

Homeschool Super Heroes

Speakers:

Ashley

Marilyn

[audio start]

Ashley: Welcome to our Homeschool Super Heroes interview today. We're so excited that you joined us and I'm super excited because we have Marilyn Rockett with us to discuss some great tips and tricks for your home schooling.

Before we get started I want to remind everybody about our website, www.HomeschoolSuperHeroes.com. That is where you can find all the interviews from all of our speakers and all the cheat sheets and resources and that kind of information about us.

But let's go ahead and get started talking to Marilyn. Marilyn is a graduated home school mom of four grown sons and Mimi to six grandsons, one granddaughter, and one great-grandson.

She's been teaching for 15 years, or she was teaching for 15 years before the Rocketts ran out of sons to teach. She's a contributor to multiple books, an author of *Homeschooling at the Speed of Life* that provides encouragement and organizational help with a scriptural emphasis.

For almost 30 years Marilyn has worked in the homeschool community locally, statewide, and nationally, has contributed articles to many publications. She is currently a regular columnist for Homeschooling Today magazine and is Editor and Chief for that publication.

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

Marilyn: Hello Ashley. I'm glad to be here with you.

Ashley: Perfect. Well, just to get started would you mind telling us a little bit about your family and how you guys homeschooled when you did homeschool?

Marilyn: Yes, that was back in the dark ages when we began, 1981 when we were closing the blinds, not letting anyone know what we were doing. And saw the multiple changes and rejoice and praise the Lord for all the changes that have happened.

We did not homeschool our very oldest son. We started when he graduated from high school and then we did homeschool the other three. And now I have grandchildren that are being homeschooled, so I've been hanging around a long

time and kind of like just got the hang of all this when I ran out of kids, and don't live near my grandkids so, I really can't help that much with them.

So I want to stay involved because back when we started all of us longed for someone just to be a mentor to help us, to answer questions, to give us a little guidance and of course a lot of us did not have that way back then. So now we are the mentors and so I love helping homeschool moms get a good start and let go of some of the preconceived ideas because we had them too, and really learn to homeschool their kids.

Ashley: Perfect. Let me ask you if you can remember or if there is such a thing, sort of maybe what a typical day looks like when you were homeschooling your sons?

Marilyn: Oh, I don't know that there is such a thing. I actually think that a typical day is something that needs to come from each individual family because everyone is different. There are so many different needs, situations, dads help, dads don't help, dads work shifts, dads are home working, so many different ways you can do it. And of course that's the beauty of homeschooling is you fit it to your family.

I think the emphasis should be on the homeschooling rather than the homeschooling. So I'm not sure there is a typical day. And as soon as you think you have one something happens to blow it anyway. But I think a good day is when you can effectively divide up your day a little bit, not by the hour because we can't do that, but where you accomplish some schooling, where you're always learning with whatever you're doing, whether your kids are helping you with a home business, whether they're cooking with you in the kitchen, those are all things that are learning experiences in addition to of course any kind of academic work.

But when you can pace yourself so you really get in a rut if you're just diving in to sitting at a desk all day or trying to do schooling all day and your house falls apart. At the same time you can't spend all your day keeping your house perfect so that you never have time to homeschool, so a good typical day is when you can balance all those things and keep your priorities straight to me.

Ashley: Perfect. Let me ask you sort of on the home topic what are some things that you do to help keep your house in order while trying to homeschool? Are there tips and tricks that you could give our moms listening to sort of help keep it all in order and some fashion?

Marilyn: Sure. First of all, all of you perfectionists let go a little bit and realize that things are not always going to be exactly like you maybe would like them to be. And you messies realize you've got to come to the middle as well and have some kind of balance because you've got a whole team of family and homeschooling is a

family affair. And so if you're trying to do it all yourself you can't do that. You need to teach your children.

I know I grew up not having to do work around home at all and it really was frustrating to me when I had a home. I didn't know how to do anything. I had to learn it. So you're actually doing your kids a favor when you teach them how to do chores when they have responsibility around the house and you work as a team. You get it done. You can get things done in a fourth of the time if you all chip in together.

Now obviously moms with little ones have to balance some of that, but I would say like I said "a typical day" is if you can spend an hour or so in your home and maybe dividing your home up into room or into sections or into certain kinds of chores and get a little done each day and then keep up the, you know, you still have to sweep under the dining room table if you have a lot of kids and you still have to do some of those things daily, but I do give a lot of those kind of tips in my book on how to balance it.

And I think deciding on priorities, which things are most important to you to get accomplished, dividing up the chores so that everyone does something every day even if it's a small amount. And then setting aside, not a certain time, but just setting aside time because you can't go by the clock so much in your home, but making sure you get some schooling in. And schooling doesn't have to be from 9 to 5, especially at home.

But team work, dividing up things, if you have kids using chore charts to really help them learn the habits of picking up and so forth I think are the kind of foundation and basics you have to start with.

Ashley: I know you've touched on it a little bit throughout what you're saying, but would you mind explaining to us sort of what is the importance of life skills. I know you're talking about cleaning and stuff, but how do you sort of I guess, I don't really want to say divide it from academics because it is separate, but it also like you said, schooling should be something that you're doing all day long throughout the day in everything that you do. But just talk a little bit maybe about the importance that you might put on teaching our children life skills and the things that are going to help them succeed.

Marilyn: Oh, absolutely. In fact, I can't put enough importance on that. I think we get a little too zeroed in on the "book work" and so forth and we forget the other things that we do need to teach them. In fact, having your children disciplined in doing chores you are teaching them a skill for success because you're teaching them to complete a job, to not quit before they finish, to see the job through even if it's a job they don't like to do it with excellence.

All those things are life skills that they're going to have to have in their future. So don't look at chores as just getting the house cleaned because it's not. It is teaching your kids success skills in the things that they have to do that are before them and that you have to do as a family. And take time for those things. And don't just send them off, you know, go clean your room or go sweep the floor, teach them how. Show them how. Help them so that they learn to do a good job and talk about the importance of it.

Oh my goodness! I didn't know how to do anything. I didn't even, of course people don't iron much anymore, but I didn't know which end of an ironing board to use or what to do to clean a house and I see in my life that it did affect me because I never had to do those things, to do jobs, to be disciplined to do them. And I kind of had to learn it the hard way as an adult and that's much harder.

And even like family businesses, if as you teach your kids as they get older to keep a checkbook, I never knew how to do that. I never had a bank account until I was gone from home, so showing them how to do those things that you take for granted in your life that you do all the time, but they're going to need for success I think is important.

Ashley: I really like that. That was one thing actually that my parents where they actually did a really good job at was teaching us how to clean the house, how to balance a checkbook, how to save a little bit here or there. And it's something that once I got married, it's not that I keep my house in perfect order, I still have my days of struggling with balance and all that that comes along with that, but actually knowing how to do it has been a huge blessing for me to be able to now be able to put it into practice.

Marilyn: Oh absolutely. You know, we have to examine standards that others put on us I think is a big thing. Either we're trying to live up to someone else's expectations or our own expectations are not set at a good place. Sometimes too high and sometimes too low, but we need to examine every standard or goal that we have for our family, for ourselves, for our children and really think about whether or not it's God who's applying that to you and not that you're accepting it from outside.

I think making a skills list for your children, and I can provide that for you on some sheets if you would like for our readers, a skills list for you just to use as a guide to go down and say does my child know how to do this and this and this? To give you an idea because there's so many things on that list that we just forget about in every day as we go along our day, so we'll put that on the site so that our readers will have that.

Ashley: Perfect. Well, thank you. Talking a little bit about expectations, one of the things that I feel at times I come across, and it's hard for me because I don't have kids yet, so I am working full-time at this point in life, but I know there's a lot of

young moms out there that have their kids and they get to that schooling age and they see all these other young moms putting their kids in school and going back to work. How do you address that to homeschool moms for either feeling guilty for not going back to work, but then again they are spending the time with their child which is so valuable and something they'll never be able to regain, but how do you I guess comfort those moms and encourage them that they are doing the right thing for their child?

Marilyn: Oh yes. And that's a big issue especially in today's economy that they feel guilty especially like you said, if they've come from work. Motherhood is the most far reaching job I guess you could say that a woman will ever do. If God gifts her with children and her husband then the results of that job reach far past just the current and even past her own lifetime.

And I certainly, looking back now, see that so well having – my oldest grandson is 25 now and married a couple of years ago and they have their first child, so now I'm a great-grandmother. And you see those generations and you realize that what you did as a mother is affecting not just those children, not just your life presently, but your grandchildren and even into your great-grandchildren and on.

And so I think that getting the big picture is really important. It doesn't feel like it when you're, you know, when the toddler is sick or some disaster's happened at home and you're battling all of that. It's actually a lot harder to stay home with your children than it is to go off to a job because you go off, you do that, you come back home and you kind of forget about the job in a way.

So I think mothers need to be encouraged that what they're doing is so important. And I'm not going to bash schools, but I'm just going to say that homeschooling or private personal tutoring because you know your own children far, far exceeds the result, even when you feel inadequate and feel like that, you know, I don't know if I know what to do. And have I got the right curriculum?

And you know, you get all nervous about all these things. Believe me the right curriculum is not the key. It's your attention to your children, your discipling them and mothering them and teaching them that is the key, and so you'll get a break sometime when you're in the middle and up to your earlobes in alligators so to speak, but get a break, but keep going back to that big picture of what an important job you're doing that's lasting for generations.

And no matter how bad you think you're doing you're going to do far better than if you had sent them off to school.

Ashley: Perfect. Well, thank you. I agree with you. I think it's really neat to be able to watch kids grow up in different circumstances. I taught previously before my current job, but that was one of the biggest struggles is I wasn't able to give the child that one-on-one tutoring experience, but in homeschooling you are able to

give. And as a mom you know even better where your child is and how much you can actually impact their life.

Marilyn: You know, Ashley, it also involves trusting the Lord because if he has given you the calling to teach your children at home then he will also be the provision for everything you need. And that doesn't mean you can't earn money in some ways from home, but your central job is teaching your children and so when you're there and you know you're there because that's where the Lord has you, then a lot of it is just trusting him because he is going to provide. He did for us for years and always has, so he won't ever fail us.

Ashley: That's a really good way to look at too. That the Lord, you know, I think it's so easy to forget, you get so wrapped up and if the child is sick or if we're doing the right thing for homeschooling and you've just really got to rest in the fact that the Lord is in control and he will provide for us.

Marilyn: And he teaches us as parents too because I know I learned way more having my kids at home than I would have, and I don't mean academically either, although I learned in that area too. But way more of the things that the Lord wanted to teach me and mold me and mold us as a family through homeschooling.

Ashley: That's neat. How would you encourage people of all ages when they have kids in high school and junior high and elementary school and even the little ones, and you have such a wide variety, and then, like we were talking about earlier, trying to keep up with the house or if you're working at home doing that as well, how do you sort of balance it all and keeping the distinctions between each of the children and trying to spend time with each of them one-on-one. How do you find enough time in the day I guess is the question.

Marilyn: Well, it is the age old question here. But I think that first of all the biggest problem I see is too many moms are trying to replicate school in their home. So they have a whole set of books for this one and a whole other set of books for the next child and so on and so forth. As much as you can teach together with your children.

There are a lot of good programs that have been written. I won't recommend any certain one, but a lot of things that have been written specifically for homeschoolers that you can combine. Your whole family is learning together besides the fact that it's a lot more fun when everyone is learning something together. The older ones are doing things that are more difficult. And the younger ones are tagging along or doing things that are more simple.

After, you know, obviously you have to teach them each to read at some point in time, but I think we even rush that sometimes in homes because some kids are not ready. I have one son who did not read until he was nine years old. And I know in school he would have been labeled and yet that same son had 19 college credits

by the time he was 16 and he was accepted at a full four-year private college when he was 17. So he just wasn't ready.

So I think we panic too much, but every way that you can combine things with your children, you're all studying the same history things, or you're combining a lot of things. And then when you have little bit ones, the olders helping the younger or if you really need some concentrated time with one or two of your kids then carving out that time.

Teaching your children to be well behaved is the biggest thing in helping you get through your day because they need to understand that there are some times when they might need to play by themselves for a little while while you help another one. And the less chaos in your home the easier it is to pull that off as well. And that of course goes back to the discipline of your children, the proper discipline and encouragement.

But I think combining everything as much as possible is the biggest help. Don't try to have a zillion school books for every child. And don't feel like you have to teach every single subject all the time either. You can always get to things. You have plenty of time.

Another thing that helped me when I started homeschooling was I had a teacher friend who also was going to homeschool and I was just wringing my hands because I wasn't a teacher by profession and wringing my hands saying oh my goodness, you know how to do this. I don't know how to do it. She said "Oh my goodness. I'm having to unlearn everything I learned in school for being a teacher." She said "You have an advantage because it really is just tutoring."

And you need that patience and time with your child that a tutor would need and helping each child, but also teaching together. It's the old one-room schoolhouse idea. My goodness, teachers used to teach in a one-room schoolhouse with every age from all the way up and they did it fine. I think we could do it with our own children as well.

Ashley: All right. You make me laugh because my mom used to always say that she had to unlearn everything from her teaching days to be able to teach us at homeschool. So one of the questions that I'm asking all of our speakers is if you could start all over what is one thing that you would do differently? Or is there anything that you would do differently?

Marilyn: Oh yes! I don't know that you get, especially in the days we started because we didn't even have all the great curriculum and the things then. We had to kind of pull together everything we could get our hands on. And I find things all the time now that I say "Oh, I wish I had had that." But I think that the one thing I would do differently is I really understand that reading, and we read aloud as a family from when they were tiny until they went off to college, we always had a family

reading book. So I understood the importance of reading and giving them good books to read. The schools don't do that anymore. They don't give them good classic, good literature to read, not junk, but literature.

I thought I was giving them enough time to just read, but I was like nervous are we going to get everything. Are we going to cover everything, etc. and I see now that that was really unwarranted, so I would give even more time for them to read. And I don't mean as a school project necessarily, just to read, than we did even though I thought it was important. So reading, reading, reading, and writing, writing, writing I think are the two most important things to really help them whether they go to college or don't go or whatever else they're doing.

Ashley: Perfect. Now when you talk about reading just a little bit, did you assign them different books based upon their level, or did you just let them go to a library and pick out a few books that they wanted to read and then bring those home and read those?

Marilyn: Some of both. We actually started gathering, and we loved visiting used book stores and gathering all the good classics and ended up with by the time they left home probably a couple of thousand books of our own. So I often wanted them to choose things we had. We did go to the library, but I felt like I was buying some of the books that the library was tossing out because they were not keeping some of those really good books.

And looking, finding reading lists in things like the *Read Aloud Handbook* and a couple of those resources that list good books and making sure we either have those or got them at the library. And we did have some assignments. We did some things and then discussed the books, talked about them, especially as they got older. But I wish I had given them more time just to read additionally on their own than I did.

Ashley: Okay. Perfect. Well, do you have any other comments or points that you would like to leave our listeners right before we wrap up here?

Marilyn: Well, in my book, *Homeschooling at the Speed of Life*, I really try to encourage moms because I think that we come into homeschooling with a lot of preconceived ideas often that really aren't true and we have to kind of shed those ideas a little at a time. The Lord is capable to, if he's brought you to this, he is capable of giving you the ability to do it. You won't do it perfectly. I didn't and I don't know a single mom who has, but we need to keep our eyes on our own path instead of someone else's because I think we can get very discouraged if we're always trying to live up to what we think someone else wants of us.

So homeschooling is really not just this cookie cutter recipe that I'm going to do x, y and z and my kids are going to turn out like this and everything's going to be perfect. We're not perfect, our kids aren't, we're not super mom, and our kids

aren't, our husband's not, and I think that we just need as far as talking to moms, I just see the biggest need as just being able to let go, take one step at a time, see something that, you know, this isn't working so great. I have the freedom to change it and make that change based on your child and not based on what some school says you need to do or some person that says you need to do, but look at what your child needs and that's the whole reason we're doing this. Is to suit it to our individual children and just know that the one who is in you if you are a Christian is greater than the one who's in the world, so he gives you the strength to do exactly what you need to do if you just take a step at a time. And I think that's so important.

Ashley: Well, thank you. Before you wrap up I wanted to see if there was a way that our listeners could get back in contact with you or see more about the resources you offer?

Marilyn: Yes. I don't sell my book individually any longer, but I do if you go to my website, which is www.MarilynRockett.com there is a place that you can click there and if you go through my website I appreciate that because it takes you to Amazon and you can buy it there. I know other vendors do carry it, various vendors do carry it.

And I also encourage people to go to the Homeschooling Today, Homeschooltoday.com website because there are so many articles, they're going to be. We're going to have a brand new website in just another couple or maybe a little more weeks and we're going to have articles there. We have some now, but the old website's not working that great. But there are articles there to encourage you.

The magazine I've loved since long before I started working with the magazine and it's my way now to reach out to homeschool moms and continue to try to encourage them. But those are the two resources now and I encourage them just to read and look and take one step at a time.

Ashley: Perfect. Well, thank you so much for joining us today, Marilyn. I really appreciate it.

Marilyn: Oh, it's good to be with you.

[audio end]

