

## Homeschool Super Heroes

### Speakers:

Ashley  
Terri

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**Ashley:** Welcome to the Homeschool Super Heroes interview series. My name is Ashley Ortega and I'm glad that you joined us tonight. I can't wait to get started and introduce our guest. Just beforehand I want to go ahead though and give you the website, [Homeschoolsuperheroes.com](http://Homeschoolsuperheroes.com), that has all of our information about the different interviews going on, the schedules, and where you can download and listen to these amazing speakers.

For tonight I'm very excited to introduce Terri Camp. She entered the speaking arena in 1998, the first year her book was published. From the moment she took the microphone she knew that she could connect with the audience in a tangible way that would produce laughter as well as life-changing information.

She's trained with CLASS, which is Christian Leaders, Authors and Speaker Service and is also a member of Advanced Writers and Speakers Association. Audience members experience life transformation and Terri shares her information with her trademark humor and real life anecdotes. Terri speaks for corporate events, Christian women events as well as homeschooling venues.

Thank you so much for joining us, Terri, tonight.

**Terri:** Oh, I am so excited to be with you.

**Ashley:** Perfect. Well, why don't I just ask you to tell us a little bit about your family and how you homeschool.

**Terri:** Okay. Well, I homeschool a little differently than a lot of people do. First of all, I have eight children. Some of them are now grown and, you know, I get to be a grandma now. I still have six kids who live at home, but just realized today that only three of them are still homeschooling. So I had eight kids basically in 11 years.

So I was pretty busy when they were little, and you know, I know a lot of people wonder like how do you juggle all of that and what I found was the best way for me was not to school my kids. I just didn't like the idea plus it was so stressful to make everyone sit down for their 30 minutes of math and then almost like you get this idea that you have to ring the bell so that they move onto another topic

quickly. And I just found that if I allowed them to kind of flow that they learned so much more and they retained it.

So what my goal when they were young and still is is to give them just a love of learning and if they have that they'll be able to go wherever God takes them because they won't be stuck with just what some other person decided they should learn. So that's basically the nutshell version.

I wrote a book called *Ignite the FIRE*, which kind of explains all of this and I call FIRE Freedom Inspired Real Education. So I learned a lot from people like John Taylor Gatto and just a lot of research into what education really is rather than what schooling really is.

**Ashley:** Neat. So what would sort of I guess a typical homeschool day look like, or is there such a thing as a typical homeschool day when you're using this type of method?

**Terri:** Well, yeah and life is kind of changed in the last six years for me because now I'm a single mom and my kids are older, so a lot of it has changed. But when they were younger we had a routine. We didn't have like a set schedule, you know, at 10 o'clock this happens and then this happens, but we rather had a routine where we would get up in the morning, and the kids always knew what to expect. I think it's important for them to know what to expect rather than just be kind of fly by the seat of your pants, but give your kids some kind of routine. But it doesn't have to be minute-by-minute.

So a typical school day for us back then with all eight of them at home would have been for us to get up in the morning and we would have breakfast first and then some of the kids had horses, so they would go out and take care of all their horse chores and the dogs and, you know, doing all that. And then they would come in and we would have what we called JOYS, J-O-Y-S and that was Joyful Obedient Youthful Service. Other families call them chores. I don't really like the word, so I just switched it up and called them JOYS.

**Ashley:** I like that.

**Terri:** And yeah, and you know it's a lot nicer to hear kids go time to do JOYS. It just has a better ring to it for me. So they would do that for about 15 minutes. That would get everything cleaned up. Not spotless, but cleaned up. And then we would have our basic, you know, the three Rs in the morning. So I would work on different kids wherever they were and, you know, some kids might do better learning sitting on the couch. Some did better at the table. Things like that.

And we did a lot of games. There was one game that I loved doing with them called the floor game and that was where I had these big pieces of paper with like math facts on them because they have to learn their math facts no matter how you

homeschool them, they have to learn -- there are certain things that they have to know. But, you know, it can be fun. It doesn't have to be drudgery. So I would take these math facts and put them all around the floor like a board game, like in serpentine fashion. And then we had this big giant die that they would roll and that would tell them how many places they would move and they were actually the playing piece. So it was really a lot of fun and they got their math facts down really fast because they wanted to, you know, they wanted to win.

I remember one of the early games one of my kids at the end of it she just kept going. She was in last place and she just wanted to go until she finished and as soon as she finished she said "I've got to go learn my fours." And so she went off to learn her fours. But that's kind of how our mornings would go. We would do fun things. We would, you know, sometimes they would have to do some worksheets, but not a lot. I found that they really absorbed information more if they could recite it to me or, you know, different ways like that. So that's what we would do in the mornings.

And then we'd have lunch. And then in the afternoons we had a read aloud time and that read aloud time would encompass everything else like, you know, of course if we're doing literature there would be history involved, geography, and we just kind of flowed with as their questions would come. I was really wanting to raise inquisitive children, so I was willing to stop. Or a lot of times I would also have to sit a notebook next to me or I'd have one of the kids write down the question if someone had a question so we could come back to it because, you know, if you have one of those why kids who's always asking why you're never going to get to read the book.

**Ashley:** Right.

**Terri:** You know, sometimes if we have some of those days it was like okay write down that question so we can address it later. And we did things like *Mystery of History* was one of our favorite read alouds. I read it aloud and then we did projects that went along with it. And that would take the rest of the afternoon and then the kids would get to play outside.

We did a lot of reading in the early days and now almost all of my kids love reading. Now notice I said almost. I don't know what happened to one of them. It's okay, so the rest of them love reading and that particular child, who I of course not going to name, just really doesn't like it that much. But she likes a lot of other things, so she does reading for the things she likes, but she doesn't want to read fiction. She'll read non-fiction. So it's kind of interesting to me that even though you're raising them all the same way you'll have some that are just going to be different.

**Ashley:** Right. Right. So when you did the read aloud times was it something that you did together as a family or would they take their own books and go read by themselves and then come back and discuss them or how did that sort of look?

**Terri:** No, it was as a whole family. All of the kids were there, whether they were one or 12 or 15. All of the kids would gather for read aloud time and I had one way to help with younger kids. I know this is a big question people have. One of the things I did was I had different tubs that I would bring out during read aloud time and they would get to play quietly with that thing, so I didn't make them just sit. They got to do things.

One of the things they did, this was really, really a cool thing. We created timeline notebooks with three-ring binders and they had like these, it was a timeline and we picked up used Encyclopedias from like the library or garage sales, things like that, really cheap. I mean like most of the time they'd just give them to us.

I called the library once and said I'm a homeschool family in the area and we need some encyclopedias. Do you have any left? Or do you have any that aren't being used or that you're going to get rid of? And she's like "Absolutely. Come get them." Well, I didn't tell her we were going to cut them up because she might not have given them to me. But they would have just thrown them away probably.

So I would pick out encyclopedias and books that had great pictures of historical things and the kids would cut those out while we would be reading aloud. Sometimes I'd tell them "Okay. I want you to find some characters from the late 1700s." So they would have a focus as they're looking and listening. They all learned how to listen really well while doing something else. In fact, a lot of them could listen better if they were doing something with their hands. So that just worked really super well for us.

**Ashley:** Good. That's awesome. Let me ask you sort of going back to a point that you made earlier that you are a single mom. Was there ever a question about homeschooling after you became a single mom? And how did you sort of handle that transition I guess.

**Terri:** You know, that is such a super good question and I'll tell you sometimes the answer depended on the day. Sometimes it was really hard, but I was so committed and I knew that I had already given my kids a love of learning. They had that as a foundation so no matter what I did from that place they had that and I didn't want them to lose it. So that was another focus for me was whatever I do in their life they're to keep that love of learning and not lose it.

And for me I felt like putting them in a public school setting not only were their whole lives disrupted already then I was going to throw them into something they

had not had experience with. So I didn't. I was not willing to do that. But I had to make a living, so the first year we actually moved from Iowa to Texas and moved a big country house with six bedrooms and horses and everything to an apartment in Texas. It was a little bit of a culture shock.

**Ashley:** I can imagine.

**Terri:** You know, their lives were just different. It became different for them. But I had found a job as a store manager of a homeschool book store. But the only reason I was able to homeschool still was that my 18 year old at the time had just graduated from high school and she said "Mom, the kids have always been homeschooled. I know how to do it. Let me stay home and homeschool them."

So she willingly put her, you know, basically put her life on hold to stay home with the kids and there was also a 16 year old right behind her. So they learned how to homeschool differently. They started team schooling and so even now that has carried through John who's one of my older kids that was one of the little kids but now he's older. He actually helps his brother, Brian, who's about oh, I don't even know how much younger he is than him, five years. So he actually helped him when I had to go to work.

And then I was also trying to make money at home doing some multi-level marketing programs. So I was honestly, I was so exhausted, I could hardly think some nights. And I would be in the living room where that was my bedroom, but I would be in the living room and I could hear John reading *Pilgrim's Progress* to his brother. And to me that was so -- that was just so amazing.

So they started doing team schooling where they kind of held each other accountable, which is a great skill for when you get out into the workplace or if you're going to have your own business. It's just a great skill to have to be able to find someone who can be an accountability partner for you.

So a couple of my girls team up, a couple of the boys team up, and that's been really, really helpful.

**Ashley:** That's really neat. I really like that idea. Me and my sister are a little bit closer in age and so it would probably have caused arguments between the two of us if one of us hadn't necessarily taken over, but at the same time we were able to work a lot together to be able to grow each other while we were learning, which was really neat to be able to see the siblings sort of coming together and take charge and take charge of their learning.

**Terri:** Well, you know my kids were all perfect, so I didn't have any problems. You know I'm kidding, right?

**Ashley:** Yes. I guess that was going to be one of the other questions is just how did team schooling is I think probably part of the answer to this question, but how do you stay focused and sort of keep on track even when new little ones make their appearance or when, you know, tough things in life happen. How do you stay focused both as a teacher and a mom and you're trying to be it all at one time?

**Terri:** That, again, gosh you ask such amazing questions. It's so good. The focus went off of like book learning. But they never really grew up with that book learning, it was always about trying to learn more. So each child just had that in them to want to learn more.

But, you know, I think that we get so uptight when something happens, and I'll tell you, I don't know a family that hasn't had something happen while they were schooling their kids, whether it's a new baby or, you know, a grandparent that comes to live with them because they're ill. That takes a lot of mom's focus. Or the marriage is struggling, or you know, thin, plain and simple. Thin comes into play too and I think that we fail sometimes to see that those are huge learning times for our kids. They may not be pulling out the books every day, but if we are focused on them learning they're going to be learning.

Let me, well, can I share a story real quick?

**Ashley:** Yeah, go for it.

**Terri:** This was shortly after we had, I'll just call it before married and after married, and it was in the middle of that. That was a hard time, you know, it's a really difficult time. And I was reading, I was still reading aloud to the kids and we're reading a story in *Mystery of History* about Paul Journeys and one of my kids said "Mom. God is telling us that we still have to go to Rome and we are not to give up hope."

And that was, you know, that wasn't something I could have taught her. That was something that she learned from living through what we were going through and that they had such a personal relationship with God themselves that they were going to Him and seeking His wisdom. And that they felt comfortable to share that. And all of the kids, I think this was about the time we decided to move to Texas and we just started talking about what does that mean when we feel that God is speaking to us through his word.

You know, He wasn't saying you're going to go to Rome, but He was saying this may be a shipwreck, but you're not done. And you know, so I think even those difficult times our kids can learn so much and sometimes that's what the focus has to be on is surviving and teaching them how to survive. They're all going to have hard times growing up. You know, no one says it's going to be just a smooth road and I think we can teach them so much during those hard times by engaging them.

**Ashley:** Perfect. No, I think that's really good. I really just being able to engage them and just to see God working in their lives at such a young age to be able to bring about His desire and that's the desire that we all want. I'm not a mom yet, but just in my life and hopefully eventually in my children's lives, that is to be able to grow that passion and love for the Lord and that's what the purpose of it all is.

**Terri:** Absolutely.

**Ashley:** So it's neat. I think it helps us focus at the same time that that's our focus to be is on God. And the schooling we need it's not to put it aside but at the same time it's secondary to the focus that we should have on God.

**Terri:** Right. And it's really more their education and that all plays a role. You know, I would challenge any mom to look up what education really is, to read some of what John Taylor Gatto talks about as education. And I'm sure a lot of people know who he is, but he was the New York State Teacher of the Year one year and then he resigned because he said he couldn't harm children any more. And that made me think "Okay. We all have this mindset of what school is supposed to look like. Are we harming our children?"

And so I had to really take a deep look at what I believed education was for my kids and, you know, it can be fun and they can learn so much. It may not look like what we think it's supposed to look like, but you know, I have my oldest daughter loved horses, so almost everything we did with her was related to horses. She did a lot of science related to horses. Biology of the horse, things like that.

She's now 25 and she owns six Arabians, has a nine acre piece of property with her Arabians and her house and everything and, you know, I just don't think she could have gotten that if I had had a school mentality with her, but it was more developing of business. She learned skills. She was making 40 loaves of bread every week so she learned skills of bookkeeping and just all these things I can't even begin to tell you how many things she learned just from that.

And, you know, if I were too busy schooling her we would have missed her passion I think. I mean it may have been there, but for me I want to -- my goal is to fuel the passion that is already in my child because they're all so unique. And I can't look at one of them and go, you know what, I don't really like that so we're not going to study that subject. I've been tempted. I'll tell you, I've been tempted.

But the other thing we can do as parents is we can be lifelong learners. I meet a lot of homeschool moms and that seems to be almost a common thread for them is that they're learners themselves and so if we can show them our excitement when we learn something new, you know, I'm always going to the kids and saying "Wow. I learned this new cool thing today." Or I might go to them and say "Oh, I have this idea. What do you think?" And get input from them because they're

all so different. It's like I have this whole almost like a board room of amazing people that I can bounce off ideas and brainstorm.

When we're looking at schooling our kids we often miss brainstorming as being something so valuable. You can't see it on paper. You can't see, you know, those are conversations that happen in the air that do more in their brains I believe than filling out a worksheet where they have to find the apple that goes to the other apples.

When they hear us brainstorming and talking about just so many things it fuels them too and I just love it. I love seeing how my kids are growing and how they're becoming adults and just how amazing it is. And you can see something that was sparked when they were six has woven its way all through until they're 22 years old and they're still enjoying that thing that they learned about.

**Ashley:** That's really neat. I mean I remember too like growing up I think one thing that you're sort of hitting on is that you get in this mindset that it's got to be at this time and this way and you've got to have it exactly lined out, but I don't remember several whether it was a dinner discussion or just the middle of the afternoon and we'd get talking about business or a passion or something and that's where learning took place. It wasn't always in the morning or in the afternoon at a set time and schedule. And so I think you've got to keep that in perspective at the same time.

**Terri:** I bet you even had maybe 2 a.m. conversations with your parents.

**Ashley:** Oh yes, we did.

**Terri:** It doesn't shut off.

**Ashley:** Yeah, I remember you were talking about finding the passion. My brother was very much into sports, or well, still is into sports. And one year he went on this baseball craze and I think everything my mom did with us had to do -- or with him, had to do with baseball, whether it was math or reading or history or learning or whatever he was able to really study what his passion was at that moment in time.

**Terri:** I love that. I so love that. And it's not that hard. It doesn't take that much more time. You know, yeah it's easier to get a box of curriculum that says this is sixth grade and just give it to our kids, but it's a whole lot more rewarding when we see their eyes light up and when we, you know, and they're talking to us and they're so excited about, you know, Africa. And they want that.

One of the things we used to do was we'd have like a family project night where like if we were studying a certain, like we were studying South America once and we decided to invite people over for our project night and each kid came up with a

new project within their country and that was so amazing. They learned so much that you know like one of them created a board game of trivia facts about Ecuador. And another one did like a relief map of Argentina, or well, probably not Argentina, but anyway, and we served food and, you know, it was just the neatest thing.

And those are the things that memories are created. The memories aren't from sitting down and doing the math worksheet. And I'm sorry I keep kind of hammering that, but it's the thing we default to because it's the thing we know. We, you know, in fact my kids knew that it wasn't school until they did their math. I mean that was just how we thought like oh, I didn't do school today because I didn't do math, even though they may have done a ton of other things that was like the listless test of if we had school or not. So I kind of got that out of the way first. So okay, let's do some math.

Anyway, so it's that joy that we see in them that is so amazing to me.

**Ashley:** Yeah. Let me ask you if you could start all over again what is something that you would do differently, or is there anything that you would do differently?

**Terri:** Wow. You know what? I just don't think so because I like they grew up. You know what? I like what they've become. I like how they love learning. I maybe would have bought more books, although I have a ton. So wow, that is, you know, when I get off the phone here I'm going to probably go in and try to figure out okay, what would I have done differently? But I don't know. You know, I just like the way we did it. I felt comfortable.

And I'll tell you the best thing to me was during this crisis that we are having someone came up to me and she said "Your kids have become more cohesive during this than less cohesive." And to me that said I'm doing something right because they're coming together and they're bonding even more so and, you know what, it's in the crisis times that you see the true character. I don't know that I would have known that this particular child would have been willing to sacrifice two years of her life to be home with her kids. That's a huge thing.

I don't know that the older son would have been reading to the younger boy if that hadn't happened. I don't know that he would have helped him with his math. You know what? I just don't know, but it's so neat to see that when, you know, we just did so much together. All of the education was done together and, you know, I know some people would go "I know my kids would never be together." Well, yeah, that's a hard thing to work on. Sometimes character is the only education they get for a few weeks. And I know that happened a lot that we were like okay, we're on a character break. Let me get versed on that.

**Ashley:** I guess one other question that I would have for you is I know some of your books and some of your materials talk about sort of becoming a cheer leader as a mom

and being able to be that mom that one is respected among all moms and among her children in that, but also being able to cheer herself on through it all. Do you have any suggestions for moms out there to be able to keep that in focus instead of getting bogged down in everything else that's going on at the time?

**Terri:** Yes. It's one word. It's relax. You get so stressed out over everything and, you know, we just -- we're caregivers. That's what we do. And, you know, I've even read books that were like well, you need to not think about yourself. You need to just lay it all down.

Well, I'll tell you if I don't have a nice hot bath every once in a while I can be grumpy and my kids don't need that. They need me to be happy. They need me to be energetic. They need me to be joyful, which is different than happy. They need me to be the best mom I can be and sometimes that means I have to go out for dinner by myself. Or it might mean that I get a bath break without little fingers under the door. Or, you know, things like that. And for all of us it's different.

I came up with this little thing called an itty bitty pity party and I actually have the plans to it on my Terricamp.com website, and it's actually purposeful pity partying, but it only gets to last for 10 minutes. So it's this real -- because if we start getting like kind of feeling negative, kind of feeling down, and we just let all of that stuff keep piling on us and we never release it. So this is like permission to release, but it's so purposeful that at the end you leave your room and you are like rejoicing that life is good because you start focusing. You go from okay these are the things that really stink, to these are my blessings. And you can't be miserable when you're focused on your blessings. You just can't. It's I don't even think it's possible.

So anyway, it's just a little plan that I do and for every mom it's different. Our thing is just different. But be willing to give that to yourself. I know one mom who would keep like a little thing of Hershey's chocolate candy bars, like the little tiny ones, in a drawer in her desk and no one knew they were there. They probably did, but you know, we all pretended like no one else knew and that was her thing. She would just go in and she would just breathe in, breathe out, you'll get this later when you have kids. And she just indulged herself in the chocolate and that was enough, you know. But if you let it build and build and build on you then it's not enough and you have to do all these like you go crazy and we don't want any crazy moms, so just do those little things daily that rejuvenate you.

I mean obviously, it goes without saying a quiet time in the morning, or wherever you can do it. For me it's during my bath time. I multitask. I have bath and God and we spend time together. And you know, that restores me. It cleanses me inside and outside and all in one swell swoop. But I think we need to be purposeful in doing those things that pick us up that are enjoyable, you know. As long as, well, you know, it goes without saying that you're not going to do

something that takes you from your family all the time. You need to just do because you still have to focus on your family. If your family falls apart, there's hardly anything you're going to be able to do to keep yourself up. So it's a balance, but I don't even think I needed to say that because we're homeschool moms and homeschool moms are, you know, we're already sacrificing for our families. That's what we do and just to give yourself a treat now and then to pick yourself up.

Of course you can always follow me on Facebook and if you're feeling a little down just say Terri, help me!

**Ashley:** Perfect. Well, if our listeners want to get back in contact with you or see more about your resources that you offer where can they go to get this information?

**Terri:** You know, Facebook is really my favorite connecting place. I love to connect with moms. I love ministering to them. I love being ministered by them. So Facebook.com/TerriCamp is really the best way to connect with me and that's just T-E-R-R-I-C-A-M-P. Of course I have Terricamp.com and then I have excerpts of my book and some of the different games that we would play on Homeschool.Terricamp.com, so that's a good resource if someone's just looking for something like they feel like, you know, things are kind of a little drudgery happening. They can go there and just pull out an idea and just do something different with their kids. It's amazing what it does to just have a game day or something like that.

So those are really the best ways to get me. And like I said, Facebook is my favorite way to connect and I just friend everybody.

**Ashley:** Perfect. Well, also all these, just for our listeners, all these resources or links will be on our download page so when they can go back to that page and access these. And I want to thank you for your time, Terri, tonight. I really appreciate it.

**Terri:** Oh, thank you! I am the one who should be thanking you. This was great. And I am really looking forward to listening to all the interviews that you're doing.

**Ashley:** Perfect.

**Terri:** I just love what you guys do.

**Ashley:** Well, thank you so much. And I don't want to keep you too long from your family, so I hope that ya'll have a great evening and we can't wait to take a look at these resources and be able to stay in contact with you.

**Terri:** Well, thank you, Ashley. You have a great night.

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