Answering Homeschool Questions with J. J. Seid

Episode 181

Rachel Winchester [00:00:02]:
One of the benefits of attending a Homeschool Made simple seminar is that you get to hear a panel discussion at the end of the day. Seasoned parents join our team to answer questions submitted by everyone in attendance. Today we're sharing a few of those questions and answers with you. You're listening to the Homeschool Made simple podcast. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively and enjoyably. Carol Joy side has been helping families homeschool for several decades now through her literature based approach to education. And JJ Side is a pastor and now, along with his wife, homeschools his own four children. In this episode from the archives, Carol and JJ answer questions about motivating kids to work, cheerfully testing for progress and knowing if this method is right for your family.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:47]:
Listen in.

JJ Seid [00:00:49]:
So some questions around our philosophy. Is this approach possible for a single mom or other non traditional family structures? And this is a question that we field oftentimes in person, talking to single moms at the at the close of a seminar.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:02]:
Yeah.

JJ Seid [00:01:03]:
And of course the short answer is, unfortunately, it depends. So much may depend on your vocation and career, whether or not you're allowed to work from home, what your financial resources are, the age of your children, how many children you have. Do you have one child or six children? What kind of family and community support do you have from grandparents or siblings or cousins or local church members? All those things can factor into how realistic or unrealistic it is to homeschool for your family and in your season of life.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:37]:
And jj, you and I were talking about this during our break and I just want to clarify something. I am booked so solid for consulting, so I'm not, we're not trying to advertise consulting. J.J. just felt like at the end of the day, you probably need that personal thing. But I said, honey, don't sell consulting because we're so booked. But he was trying to be helpful to you. But in the same way I would say with this question, this might really be a consulting question because it's such a specific thing. Just as he's saying that there is no one size fits all to this.

JJ Seid [00:02:12]:
Answer, another question came in. Do you have any tips on how to encourage work with children who complain? I have some initial thoughts. And this is something you've spoken on for many years. So we want to give our kids a theology of work, that work existed before the fall. Work comes with thorns and entropy. You fix something and then it breaks again. And there's frustration in our work, there's futility in our Work, but work itself is not evil. If we were restored to the pre fall condition, there would not be an absence of work, but there would be an absence of frustration in our work.

JJ Seid [00:02:48]:
So we can both dignify work for our kids and also empathize with the frustration that they feel in their work. Another thing I would say is we often make the mistake of sending our kids off to work when what they really want to do is be invited in rather than sent away.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:05]:
So good.

JJ Seid [00:03:06]:
So we want to work with more than having them work for us. We want them to work with us. And that makes such a difference. I think every parent, when we picture the overlapping Venn diagram of communication and discipline as we parent. So some of us are much quicker to communicate and communicate well. Some of us are much quicker to discipline. All of us are probably weaker in one of those two categories. Both are necessary to parent kids through their resistance to work, discipline and communication.

JJ Seid [00:03:38]:
So it's good for us to stop and ask, which of those two do I probably need to lean into more? Maybe I've been communicating really well, but my child needs to experience discipline and consequences when they fail to obey. Maybe I've been quick to

discipline, but I haven't done a good job of casting vision for working with me as their parent.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:56]:
And can I add the third factor? Make it fun whenever you can.

JJ Seid [00:04:02]:
That's good. That's good. There's a book on parenting I like to recommend called Childproof by Julie Lowe. She's a gifted therapist, biblical counselor, Little B, Little C works for CCF Christian Counseling and Education foundation, and she's particularly gifted in working with children. Her book Childproof is so great. The subtitle is Parenting by Faith, not Formula. And so she talks about dwelling with your kids according to knowledge, refraining from anger and being really wise. And Paul Tripp's book Parenting is really, really Good.

JJ Seid [00:04:35]:
And his brother's book, Shepherding a Child's Heart can be helpful as well. But I really like Julie Lowe's book. Here's a question of someone who's sort of wrestling with everything they heard today that you heard our passion come through as we taught that you hear the passion of people who embrace this method on the podcast. But this person is wondering if there is a percentage of people who don't like this method after they try and switch away from it, or if there are components that not everybody likes. Can we describe some areas where homeschool families struggle using this method? What struggles might we expect to face? I thought of a quote from Nietzsche. Nietzsche Famously said, if you know the why, you can live anyhow. If you know the why, you can live anyhow. So we're not trying to be rah rah or pretend like everything is going to be roses and rainbows if you do this method.

JJ Seid [00:05:29]:
I think we want to cast a vision during the seminar for the purpose behind what we do precisely because it is hard and requires sacrifice. Many aspects of this method are hard. Parenting is hard. Marriage is hard. Balancing your family's budget is hard if you give up an income in order to homeschool. But my friends who've embraced totally different educational approaches are facing a different kind of hard. Getting a teacher to understand the unique needs of their child, wrestling with bullying in a classroom. So everybody's got hard as a parent and it's just a question of what kind of hard and if your convictions lie upstream from the challenges you face.

JJ Seid [00:06:13]:

In other words, I sort of know the challenges are going to come. With my model. We have less money for groceries because we're a one income family. But that was a decision we made on purpose. And so when those challenges come and we're having to be really careful with our grocery spending, we're hopefully not feeling as much self pity because we've decided to invest our money, metaphorically speaking, other places, we've decided that our convictions lie upstream of our challenges. And so we're not shocked by the challenge of having a little bit less money at the end of the month because we've chosen to give Kristen the opportunity to stay home with the kids. So, yeah, there are challenges in this model, but hopefully they're ones that we embrace. Self conscious.

JJ Seid [00:06:55]:
I think I would say, you know, as you've listened to what you've heard today, part of my answer would be a question back to you. You know, you tell me based on what you've heard, what do you think? Does this sound worth it? Are you hooked? Does the juice sound like it's worth the squeeze? Then maybe it's for you. If not, maybe not. I think a lot of times people, if they've sat through what, what we've talked about today, they start to get a pretty good picture if it's something they want to sign up for or if they would rather embrace different challenges.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:24]:
I was just going to add, jj, that I would say the, the life model of this ministry is Jesus's comforting words to us, that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. And as our pastor Chuck Smith taught us, if you're carrying a heavy burden, take it off. Because he didn't put it there. And so my mission statement as a homeschool mentor is to take the heavy backpack that so many homeschool families are carrying off of them. They're carrying expensive backpacks, which are very heavy burdens as well in terms of time and effort and model. 35 years, I've not had one family say to me what you taught us was wrong. We regret what you taught us, not one family, because this isn't original to me. So I take no credit for it.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:18]:
This is as old as time. And Dr. Raymond Moore and Dorothy taught me everything I know. But what we're teaching you is basically to just read out loud to your kids and put them to hard manual labor and do math, you know, and so it's just so simple. It's inexpensive, it's low stress, it will work whether you're sick, whether, you know, I mean, families go through crises. They're like, my mother was dying, she was living with us, but we were able to read. We just kept reading. We sit around grandma's bed and we would just still like, this is a method that is easy as it could be.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:54]:
I just don't hear any complaints.

JJ Seid [00:08:55]:
Well, I like everything you just said. And I think maybe a final thing I would add to that question before we move on is you and I have talked about how easy it would be for you and I to become busy bodies, to be overly prescriptive about exactly what people can read or do or not do and sort of position ourselves as a sage on the stage, dispensing granular advice about every aspect of this method. And so part of the beauty of this method is it comprises many methods. It's encouraging parents to exercise discernment and to follow their own passions and talents. And we've given some really simple principles. You know, don't leave your kids alone with screens, read books. And. And those are things that people can apply in 10,000 ways.

JJ Seid [00:09:37]:
And so that is maybe why we often sound so happy and enthusiastic, is we're not trying to put people in a corner, but we're trying to give them permission to pay attention to their own instincts, follow their own conscience, and do what God's calling them to do with their kids. And the beauty of that is people come up with all sorts of fascinating ways to apply these principles that we could have never predicted.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:00]:
It's true. So it's not a one size fits all. It's a custom made suit. And you, you are the boss. Dr. Moore would say. You're the experts. No one knows your children better than you do.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:12]:
No one loves them more than you do. So make this what works for your family and not worry about what the neighbor's doing or the lady at church who's opinionated.

JJ Seid [00:10:22]:
Yeah, it's just human nature. You know, God will give us particular conviction in a particular season to do a particular thing, and then we try to tell everyone else they ought to do it as well.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:31]:
That's right.

JJ Seid [00:10:31]:

And because we're Pharisees. Yeah, there's a big difference between those two things. So we want to empower you to pray and exercise discernment, and that's a really fun process. At the end of the day, another person asked, I'm feeling a disconnect between unit study theory and knowing how to test for progress and issue grades and reports. So, yes, we would probably say you're right. You're sensing that those are two very different ways to go about educating your kids. Are they mutually exclusive? In a sense, yeah. All the success stories we share today, and we shared a lot of really encouraging success stories, those were not brought to completion by constant temperature taking by means of tests and grades, pulling the bread out of the oven constantly to see if it's baking.

JJ Seid [00:11:14]:
And I think what keeps our kids on course is in a sense, much harder and another sets sense much easier than you might think. You don't have to constantly test and grade, which is in a way easier. In another sense, you have to pay really close attention to your kids. You have to be curious, listen attentive, be present, prayerful, discern where your kid is stuck and they need more structure, where they need more freedom. And in a way, you can't outsource that. So it's kind of like open your eyes, pay close attention, pray a lot, be curious, ask good questions, and it'll often lead to really thoughtful interventions for each child.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:52]:
I'm also curious, JG by their last. By their question whether in an umbrella school that is requiring all those things, and if so, I would say maybe if. If you're feeling it's a little that you're in a constraining under an authority that feels constraining to you. There are so many umbrella programs with different philosophies. It might be a time to look for a freer. You're not under such a legalistic, controlled thing. And nothing against those programs. They're just assuming that you're having school at home.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:29]:
And Dr. Moore would stand on the hilltop and say the worst thing you can do is have home. Homeschooling is the complete opposite of that. But if they're giving you a school model and just think you're doing it at your dining room table, like you do it in a classroom, I could understand what they're asking of you. But that's not what we recommend.

JJ Seid [00:12:50]:
Sometimes those schools can provide more requirements than even that state legally requires.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:55]:
That's right. Yeah, that's exactly right.

JJ Seid [00:12:57]:
Yeah. Another person is asked, pivoting now, to questions about reading. If a child learns to read and then becomes uninterested in read alouds, how can I revive that enthusiasm for being read to, even though they love to read for themselves? And we maybe guess what might be going on. And of course, we could be way off base, but that could be quite normal, especially if a child is eager to read at the speed of reading to themselves instead of the speed of being read to. So it might be something as simple as that, that what you're doing is working and they want to rip through books and.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:32]:
And they will come back. This is temporary. I've never met an adult that wouldn't give you anything if you read out loud to them. So it's. It may just be temporary. But JJ himself was such a fast reader, eventually he started out very slowly reading like we taught him to read, I think at seven and a half. But he didn't really read for pleasure. I'd say at least nine.

JJ Seid [00:13:54]:
Wow.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:55]:
So. But once he started to read for pleasure, then he was like, because when you're older, you don't go through all those baby steps. You know, Once he really started to read, he just took off and was just reading like a maniac. And as a result, he was impatient with being read to. So if there were a few years there that he'd be like, can I just read it to myself? And I was so upset. But that didn't last.

JJ Seid [00:14:19]:
Yeah, that happened with our 14 year old. She would have been viewed as a delayed reader because of when she finally read. But then she hit the ground running and I think I had been reading Tolkien aloud to her and she basically took the book and said, I'll finish that. So, yeah, it is interesting.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:33]:
And she's read it three times through all of the Tolkien books.

JJ Seid [00:14:36]:

Yeah. What are some practical ways you manage your children's time or your family's time to protect time to read? What are some examples of things you would choose not to do in order to simplify and guard that time? What would you say?

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:50]:
I think children need times of silence and solitude and we need to create that for them. They're not capable of doing that themselves. So in my model, I tell parents to let their kids read in bed when they wake up in the morning. Then they get an hour after lunch of feet off the ground time. In my method, we didn't talk about that in this seminar or. But we do in the other one, where they can pray, sleep, read, or think. So you're creating the spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude, which, when you study the history of the church, were absolutely foundational to the church. But in America today, we have utterly lost contact with those two spiritual disciplines.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:31]:
So teaching kids to love being alone, to love silence, because, as C.S. lewis said, a literary man is constantly looking for silence and solitude. They just are. Because I cannot read when there's noise, even the slightest noise, I cannot. It just. Oh, you know, a clock that's ticking too loudly or chiming or whatever it is. It's just we have to create those spaces. And then, of course, daddy reading at night.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:00]:
But then before they go to bed, once they're old enough, they're given a limited amount of time. You can read to yourself for half an hour or 45 minutes. So you've created three big blocks of time in your child's day that they can read or do nothing else. So you know they're going to read. You know, if you say you can pray, sleep, read, or think, well, of course they're going to read. But I want them to think they've chosen to read, not that they're being forced to read.

JJ Seid [00:16:25]:
Yeah, that's good. The question asker talked about managing your children's time or your family's time. And that's a good reminder that we make choices about how many sports our kids are in, as was already mentioned, how many side hustles you're going to try to pull off, how much money you're going to try to make, how expensive of a car payment you're going to commit to, whether or not you're gonna say yes to chairing that committee. So, you know, I have so many people in my orbit that seem to say yes first and then experience regret later. So I think it's good for us as couples, as families, to ask, what do we want to protect? And then what are we willing to say yes to? If we want to be missionaries in our neighborhood, then we want to be around for our neighbors. If we want to have time to read at night, then that probably means we have

to say no to X, Y, or Z. That would keep us out late many evenings. So a lot of this is reverse engineering our life from the things that we want to say we did with our kids when they leave the house, to what we say yes and no to as as parents.

JJ Seid [00:17:25]:
Another person asked a great question. Our house is full of all types of books. Good for you. That's great. We love that. Does it bother you if my 8 year old son only wants to read things like Narnia and the Hobbit or else about war, World War I, 2, Civil War, et cetera. He's almost become obsessed with those things and has a meltdown if I try to steer him toward other subjects. Do we need to manage our child's interests if they seem a little off or extreme to us? I think that sounds pretty normal for a boy.

JJ Seid [00:17:51]:
It sounds like you're doing great. It sounds like he has specific tastes, which is typical, and he's probably very bright, which means that he has even more specific tastes and opinions.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:01]:
But the really fun thing is it won't last in a year. He'll be obsessed with something else. And then you can always introduce. I mean, you can be parental, you can say you can read three of your books and then you're going to read one of mama's books and one of Daddy. Like daddy has a book he wants, wants you to read. Mommy what? You know, so who's running the asylum? I mean, you have authority, but I love that he's interested and passionate and of course he's reading Tolkien and who else was it? Lewis? Well, yeah, talk about the gold standard.

JJ Seid [00:18:31]:
That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:31]:
So, I mean, gee, this is not something I'm going to worry about at night. Yeah, that's wonderful. It's great.

JJ Seid [00:18:38]:
This is a great question. I love the focus on classics, but one question is, how do we help our children understand viewpoints from people from different ethnicities who could not write or be published hundreds of years ago? I think this takes thoughtfulness and work and I think homeschooling is uniquely suited to doing this. When I think back to my childhood, I was reading books from around the world. I was reading books from minority voices. I was reading books that a lot of my friends had

never even heard of. It's much easier in the library these days, even at the picture book stage, to find books about Harriet Tubman or to find books about fairy tales from minority cultures. You can exercising discernment, you can expose your kids to all sorts of wonderful things from all over the world. It's as easy as browsing with intentionality in your library and then talking to friends and Learning.

JJ Seid [00:19:29]:
I'll give you one small example. For instance, reading books by African Americans or about African Americans who, to at least zoom in on our own nation's history, did not have the freedom to write or publish. So, for example, narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave by Frederick Douglass.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:47]:
Yeah.

JJ Seid [00:19:48]:
The Negro, His Rights and Wrongs, the Forces for him and against him by Francis Grimke, an evangelical preacher. There's a seminary now named after Francis Grimke. The Warmth of Other Sons, the Epic Story of America's Great Migration by Isabel Wilkerson. Talking about the early 20th century. Phyllis Wheatley, the first African American female poet. First African American American poet to be published and a devout Christian. I met a professor at Southern Seminary who was writing his doctoral dissertation on her and her poetry. You can pick up her complete works in a Penguin edition, and multiple scholarly biographies have been written about her now as well.

JJ Seid [00:20:26]:
So even just a little bit of digging in that one area and you can multiply that by a thousand. The Southeast Asian cultures and global cultures, and it's a blast. I mean, this is the fun of homeschooling.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:38]:
Okay, so I've got the gold standard right here.

JJ Seid [00:20:41]:
Oh, I don't know about this book.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:41]:
Yeah, yeah, yeah. Chelsea turned me on to this book and we did a podcast about it. One of my board members has an adopted son from Africa, special needs child that's the most adorable little boy in the world. And she turned me on to this book. It's called

Give youe Child the World Raising Globally Minded Kids One Book at a Time. And it's a believer who wrote the book. She lives. Let's see, she lives a life at home every day with four countries.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:10]:
England, India, Liberia, and the usa because she has adopted children. Representatives represented under her roof. And she has several adopted, several biological. Yeah. And her husband's from Britain, so she's got the whole thing going on here. Anyway, this is a great resource. Give your child the world.

JJ Seid [00:21:29]:
That looks fantastic. I can't wait to look at that.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:31]:
Yeah, yeah, it's wonderful. And even on my list, I just have to say that Chelsea and I sat down and looked at my Lover of Books list, which is on the other seminar. And. And fully half of the books were set around the world. Different ethnicities, different races. And we didn't do that when I wrote the list. I just wrote the books that your children have to read. I just made it really simple.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:56]:
And half of them happen to be pertinent to that. But instead of, like, being all we've got to read da da da da da. If we read great books, these things are just part of it, you know, like Up From Slavery by Booker T. Like things that are on my list that are just that. So many of the children's picture books are in China, Japan, they're in Africa. They're, you know, it's just great books take place all sorts of places, and as we're reading them, we're making friends with people from other cultures, other ethnicities. It just comes with reading great literature.

JJ Seid [00:22:33]:
Yeah. Multiculturalism has come to your public library in many, many really good ways. And so it's not difficult. You don't have to spend a dollar. You just exercise discernment and you look through the books and you can bring home books that will expose your children to all sorts of fascinating and stimulating cultures.

Rachel Winchester [00:22:48]:
You've been listening to the Homeschool Made simple podcast. If you like what you heard in this episode, please leave a rating and review on Apple Podcast or Spotify or share this episode with a friend. It means so much when you help us spread the message of Homeschool Made simple with others. Thanks for joining us this week on

the Homeschool Made simple podcast. Remember, Jesus commandments are not burdensome. What he calls you to do, he will enable you to do. Blessings.