which he lived, and the countries in which he ministered to people and the people groups and all those kind of things, so not only does that give us a really good overview of the areas and that kind of thing, but it also helps build a foundation for the kids to model their own lives after people who follow the Lord. We kind of have an eclectic approach to homeschooling.

Ashley: That's really neat. I really like the idea of learning through missionary stories. I haven't really heard much of that, but it makes sense because we want our kids to have that feel for missions as well. But it's a great way to incorporate every I guess subject into a unit study or something like that.

Heidi: Oh yeah, wonderful. Yeah. We love it. It's been good.

Ashley: That's great. If you could do you -- I don't know if you guys have it because there's not really such thing as a typical homeschool day, but sort of walk us through what maybe a homeschool day for your family would look like.

Heidi: Sure. Our family is maybe a little different like everybody's and because my husband and I run a ministry to homeschoolers now fulltime. So he's home in the morning and we swap off sometimes like this fall I'll be writing the second book in a series of books that I'm writing and so he will be helping more, but typically I'm one of those people that likes to get the kids up in the morning. So some people like to sleep in really late, but I like to get everybody up.

So we're usually going by 9:00 and we start with just a few minutes in the Bible. We start with a few minutes in God's word and we pray. I like to go over the whole day with the kids so I can kind of get on the same page with everybody because we have children in high school and little ones that means we've got people kind of running in different directions.

So we start off together. We do science together. We do history together. We're reading of course a chapter or two in a missionary story. And then I do individual studies with them. So they have an idea of what it is they're supposed to be doing because I map it out for them at the beginning of the year, the bigger ones especially, they're very self-directed after that. And then my focus for the next

hour or two is on the little ones and the phonics, you know, the kids who are doing phonics and learning math skills and that kind of thing.

So we spend about two hours in the morning together as a family because the history and the Bible and the science are generally done together. And then individual studies I just kind of take time going around the table with them or finding them in a little corner of the house or wherever it is they like to study and then spending some individual time with them.

I really like to be done . I mean completely done with homeschooling by 2:00 in the afternoon just because I have a life. I have things we need to get done and so we try really hard to be done. And I notice if I start later in the day then I'm not done early in the day and then that's frustrating for the afternoon. Typically that's how it goes. I mean it changes from day to day depending on if there are doctor's appointments or what's coming up, but typically that's how it goes.

Ashley: Right. Great. And when you say doing subjects together do you do the same subjects with your little ones that you do with your high schoolers when it comes to history and science? Are you all studying the same thing at one time?

Heidi: Yeah, definitely. That was something that I learned early on because we started off with all workbooks because that's kind of what I was used to from my own experience in school. But what happened with our family was it just kind of created this fragmented day because we'd start off and we'd pray together, but then everybody sort of went to their own corner of the room. I had one kid studying world history and one kid was doing U.S. history and, you know, one child is -- you know, it was very fragmented and I was learning through that.

I was trying to make my homeschool look like regular school and homeschooling is more like -- it's more of a lifestyle. It's more a way of living together as a family and learning. So that's when I started switching to the more Charlotte Mason approach and to unit studies because yes, we're all studying the same period of history.

And so I would tell parents I like to use what I call a school bus approach, so let's say we're all going to get on the science bus. So one year we're going to study botany together, even my high schoolers. So we're studying botany and we'll sit down and we'll read whatever the chapter in the book that we're studying and we'll look at some pictures. We might go out in the yard and pick some flowers and take a flower apart, but I'm going to let my kindergartner off the science bus after about a half an hour or maybe even less. And I'm going to give her a picture of a flower and I'm going to tell her "Hey, this is your picture to color. Here's a couple of words for you to trace about the flower." The second grader is going to get off the bus about 15 minutes later with kind of a different thing to do that's age appropriate. And then maybe a half an hour later the high schoolers and the

junior highers are off the bus only they are labeling the parts of the flower, they're going to be doing a lot more mature studying because they're older.

So I always tell parents it's completely possible to do those kinds of subjects with all of your kids. You just have to be sensitive to the age appropriateness of the assignments that you're giving your children. But it sure helps at the dinner table when we're all talking about the same thing instead of trying to catch up with six or seven different people and what they're studying. So yeah, we definitely study those things together.

Ashley: Perfect. That sounds great. Let me ask you, you mentioned earlier about notebooking. Would you mind giving us just sort of telling our listeners what that is and then maybe giving them a few tips on how they could use notebooking this year in their homeschooling?

Heidi: Yeah. Notebooking is something that I discovered about seven years ago or eight years ago, somewhere in there. And basically what I do is every child has a notebook at the beginning of the year. So just a regular three-ring binder is what I'm talking about. And I like to do the binders that have the clear covers in them so the kids can make their own cover. So I have them design it, you know, like draw me a picture or write down your goals for the year and make a cover. So all their covers are unique.

What we do basically is I will as I'm studying throughout the week with them, so Monday through Thursday we're covering specific things in history and science and Bible and the missionary story, might get in some poetry, that kind of thing. And then on Friday as long as it's not a coop day, on Friday they will go to a whiteboard where I write down kind of all the things we've talked about that week and then I'll tell the kids "You need to pick one from each of these topics. One of these -- so one topic from history, one topic from Bible, and then I want you to create a notebook page for me."

So for example, if we're studying, let's just -- we'll continue with the theme of botany. So if we're studying flowers we will have gone over a series of things that week and so my kids will pick one thing that they want to focus on and they basically create their own page. They kind of regurgitate that information in a way that's creative. So sometimes they'll write a little report, or sometimes they'll do a sketch or a drawing, but it's most of the time the younger ones need more guidance from me, but the older ones can usually come up with things on their own.

And I love that approach because they're writing about something that's interesting to them, so I'm not just giving everybody a carte blanche, you know, this is what we're all doing. And they'll come up with really it allows them to use creativity and recall the information that we've been learning. So for them it gives an opportunity to be creative and to be self-directed. And for me it's an

excellent gauge of are they retaining the information. And so when they turn those pages into me, we tend to do them on card stock and then I simply put them in a box. We have like a Rubber Maid box that all these assignments go in because I have so many children I'm doing it for, so all their stuff goes into a box. And about once a semester or once a quarter we'll go through the box and I'll put the kids' pages in a pile that's just their pile and then we put them in sheet protectors. The good work gets put into sheet protectors into a notebook.

So at the end of the year I've got an excellent record of what we've been doing and they're really fun to look at. So I think every family does notebooking differently. I have one notebook for each kid and we put all of our stuff in there. I know people who do science notebooks, you know every kid has a science notebook and a history notebook and they keep those. They might have one or two notebooks for their entire maybe two or three years of school. But we do one notebook for each year of school.

So if you look up on our shelf you'll see Savannah's here or Skylar, Spencer's summer and now Sidney and each of the binding of the notebooks I've made on the computer on cardstock a little thing that slips into that binder or into that binding so it'll say The Year (phonetic 00:11:34) of St. John 9th Grade and then underneath that it has the school year. So they can go back at any time and pick those notebooks out and look through them and see what they studied. And we, I love them.

And that really set me free from feeling like everything had to look like what we found in a workbook or that I was a prescribed curriculum. And for our family it works great.

Ashley: That's neat. I really like that. And I like that they can go back and look through them. I remember there's a lot of things that I have left over from, well, there's some things that I can go through, but then there's a lot of papers too, you know, that I had to write, but it's neat to have them all in one place to be able to go back. And it also helps with recording purposes later on, you know, if your kids want to go to college or something like that.

Heidi: Oh, yeah. I tell people, you know, these will as your kids get older especially into the high school years they actually function more as a portfolio of their work. And so when Savannah was getting ready to go to college we took a couple of her notebooks because she is an incredible artist and she had so many things in there that were just beautiful examples of her work. And the college admissions counselor said that was the best transcript, the best portfolio he'd ever seen because it gave them a really good window into the kind of work she was doing and what she was capable of doing.

Ashley: That's neat.

Heidi: So I would tell parents keep them especially through the high school years because they really will help you when you go to create your transcripts and go to create an official record of their work.

Ashley: Great. Is notebooking different from lapbooks?

Heidi: Yeah. Lapbooks are basically taking a file folder that you'd find at Office Depot or Staples or wherever and making it into like a miniature version of a science board. Do you remember from science fair when you were a kid? You read a book and -- it's the same idea, but I also do those all the way through high school. I've heard people say "Oh, lapbooks are just for elementary school kids." But they're not. You should see the amazing things that high school kids will do when given the opportunity.

And so I love to do them for a specific subject. And we don't do them all year. Like I might have the kids do three of them at the most a year because when I'm doing a lapbook with them, which I'm normally not notebooking because you can't really do both unless you want to burnout your kids or burnout yourself. The idea is that it's enjoyable for them. So as soon as it becomes drudgery then that's no good anymore.

So what we've done is take like for example when we did Hudson Taylor we were studying China and so I had them do a lapbook on China. This is years ago. But they got, I mean wonderful. It's like I took them to a Chinese restaurant and they went up to the lady who owned it and they said, you know, "We're homeschooling and we're studying China." She was so excited. She was like "Oh, you say my country. I give you lot of thing." And she just gave them menus and all kinds of things written in Chinese and they were able to incorporate those into their lapbooks.

So I always tell people it's better when you're trying to learn about lapbooking you can go onto Google or You Tube for that matter and people have posted dozens and dozens and dozens of videos of themselves making lapbooks. So it's such a visual thing. I think you really need to look at it. There are lots of lapbooking websites that you can go to and learn how to create your own.

And then the main thing, if I can leave parents probably with the one thing that I think is the most important when it comes to lapbooking is that it's your child's lapbook, it's not yours. So I think helicopter parents, you know, they hover over their kid and "Oh, no. That should go here." And "Oh, this should be straight." And I used to do that with my kids and what I've learned over the years, especially as they've gotten older and I treasure those lapbooks from when they were younger, the imperfections are what makes them wonderful. You know, looking back and remembering when they couldn't spell or they were trying to make sense of something that they were putting on to a piece of paper.

And I'll give them guidance and help them, especially if they come to me and they want my help, but don't micromanage when your kids are creating because it's part of the creative process. So when they're learning and you're trying to figure out how to help them do it that's one thing. But once they kind of got the hang of it let them go on their own and just encourage them rather than standing over them. Every once in a while maybe going over and saying "Wow that looks great! You're making really good progress." You know, "Have you thought about this? Have you thought about that?" Those kinds of things. That way when the finished product is there it really is theirs and they can own it and it's something that they can be proud of.

Ashley: Perfect. Sort of switching back to you were talking a little bit about your daughter and high school and documenting. Why do you think that people should homeschool during high school and what approach do you sort of take to homeschooling your kids while they are in high school?

Heidi: Yeah, that's a good question. We are so passionate about homeschooling through high school because so many parents quit in high school. And I always tell parents, "You know what? These are the best years. I mean you've just been locked up with a little person for 10, 11, 12 years." Now they're starting to, you know, Lord willing, if you've been discipling them and loving on them and building a relationship with them you're going to start to see fruit from that.

And the other reason is because the decisions that these kids make and what they're exposed to in high school literally is setting the projectory for their adult life. And so I always encourage parents there's nothing that happens in high school, in a "regular" high school that you cannot do and do better at home. And that includes giving your kids outside opportunities.

That doesn't mean that you lock your kids up inside your home and they never go outside and they don't have friends and you don't give them a cell phone. That's not the idea. The idea is that you're coming alongside them all the way through high school and just nurturing them and discipling them and keeping that home a parent-child relationship strong because the Bible says that your children are like arrows. At one point you're going to release those children into the world and hopefully they're going to go far and accomplish incredible things for the Lord, but they're not a boomerang, right? They're not supposed to come back.

So I always tell parents before we release and arrow the imagery of scripture suggests that you're an archer and you're pulling that arrow close to yourself. It's a heart thing, you know, you're keeping that child close to you. And so when the time comes to release the arrow you know that you will have done everything you could to prepare your child. And you can prepare them academically and spiritually and emotionally. I have seen it, you know, and I think you can do it better from home frankly. And it's a better environment for your kids.

And so people always say to me, “Oh, algebra, chemistry, and biology.” You know, all those things and I tell them, “Look, a homeschooling doesn’t necessarily have to mean you’re home all the time.” It shouldn’t mean home alone. I mean we’re relational beings and most of the time if you’ve got a kid going into high school they’re fears are going to be centered around social things. They’re not going to come up to you and say “Mom and Dad, I don’t want you to homeschool me through high school because I’m just not sure that you’re going to do a good job teaching me math.” They don’t care, right?

What they care about is the relational aspect, you know, am I going to get to experience some of those that I’ve heard about in high school that are important to me? And so I always tell parents talk to your kids. Find out what their hopes and dreams are for their high school years. And then your job as a parent is to facilitate those things in a healthy way in a Godly, Christ-honoring way.

And so like for example, our daughter, I did the first couple of years of high school by myself. I mean we did biology and we dissected things on the kitchen counter and all that. And then as the younger ones were coming up I realized A, I don’t want to do that again, and B, I really needed to focus on giving the little ones up strong phonetic and mathematical foundations so that they could do well as they got older.

And so I started looking for tutors and people who could help me through the homeschool coop and that kind of thing and that has been just a Godsend because one day a week they’re going and another mom is helping with biology. Or another mom is helping with algebra too, or some of those things that I frankly just don’t want to do with them. And so I tell parents all the time don’t feel guilty.

I’ve heard homeschool speakers make parents feel guilty because they hire a tutor or they get help. I just think as long as that teacher is Godly and you know what’s being taught and you’re the one who at the end of the day is responsible for overseeing that child I think it’s a good thing. You know, for pity sake get help, you know. No one’s going to make fun of you for taking a Tylenol when you have a headache, but when you’re frustrated and struggling with school we tend to, for whatever reason.

We’re filled with this angst, a lot of homeschoolers, about you know, should I get, should I look for help. And I just think yeah, look for help. It’s good because anything that will help you keep your kids home during those years so that you’re continuing to nurture them and build that relationship with them to me those things are invaluable. And if getting someone to help with algebra or a writing course, even online.

I mean Savannah took Constitutional Law a couple of years ago, and Sierra’s going to take it again, Sierra will take it this year through HSLDA and she got to

do that online and sit under Mike Ferris and it was a great experience for her and I didn't have to teach it.

I just think the important thing is just looking to see what are the needs of my child if she or he are coming into high school and how can I facilitate their learning in a way that's going to be good. Give them what they need and help me to be able to do it all the way to the end.

So the idea is not to burnout. And if you're on the verge of burnout I just encourage people to look around you. There's so many resources for homeschoolers now. Look around you and don't be overwhelmed by high school because if I can do it -- and Savannah, our oldest daughter's thriving in the college environment -- if I can do it anybody can do it. You can absolutely, it can be done.

Ashley: Yeah. I homeschooled all the way through high school, but we would sit on the couch and watch lectures through videos or online courses, or we did some coops as well, but there were several options for us to be able to still stay home and get the social environment at the same time.

Heidi: Yeah. And it's because your parents were doing their homework, you know, they're looking around and going okay, what can we do? And I just think it's so important. And again, for parents to hear you can do it. It's not that hard. You know, it's really not that hard.

I teach a workshop on homeschooling through high school and it's not a lot of technical stuff because once parents are empowered and they realize they can do it, then they start realizing where they can start to get help and I think the main thing is just encouraging them. You can do it.

People always want to talk to our high schooler and our high school graduate when we travel because it's like they're like ooh, there's one. I wonder what she is doing. I wonder if she can carry on a grown up conversation, you know. And as we talk to them they realize oh, you know, if that lady Heidi, if she can do that and these are her kids and they're doing great then I can do it too.

And I think that's the main thing, so yeah, I'm all for -- I love it when homeschool graduates, when they'll introduce themselves and to parents and I graduated from homeschool, and you can see the wide eyed like whoa, you seem pretty normal. You seem okay.

Yeah, it's good. I just encourage parents. I feel so bad because we see we lose a lot of them when their kids get into high school and we lose them mostly because of fear. They're afraid their kids won't get into colleges, they're afraid they're going to miss something and the Christian homeschool movement is a movement of the Lord and I always tell parents yes, there will be gaps in your kids'

education. There were gaps in your education and you graduated from a “traditional” school, but the Bible promises that he who began a good work in you and also in the life of your child He’s going to finish it. He’s going to fill in those spots. He really will. We’ve seen Him do it over and over and over again, and He’s faithful, so it’s a trust thing also. Trust in the Lord. If he’s called you He’s going to help you finish what He started.

Ashley: Right. Now that’s been great encouragement and advice for parents just to remember that it will with everything in life, but specifically with homeschooling and specifically in highschooling, you know, just trust the Lord and it will happen. There are many days that my mom probably felt like she was pulling her hair out at times, but at the same time she was faithful and it was a good experience because it brought us together and created a friendship between my mom and I.

Heidi: Yeah, that’s great. That’s great.

Ashley: But it was also a learning experience for both of us to learn how to interact with each other and interact with other people and that kind of thing.

Heidi: Oh yeah, it’s so important. It’s so important. And it’s not -- once you get into it and you kind of get your footing you realize it’s not as hard or as scary as you thought it was going to be. I think it’s that, like I can remember just totally freaking out when my kids went into junior high. Freaked out, you know, because I had this conventional wisdom as you can’t do that. You have to hire it out, you know. And I had seasoned homeschool moms around me who were like oh no, and just kind of talked me down out of my tree and we did that all the way through school. So now this year I’ll have a senior in high school and our son Skylar will be a freshman and then we’ve got a 5th grader, a 3rd grader, a 1st grader, and a baby, so.

Ashley: Oh wow, you’ve got a full house.

Heidi: You are not kidding.

Ashley: Well, sort of switching to the topic of busy moms, one of the quotes that we had gotten out of your book, *The Busy Homeschool Mom’s Guide to Romance*, said “Do you ever wonder where the girl your husband married went? The book is for every mom who is collapsing to bed at the end of the day, looks into the eyes of her husband and promise tomorrow she’d have time for him. Trouble is tomorrow never finds her more exhausted than the day before.”

Can you sort of I guess elaborate on that and sort of give tired moms a few tips to bring romance back into their marriages?

Heidi:

Yeah. Well, I think every mom, you know, I just finished speaking last week at a family camp in Michigan and I asked the moms, you know, “How many of you guys are tired?” You know, a hundred percent of them put their hands up because you’re tired. Being a mom is a lot of work.

And I think that one of the dangers in homeschooling is that moms can very easily become focused on their children. They focus on -- they become all homeschool all the time because it is so much work to run a home. Let’s say you’re not homeschooling, and work anyway, and you add homeschooling onto it and they neglect, a lot of times we neglect our husbands. And it’s not a willful neglect, you know, most of the time. It’s just an I’m tired. It’s a leave me alone tired. I’ve had enough, you know, one more person. I remember thinking I’ll collapse in the bed in the evening and just think if one more person asks me for one more thing, things are going to get ugly. No, I just -- I need some time to myself.

And the danger is that at the end of the day if this becomes a pattern or we forget to nurture our marriage and nurture our husband and when we’re done homeschooling our marriages fall apart, or in the middle of homeschooling our marriages fall apart, they won’t have been worth it. I always tell moms “Do not sacrifice your marriage on the altar of homeschooling. It’s not worth it.”

And we see Christian marriages, even homeschool marriages, they’re in trouble all around us. And we’ve adopted the world’s point of view on marriages, which are during the school years your kids come first and then your marriage and it’s not true. And the Bible says that the marriage is the foundational relationship in the home.

So I always tell moms, “It doesn’t take much. It’s more a reordering of your priorities. It’s more just remembering that there was a point in time in which you were trying to win the affection of your husband.” I’ve got to tell the moms, “Anybody remember that?” And they kind of give this sheepish look on their face. Yeah, we remember. We don’t have time for that anymore, but we remember.

I always say you know, there was a point in time in which you were pursuing your husband. You were a student of your husband. You wanted to please him. You wanted to come alongside him. You wanted to help him. And then you know, you get married and the years go by and you’ve got a mortgage payment and the bills start coming and the kids start coming and then you start homeschooling and we lose sight of that girl. You know, she’s the girl your husband married. She’s the girl that wanted to put some makeup on and wanted to listen to his dreams. You remember we would sit and we would listen to our husband and even his dumb ideas we were like, “That’s amazing.” You know, “Tell me more.” And now we’re like “That’s a dumb idea. Scoot over, you’re in my way. I’m trying to make dinner.”

And we forget that the preciousness of that relationship. And I always tell parents, you know the Bible says the enemy -- in 1st Peter, the Bible says the enemy prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. And the first thing he will devour in a Christian home is the marriage relationship. And if you can picture a lion, a hungry lion, you know, not like the lions you see at the zoo, but a lion on the African Savannah, you know, whose ribs are showing and it's hungry and mean and angry prowling around outside your home.

My husband says that he's like a voyeur, you know, especially in the evening because that's when the lights are on in the home. He can really get a good view into your home. And he's looking for any area that he can to drive a wedge between a husband and a wife. That's the first place he'll start. And if he can do that, if he can drive that wedge between a husband and a wife and create a distance between them then he's got an opportunity to take out that marriage. And if he can take out your marriage he's got a clear shot at your kids. And in the end that's what he's after. So keep your eye on the ball.

I come from a family that is literally riddled with divorce. I mean there are just on my side of the family and actually now even on my husband's side there are just divorces everywhere. I mean it's just most of us are divorced. And I just think it must break the heart of the father because what happens is these families and it puts our children at great risk, and we're losing sight of the bigger picture. You know, the goal when we got married was to struggle hard as a couple and to raise children who would be followers of Jesus Christ. And when those marriage relationships crumble it's not that those things can't be redeemed and that your children will crumble.

My parents are divorced and I'm walking with the Lord, but there were seven of us and the vast majority of my siblings have really struggled in this area. And I know that it's because they were at one point in their life when my parents' marriage fell apart their lives are sort of laid bare out there and that protection is gone. And so I encourage mom to love your husband, take time with him, you know, make sure that you're not so exhausted at the end of every day that you don't have time to meet his physical needs or his emotional needs.

And then build, you know, you continue to build on the foundation that you laid when you first got married so that your relationship into the years ahead and after your kids are gone is strong and can be an example for your kids because they're watching you. You know, they're watching you. We're helping set the foundations for their marriages because they're watching us set the example through our own marriages. And I think we lose sight of how important it is.

And so, I mean throughout the whole book I kind of weave a story of the girl that I call "that girl." And then I tell some stories about my own life and how we've seen both good and bad come from either a rejection or an embracing of that

principal of nurturing the girl that your husband married so that you guys have something, you know 10, 15, 25, 35 years down the road.

And I've been married for, you know, 22 years now. And I can tell you it goes fast. It's going by fast and I want to be at the end of my life I want my kids to be able to look back at my husband and I and say, you know what? They weren't perfect. They didn't always have all the answers, but they loved the Lord Jesus and they loved each other. And those things were never in question.

I think we live in a throw away culture. The culture doesn't care about those things and so Lord willing it'll be an encouragement to the women who read it to really love your husband and recognize what's at stake and so that we can be brought back to the things that really matter. And at the end of the day it's not going to really matter how awesome of an algebra teacher you were. It will matter, you know, did I teach my kids to love the Lord? Did I follow it myself? Did I love my husband? Those are the things that really matter.

Ashley: Well, it's been great encouragement from you. I've been married just a year and a half, but it's good for me to hear those things to sort of picture, you know, start now in my marriage building those foundations to where, you know, I mean it will still be a challenge at times and I'm not saying that at all, but to where maybe it will be helpful to where when I get to the point that we have kids then I become a mother that hopefully I can keep my priorities straight at that point.

Heidi: Yeah, that's right. That's right.

Ashley: At the same time I think you're really right because I do look at lot at my parents' marriage and see how much they are in love with each other and in love with the Lord and it makes it easier and it helps me see where my eyes and focus need to be on at the start of my marriage.

Heidi: And your parents are setting the tone for that.

Ashley: It's neat. Well, one thing, one question I'm asking all of our guest speakers is if you could start over what is one thing, or is there anything that you would do differently if you could start all over homeschooling again?

Heidi: Yeah, I think if I -- there's a lot of things I think I would, but probably -- I would probably focus more. I would be less afraid. I started out so fearful. Fearful because I listened to the lies of the world that I couldn't do it. That it was just going to be this insurmountable thing that I wasn't going to measure up, and so I really focused hard on the academics of our kids. And I'm not anti-academic. I mean clearly. I mean our kids are going to college and we want them to do well.

But I think I would probably I would focus more on the relationship part of it and really have a vision for why we were homeschooling. And spending that time

with our kids. It took me a few years to kind of get my feet on the ground. I tried, you know, I did the scheduling thing, which I am a fan of schedules, but then the schedule started to run me and I felt like oh, I'm failing. It's 10:15 and I'm not doing this and it's on the wall. You know, I'm supposed to do this at 10:15 and I pretty much burned my kids out just trying to do school at home.

So if I could go over -- back and do it again I'd probably be doing more what I'm doing now, which is just focusing on the opportunity of homeschooling, which is discipleship. It's discipling our kids. It's building the relationship with them. It's walking alongside them and doing life with them and not being so filled with so much angst about the academic piece of it because as homeschoolers we are under tremendous pressure to have our kids perform academically now.

The classical education movement has come along and there's some aspects of that that I actually really like, but the part about it that bothers me is that we are adopting within the homeschool community a Greek model of education. I mean we're just swallowing it hook, line and sinker, and the Greeks were all about bigger, faster, stronger, harder, smarter, you know, and in this country education is an idol.

And we see it all the time, you know, the sacrifices that parents make with their children to put them in a system that's absolutely Godless because we better educate them. And if you look at the Bible, you know, the Jewish model of education was an apprenticeship with a coming alongside with a mentoring. It was largely built around relationships and seeking the Lord to find out what it is that your kids have been created to do because the Bible says that God has something unique for them He wants them to do.

And so, I kind of wish I would have gone into it with a little bit more of that approach and I think it would have helped with especially the stress of the early years of just feeling like I'm not going to measure up. And so yeah, I always try to tell parents, you know, step back and spend time with the Lord with your kids and He really will guide you, He'll help you when you're choosing curriculum and all of those things make sense when you're talking with the Lord and you're modeling those things with your kids.

So that'd probably be it. If I could do it over again I'd probably less like freaked out.

Ashley: Yeah, well that's great. Heidi, before we wrap up here I want to ask you if there was a place that our listeners could go to get some resources about the information and the books and stuff that you have.

Heidi: Yeah. Well, we run a ministry to homeschoolers, you know, the passion of my husband and I for 10 years now has been to get the church to start to support homeschooling families instead of looking at you like you're an alien when you

tell them that you homeschool. And it's -- I won't lie to you. It's really challenging and we are really trying to wake up the church in terms of coming alongside homeschool parents and supporting them and giving them a place to meet within their churches.

And so we developed a homeschool coop model that meets about 18 mornings a year and we have about close to 50 locations now across the United States.

Ashley: Wow.

Heidi: And we tell parents, you know, talk to your church. The church is the first place that a Christian family can go and find information on homeschooling. If they choose to do that there should be resources available at their churches where they can at least get started, find out who in their church is homeschooling. And so that ministry can be found at Firstclasshomeschool.org. And we've wrapped up a series of interviews with Dr. Dobson. You can listen to those on there at First Class also. Just kind of casting our vision for getting a church to support homeschool families.

And then I wrote the Busy Homeschool Mom's Guide to Romance and that can be found at thebusyhomeschoolmom.com, or at heidistjohn.com. They'll both go to the same place and hopefully by spring I have two more books that are coming up in the series and we're hoping to have those finished by the end of the spring of 2012, so we're working on that.

And then the last thing that we have is a book store. First Class has opened a book store where you can pretty much buy any homeschool curriculum out there on the market and part of the proceeds of that goes to support (inaudible 00:39:09), which is a huge encouragement to us. So if you're looking for curriculum and you're not sure where to get it you can get just about everything you need there and that is firstclassbookstore.com. So try those three things and they all go to support the work that we're doing to encourage homeschool families and build them up in their marriages.

Our speaking schedule is there at heidistjohn.com, the speaking schedule is there. I will be speaking for Apologia Live this year, so I'm really excited about.

Ashley: That's cool.

Heidi: I'm going and doing mom's retreats around the country.

Ashley: That's neat.

Heidi: Yeah, so I'm really excited. Lots of things coming up.

Ashley: That's nice. Well, thank you so much for your time today, Heidi. I really appreciate it and I'm excited that you gave our listeners a lot of encouragement and advice to be able to hopefully move forward and have them come check out some of your resources. So thank you so much. I really appreciate your time today.

Heidi: Thank you so much for having me. I appreciate it.

[audio end]