

Embrace the Strengths of Homeschooling Wherever You Are

Episode 229

Rachel Winchester [00:00:01]:

From the beginning of the modern homeschool movement, Doctor. Raymond Moore warned families to be careful not to do school at home. Homeschooling is something altogether different. The freedom we have in teaching our kids at home can sometimes make us feel uncomfortable, but it is really one of our greatest strengths.

In this episode, we are back to finish our conversation about being bored with education. If you missed part 1, be sure to go back and listen to episode 228.

You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably.

Carole Joy Seid has been helping families homeschool for several decades, and J. J. Side is a pastor and homeschooling dad to 4 kids. And I'm Rachel Winchester, a fellow homeschool mom of 3. Today, we'll encourage you to homeschool with confidence and joy. Listen in.

Carole Joy Seid [00:00:53]:

Okay, J. J. . Take us to the next stanza.

J. J. Seid [00:00:55]:

Okay. Prop says,

"Dear board of education, all I've learned from your system is the fact that it's just the system that you set up.

And if I just repeat what you just said in Jane Shafer method, then I passed. Right? You're just testing my ability to regurgitate.

And if your best instructors are miserable, I'm pretty sure it's not the kid's fault.

This pain I know firsthand, the grand learning moments, the innovative lesson plans that causes eyes to sparkle as if those students have just caught rides on Shooting Stars.

These lessons have wings only to get clipped to fit into the low res JPEG you call the state standards.

Why do you insist this is still the industrial age?

My child is not a widget, and a school should not be an assembly line, making my daughter's diploma equivalent to an inspection by 2235 stamp.

Dear Board of Education, so are we."

So I had to go look this up. The Jane Shafer method is a method of teaching students how to write an essay. It's for students who struggle, with writing, And and it's been broken down in a very philosophical, thoughtful way that that struck me as very intelligent. But we were talking before this podcast sort of the poignant challenge of that, because we're always evangelizing people for the only way you learn how to write is to read, to fall in love with reading. Stephen King in his famous book on writing said it really bluntly, where he just said, look, if you're not a reader, then you need to give up your dream of becoming a writer. Now, of course, not everyone is called to become a vocational writer, but I loved how unapologetic Stephen King was in that. He's like, look, there's no technique. If you don't wanna be a lifelong reader, then find another vocation. That's okay. Like, that's not an insult against you, but there's just no way to become a successful writer if you're not a reader.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:43]:

Yes. As Charlotte Mason said, no man can write well who does not read much. And then she said composition should not be taught to children. Writing should be as natural to children as running and jumping to a child who is well versed in books. So these formulas sound so appealing, and adults all sign up for these classes for their kids. And it is the worst possible thing you could do because if you want your child to hate writing, that will do it. There's no creativity. It's just like, do a, do b, do c, and then go home.

Like, what is that? There's no there's no joy in that. It's like, you know, reading a manual as you're kissing your husband or, you know, what on earth? You know? It's just

J. J. Seid [00:03:34]:

It's like I want us to have, you know, some imagination and understanding, you know, for teachers in certain settings, where you're inheriting students. They're not your children. You know, you're not controlling the fact that they're probably interacting with screens. Statistics now tell us approximately 7 hours a day. And so you're taking a child who spends 7 hours a day with screens, and you're trying to teach them how to write.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:03]:

Yes. But, can I tell you what to do? Use the time that you have those children to read out loud to them. That's the best use of time you could have in a classroom. I know it's scary.

J. J. Seid [00:04:16]:

Yeah. Talk more about that. Is that something that that teachers have the freedom to do?

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:20]:

Well, in good schools, they do, and teachers figure it out. Like, when I was in 6th grade, missus Massey with her Boston accent, would we come in after lunch? And she'd tell us in 6th grade to put our heads down, which nobody tells that a child that old to put their heads down because she just wanted undivided attention, and she'd stand there in her heels and pearls, and she would read Kon Tiki to us out loud, true story that had just been published right in my high school years, junior high years. And, she had every single person hanging on her every word every day after after lunch. That was the high point of the day. It's the only thing I remember about school. In all the years I went through grade school, even into high school, I remember nothing, But I remember missus Massey reading out loud to us.

Rachel Winchester [00:05:09]:

And one of our families in California, well, now they live in Washington, but he was a public school teacher in California, Bruce Manson. And I remember him talking about how he would read to his students And he basically took what he could from our philosophy and brought it into his classroom for decades and gave his students a little taste of this method in the ways that he could implement it in his classroom.

So even in California, he was able to figure out a way to work that, you know, into the standards, into that low res JPEG that they call the standards. And I think just being driven by the state standards, even as homeschooling parents, we can be driven by standards and say, well, the state, you know, needs records for 7 subjects. And how am I gonna show all these things? And we can be driven by the standards rather than being creative and understanding how holistic so many of these things are. Reading aloud hits so many subjects and so many learning points.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:11]:

Yes. And the answer to the question is, what about the school and what are they gonna say? Give it 2 years of standardized testing from those kids who've been read to, and I promise you, they'll be taking you out to dinner as a teacher. The school board will be

like, okay. What is your secret sauce? Because your kids have their scores have escalated. Why? It's because you've exposed them to great books. Yeah. I was reading an article today from London from The Guardian, and this man was talking about expose them to Heidi. Like, he was just just today, I was just reading the article, and I just thought, yes. Thank you.

Someone who understands that it's so simple that it's that it scares people so they don't even take it seriously. Like, just expose them to great literature and read out loud to them. But it's like, well, no. We gotta make this more complicated. We need a professional in here. Don't try this at home. No. Really.

Just read to them and surround them with great books and be a reader yourself and let them alone with literature, and they will figure it out. And their scores and their abilities to write and to speak will rise painlessly.

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Are you wondering if this is the right method of homeschooling for your family? Carol and J. J. recorded an introduction to homeschooling to help you decide. In their hour long conversation, they go deeper into the marks of our approach. They cover topics like the value of experiential learning and why boys especially are losing in school settings. They also share about reading aloud as the backbone of your child's education and so much more. If this sounds like what you need, we have a special listener discount for you too. Use coupon code podcast at checkout and get this recording for just \$7 The link is in the show notes. We hope this resource helps you find a more enjoyable way of homeschooling. Now back to the show.

J. J. Seid [00:08:04]:

Those who have attended our seminars have heard me tell the story of Jeremy Wayne Tate is the CEO of a company offering a new standardized test challenging the SAT and ACT called the classic learning test or the CLT. And he used to be a high school English teacher. And it was so interesting to hear his story of teaching evening high school to 11th grade students who had already failed their English classes. So he's being handed these students. And in a sense, the school is saying, figure it out. You know, we couldn't get these kids to engage with the subject. We couldn't get them to pass the subject. So they're yours, you know, in an evening.

And he said, as I'm flipping through the textbook, supposed to reteach the same material that had failed to gain their attention the first time, he decided to chuck the

textbooks and with his own money, bought copies of Flannery O'Connor stories. You guys know his story because you've heard me tell it so many times. But but he said it was the most successful semester he ever had. The students that were previously checked out became obsessed with the shocking nature of O'Connor's writing, and the game plan was simple. They would form a circle, read out loud, and stop to discuss when anyone felt the urge. So kids that people would have concluded, you know, are just uninterested and uninteresting turned out to be wide awake and be full of curiosity and actually have an innate desire to learn when they were given something to sink their teeth into that was focused not on textbooks or regurgitation, but actually on actively engaging with a classic work of literature that actually touched on and spoke to their own life experiences.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:35]:
Right on. Right on.

J. J. Seid [00:09:37]:
David Coleman, CEO of the college board, has stated publicly that, quote, teachers will teach towards the test. There's no force on this earth strong enough to prevent that. So I loved what you said, Rachel, of, Hey, let's not just pick on teachers. That's something that parents can fall into the trap of. Homeschool parents can start thinking in that widget way that propoganda is talking about instead of, an open ended curious way of saying, hey, we can do anything here. What awakens curiosity in my child? The test is the basement, not the ceiling. How do I have a much broader vision of whether or not my student is engaged? And and, I I actually don't need to worry about these tests. My ambitions are so much higher than these tests.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:23]:
Yes. Oh, that's good. I like that.

J. J. Seid [00:10:26]:
You can hear my keyboard clicking and clacking in the background here. I'm sure I'm breaking every podcasting rule. Yeah. I haven't I have this

Rachel Winchester [00:10:34]:
That's okay. It runs in the family because Carole recorded outside one day. And I just was listening to that, and there's birds chirping in the background so it just runs in the family.

J. J. Seid [00:10:45]:

This podcast is fully immersive. We're bringing you all the ambiance.

J. J. Seid [00:10:56]:

"Dear board of education, last stanza and and, maybe the best.

Dear board of education, there's not a scantron on the planet

that can measure inspiration. This is what our teachers pass on that matters.

But you'd rather them do a jig to the tune of an AYP score.

(That's Adequate Yearly Progress.)

That's the standardized test that's connected to no child left behind.

As to avoid losing WASC, right,

(which is sort of the alphabet soup for collegiate accreditation.)

N c l v got a shuckin' and jivin', but you can't measure a kid

inviting their teacher to a quinceanera or a soccer game.

J. J. Seid [00:11:31]:

And that's him abbreviating no child left behind,

or waiting rooms at free clinics.

I can name 10 kids offhand who would still be in handcuffs if it wasn't for Mr. Singer.

Nick Lovano runs his own design firm, and he failed the exit exams twice. Failed.

Dear Board of Education, I mean, can we not Google

when the Magna Carta was signed? If your brightest stars are always dim,

something must be wrong with your glasses.

If every place on your body that you touch hurts,

then your fingers must be broken.

Your PhDs, you have 5 suffixes at the end of your names.

You're the people that know a lot." (These are his words, not mine. Don't stone me.)

"How come you're not smart enough to know

that you don't know what you don't know?

Did anyone ever suggest that maybe we should test the test?

Dear board of education, so are we."

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:15]:

Good. Really good.

Rachel Winchester [00:12:20]:

At the end of the stand the last stanza, I was thinking he's talking about the difference between treating a child like a widget and treating them like a person. And he's really continuing that theme here of just, you know, what will bring a true education is that

connection with a teacher that you want to invite them into something pivotal in your life. Come see me at the soccer game. Come to my celebration for this special birthday. Come with me and wait because I have something serious happening in my life. You know, the building of those relationships person to person is really what's going to bring about that personhood and what it is to be human. And rather than just this is what it is to be a machine.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:08]:

Yes. Check the box.

Rachel Winchester [00:13:10]:

You know? We're Christians, so we believe that we are all created in God's image and that we are people, humans, like, that we have something special, and we aren't just a cog in a machine. And so our educational approach should reflect that distinction. And so he's talking about that just you're pressing. You're pushing something into this industrial mode that has just taken over a whole society.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:38]:

You're not a machine.

Rachel Winchester [00:13:39]:

Isn't working.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:40]:

You're not.

Rachel Winchester [00:13:40]:

Yeah. Because you're not a machine.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:42]:

Yeah. You're made in the image of God. And he's creative because he's the creator and so are we because we're like him. We're like our dad.

J. J. Seid [00:13:52]:

Yeah. I love the prop. You know? Immortalizes this Mr. Singer, right? You know, how wonderful this is a real person. And he's going, hey, you know, here's here's 10 kids that probably got kept out of the system, because of the fact that he was able to make a personal connection with them. And how interesting. Right? You know, you could get your students to pass certain tests. You could check boxes.

Administrators above you could look at your numbers and and conclude that you're succeeding as a teacher. But as he's saying, like, there's these intangibles that aren't going to get measured. Are you really awakening curiosity in your kids? Are you building a strong mentoring bond with an adult who cares? Sociologists will say, you know, students are more likely to succeed. They're less vulnerable to get in trouble if there's an adult in their life that cares about them and and the child knows it. You know, that they actually established a relational bond with them. So how interesting that you could get everybody in your classroom up to the standard and yet lack what the child needs most, which is an adult in their life who cares about them, and has built trust, the kind of trust that tethers a kid and, and, and keeps them from, from making disastrous, decisions. So interesting.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:07]:

Amen. So you all know one of my favorite movies in the whole world is stand and deliver, the true story of Jaime Escalante who, gave up his high-tech aeronautic career in Los Angeles to go into the most horribly depressing inner city school there in LA and taught these kids that couldn't even pass, like, 9th grade math and brought them to take the AP exam in calculus and how he believed in them and pushed them and drove them and loved them and invested in them and sacrificed for them. And he is a modern day hero. And if you wanna read his book, it's called Escalante, the biography on him. But the movie is a must, and every teacher should be required to watch it. And homeschool parents, it must be a law that you must watch that movie at least once a year. But the power, the influence of 1 teacher that gives their all and loves the kids and doesn't back down, it doesn't take no for an answer, It inspires me every time I watch. It makes me cry.

J. J. Seid [00:16:14]:

Yeah. And this is a a prime moment to say something that I'm going to say until our listeners are sick of hearing me say it. And that is, we've got this wrong way if people tune in expecting us to tell them what's the most spiritual decision for all Christians to make with all kids as it relates to education. There can be a bizarre sort of false righteousness in saying, this is why everybody should do classical Christian school. This is why everybody needs to be in a public school. This is why everybody needs to be homeschooling. So of course, we want to avoid that ditch of sort of going wink, wink. This is really the most spiritual option. The opposite ditch is to be so afraid of, the ways in which Christians try to elevate particular education choices as more inherently more virtuous, but we then avoid saying honest and intelligible things about the benefits of certain educational choices.

Another way to say that is, not everyone is supposed to homeschool. But if you do feel called to homeschool, there's nothing that makes me sadder than people apologizing for homeschools strengths. Apologizing for homeschool strengths, as though we have to defend all the ways in which homeschooling doesn't fit within people's expectations of formalized education that involves a lot of measurement. And the irony is the song from Prop is a reminder that for those of you that are persuaded that you are to homeschool in this season of your life, here's an entire song reminding you that you're going to be able to do so many things effortlessly. The prop is challenging educators to try to find a way to do that will often feel like going uphill both ways for them to be innovative or subversive. And you don't have to be subversive or innovative. You're gonna just be doing this in the everyday, all the while feeling self conscious that it doesn't feel more mechanized, formulaic, and measured. And the irony is homeschooling strengths are the awakening of creativity, the tailoring of an education to your child, the ability to do all the things that that prop is celebrating.

So again, it's it's not that we would become self righteous and say, man, if you're not homeschooling, what are you doing? But for those who are homeschooling, it's amazing how often they're tempted to abandon it because they feel incompetent, inadequate, or because it feels too organic or natural.

And it doesn't feel schoolish enough. And prop is saying, no, those are the best parts. Regardless of your educational choices, those are the best parts. Don't lose those. The mentoring and the curiosity and the spontaneity and the organic creativity and the fact that education is not a one size fits all thing. So I think homeschoolers need to stop apologizing for the very things that make homeschooling strong.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:04]:
Yeah. Amen. I love it.

Rachel Winchester [00:19:07]:
And diluting the potency of, like realize that you have a concentrate, and so don't put too much water in it and then lose the flavor of the juice that you have. You know, if you over dilute it, then it's not gonna be what it is meant to be and what it can be. And so sometimes people end up because they are insecure about those strengths of homeschooling or their ability to make those decisions as the expert on their own children, then they end up sacrificing some of their freedoms, not because they have to, but because they want to to feel that comfort of, okay. Well, at least I know I'm doing enough science. At least I know that someone approves of my plan and my what I'm doing with my kids. But, actually, is that really helping toward the end that you want, or is it diluting the the the juice a bit and not making it as potent as it as it could

be? You know, with charters or with doing programs that you don't have to do, but that you're just signing up for because you feel that insecurity and pressure.

J. J. Seid [00:20:10]:

That's a great way to say that. It's not that we don't wanna learn from experts or that we don't want the community to come around us in the education of our child, our faith or insecurities. So it's like, by all means, outsource carpentry to the master carpenter. And let your child apprentice with them. But you don't have to outsource your child's education to a co-op because you're convinced that your kid can't learn anything from you. But by all means, be a part of a co op because there's great relational things happening or because you're dissecting a pig, you know, with a dad who happens to be a scientist and is volunteering his time, because that's something you wouldn't be equipped to do at home. But you don't have to outsource, an English class to somebody else. That's the thing you're actually most qualified to do.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:03]:

That's right. For Bible.

J. J. Seid [00:21:06]:

That's exactly right. Spiritual formation yeah, that's so right. You know, it's like people like Jeremy Wayne Tate, who've been in the system, if he saw us trying to recreate aspects of that system, because it'll make us feel better about the education we're giving our kids, he would be so confused. He'd be like, no, no, you're recreating all the parts that I want to dismantle. You know, like, by all, it's not that some good things don't happen in those places, but the things that you would wanna recreate are not those. Those are the limitations. You know? But you're recreating the limitations because then it gives you the feeling that you're giving your child an education. But those are actually things that were built by necessity because of student to teacher ratios or limitations or bureaucracy or not having a clear philosophy of education.

That's that's not the goal. You know, don't try to recreate those things. Those are the accommodations and the limitations.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:58]:

That's so good. Yeah. Yeah. Be you know, I'm just thinking of, you know, in the sixties, the song, say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud. Like, that idea of, like, we're proud of what we're doing here. We're not we're not like, yay. I'm a homeschooler. But, like, be proud of what you're doing because this stuff works.

And and we can be bold and confident, with humility. I'm not saying we need to be arrogant or obnoxious. God forbid, there's nothing worse than an arrogant homeschooler, And I know I've been that in years past. I I pray that I've repented of that. But, but I think there is something about being, like, you know, we're like, the the motto from, growing without schooling, John Holt's organization, was we're growing without schooling and doing great. That was the bumper sticker. We're growing without schooling and doing great. It's such a positive thing.

It's not arrogant, but it's joyful. And that's what I think we we need to embrace. The gift that we've been given, we don't take it for granted. We know we could lose this at any time legally. Like, we we're not cocky, but we're also as as, Keller says, we're not cocky, but we're not sniveling. Is that what he said, J. J. ? What was his comment?

J. J. Seid [00:23:23]:

Oh, man. Yeah. Yeah. The gospel sort of keeps you out of both ditches. You're not

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:26]:

That's right.

J. J. Seid [00:23:27]:

You're neither proud nor sniveling. So you're right. There's an analogy to homeschooling. It's like, we want people to homeschool with humble confidence. Because they feel like this is what God's called them to do. He's going to equip them, but they're not walking around going, man, if you really loved your kids like I did, you'd be homeschooling. Nor are they constantly apologizing and homeschooling out of this profound insecurity.

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:45]:

That's right.

J. J. Seid [00:23:46]:

But they're just humbly confident. They're like, yeah, this is what we're doing, and and we think it's gonna be great.

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:51]:

Yeah. Amen. Amen. Why not? We believe in it.

J. J. Seid [00:23:54]:

Of course. That's right. Hey, it might not be for you and that's okay. You know? But, yeah, I hear the horror stories, you know, someone in our church approached someone

else and said like, I homeschool because I love my kids. You know, it's like, well, there's a lot of discipleship issues in that, in that one statement.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:09]:

Yeah. Yeah. Yes. Yes. And yes, We're all sinners, and we're dangerous when we start talking.

J. J. Seid [00:24:15]:

But That's right. That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:18]:

I know I've been very dangerous, and we I I get it. You know? But we we don't wanna fall, like you said, into either camp. The truth of the matter lies between the two banks. And so we don't wanna be apologetic, but we also don't wanna be arrogant. We just wanna be joyful. Like, this is a a privilege. It's a ton of fun, and we're having a blast doing it. It.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:40]:

And welcome. Come on in. The water's fine. You know, when you tell other people

J. J. Seid [00:24:44]:

That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:45]:

Like, invite them in, but don't say like, well, I thought you were a Christian. Like, if they're not homeschooling. You know? We should just so fall into either side of this ditch. Yeah.

J. J. Seid [00:24:55]:

That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:56]:

Yeah. So any closing thoughts, Rach, on your mind before we close out here?

Rachel Winchester [00:25:03]:

Not especially. I'm thinking about a message that I got, recently from someone who was telling me that she's been kind of begging her husband to homeschool her kids, but that he wants them to stay in the Christian school that they're in. And so I just think that there's so much you can apply just by providing a rich home environment in your home, regardless of whether your kids go to school or not. You can provide that rich

home environment. You can take ownership for their own your children's discipleship, and you can read books with them. You can spend time together outside. I mean, you can do so much to foster a great home environment that builds them up and creates that bond even if they spend the day away from you. And so I just if she's listening or if there's anyone else who's listening like that, then I just want I don't want them to hear this conversation and feel disheartened if they don't have that option, that, you know, we do.

Rachel Winchester [00:26:03]:

But to feel like, okay. Well, I'm gonna do what I can, and I'm gonna also be joyful about that.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:09]:

That's right. That's right. Because we all homeschool. It's just a matter of how many hours a day we do it. So even if our kids are in school for whatever need or reason, we still every minute that we have them, we can be intentional and bring these principles to bear. We still have them a lot of the time, all summer, all the holidays, all the weekends. We can we can homeschool a little or a lot, and and the Lord will bless, you know, like, when when they gathered the manna. Some gathered a little, some gathered a lot, but all had enough.

And that's really a good way of looking at it. If you can't homeschool full time, maybe you're a single mom or for whatever reason, the Lord will bless the time that you do have with your kids. And instead of just sitting around watching sitcoms, you can do some of these really rich things with your kids, fixing the car and planting a garden and washing windows and pulling weeds and baking, you know, cookies, whatever you're gonna do with your kids, that you're investing in them, you're intentional with them, and they know. I someone I was reading, was saying how when a mother has to leave her children, the child understands that that is not the mother's desire or choice. The child knows the difference. And that when you're with them, you just love every second of it, and the Lord will multiply the time, that every minute will become like an hour because the Lord's blessing will be on that because he knows your heart, and he knows the desire of your heart. And he will fight for your kids and make up for the limitations that society or finances or other situations, you know, create. So why don't you close us in prayer, J. J.?

J. J. Seid [00:27:57]:

Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. Lord, we pray for every parent who might be listening to this podcast, and we ask that you would encourage their hearts. Lord, protect all of us from comparison, and beating ourselves up with the encouraging stories that other people

share, and for the things that you've put on our heart that you're inviting us to step into. We pray that you give all of us courage to say yes to you, to say yes to our kids, to be present, Help us to get unstuck where we're stuck and protect us from despair for the days when it goes off the rails, which is true for all of us. Remind us of your goodness. Remind us that this ends so well. Amen.

Rachel Winchester [00:28:39]:

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