

Homeschooling with a Large Family

Episode 239

Rachel Winchester [00:00:01]:

One of our favorite things to do on the podcast is to share stories of homeschool families who, as Carole says, have drunk the Kool Aid of this method and are reaping the fruit of it. In this episode, you'll hear from a family whose story will encourage and inspire you. 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 now, and this is one of the families who have attended our seminars and consulted with Carole over the years. We hope this conversation spurs you on in your own homeschool journey. Listen in.

Carole Joy Seid [00:00:41]:

Friends, I am sitting across a screen with my dear friends, from Southern California, Ben and Rylee Applebee. And Ben and Rylee have been coming to my seminars for quite a while and have been consulting with me. And Rachel and I thought it would be an amazing opportunity to interview them because they are very unique in many ways. Ben is a pastor, and they have a large and continually growing family, which is just a glory to God, in their attitude, in their welcome, and, love for children. So welcome, Ben and Rylee.

Rylee Applebee [00:01:21]:

Thank you, Carole. We're so happy to be here.

Ben Applebee [00:01:24]:

Hey, everybody.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:25]:

So we are doing seminars at your church nowadays, which we are so excited to partner with you. And, Ben, you're pastoring at Watermark Orange County, Watermark OC, which is Costa Mesa address.

Ben Applebee [00:01:39]:

Is that correct? That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:40]:

Costa Mhmm. Yeah. And so we're gonna be with you guys January 25th in the New Year, 25 25. Catchy, date. And we're really excited about doing that, and it's such a great location. You can fly into John Wayne Airport, and then the world is your oyster. You know, they can go to the seminar, and then as soon as it ends, they can go jump in off the pier in Newport Beach. So it's just a perfect I don't know if you can really but if you can.

Ben Applebee [00:02:10]:

It's still a great vision. That vision has a nice ring to it. We'll go with that.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:13]:

I know. So that's what's coming up. But, tell our listeners about your family and a little bit about your story as homeschoolers.

Rylee Applebee [00:02:24]:

Yeah. So as you said, we have a large family. We have 11 kids and 7 of those are, biological and 4 are adopted. And we adopted through the Orange County foster care system. And, yeah, we've been homeschooling the Carole Way, since the start. I got the privilege of attending 1 of, well, actually, my sister-in-law attended one of her seminars before even our kids were school age, and she said, you have to watch this. And so she brought me home the DVD at that stage, and I sat in my bedroom and watched it and just knew there was no other way for our family. So we've never turned back.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:10]:

Wow. And, what what kind of grabbed you, would you say, Rylee? What what bore witness with your spirit, I guess, is what I'm asking.

Rylee Applebee [00:03:19]:

Yeah. I think it was your intentional detail to discipleship. That was really something that I wanted incorporated in our family. Even higher than the education was the character, and I saw that, woven through everything that you did. And that really what is what grabbed my heart from the start.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:42]:

Yes. So your first born is how old?

Rylee Applebee [00:03:45]:

He is 12. He'll be 13 next month. So we're just about to enter the teen years.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:50]:

Mhmm. And the baby is what? Like, 9 months old right now?

Rylee Applebee [00:03:54]:

Correct. Yep. He just turned my 9 months old.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:56]:

Okay. So you've got a span there. And how how would you say this method works for you with a large family? Has it been a good fit? Is it you know, other methods might not be such a good fit? I don't know. I'm just I'm just curious how it works because people sometimes are like, well, we have 4 kids and you know, or whatever. And you, you know, you've got a really nice large family. How how does this custom work for your family?

Rylee Applebee [00:04:26]:

Yeah. I feel like that's another we didn't know we're always gonna have a large family, but as it's developed, this really is the only way I can imagine homeschooling with me still getting to be that lead teacher and not subbing things out. Yes. And, I think the reason for that is I can group school really well because the history is done in such a way where it's a unit study and you've provided resources from multiple ages. I'm able to group the children and, really, we have 2 sections right now and teach, them together.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:02]:

Oh, I love that. And, you know, when we do the seminars, we say, like, if you have a large family, the most the the most groups that you should have would be 2. Like, even if you have 26 children, you have the little kids and the big kids. And is that kind of what you do at your house?

Rylee Applebee [00:05:21]:

Exactly. We have American and we have world. So we have our two groups.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:25]:

Yes. And American for the younger and world history for the older. Yeah. That's right. So how many years have you been doing history? I guess well, you tell me. Tell me how long.

Rylee Applebee [00:05:37]:

I know. Oh, man. I guess we probably started reading the books, the history books when Levi was 6. So I yeah.

Ben Applebee [00:05:45]:

And I don't I don't wanna interrupt the flow here, but another thing, I'm pretty sure, Carole, that you've been instrumental in the so called better late than early kind of worldview philosophy, and know that's very polarizing. We've all we've seen lots of homeschool families wrestle with that, but that also helps with the ages because, you know, this is, like, only 4 of them are really reading and the younger ones were not even pressing that yet. So that's that helps with the delineation as well.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:11]:

Oh, that's a really good point, Ben, that I would not have even thought of. So yes. Because a lot of times I'll be consulting with the family, and I'll say, well, you have 18 kids, but only 2 of them really are school age. And they go Right. Oh, you know? Yes. Yeah. Because people think school starts at 2, and in my kingdom, it doesn't start till at least 7. Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:33]:

And doctor Moore really emphasized waiting till 9. So if you look at it that way, then, you know, a lot of people think, well, how can we possibly homeschool with this many children? But very often, I'll say to them, but you really only have this many that are school age. And then I hear this huge sigh on the phone from them. Yeah. And they're like, oh, sure. You just took this just happened last week. Woman said, you just took a load off my back.

Ben Applebee [00:06:58]:

Yes. Beautiful.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:59]:

Yeah. So that's a that's brilliant then. That's really helpful. So can you share a little bit about your embracing of life? You have left the little children come. And can you talk about how that journey kind of has progressed? Maybe you weren't born with this journey in your mind, but can you tell us the story of it?

Ben Applebee [00:07:19]:

Yeah. I'll I'll I guess I'll go first because my wife is pointing at me and then she'll pick it up. And maybe add edit some things as I'm as I'm going. But, yeah, we were both raised in, I'm not gonna call it traditional, but a private Christian education through

elementary then public high school. And, but we had a heart for formation of our kids. We knew that even those 2 other systems were insufficient for our formation. And so, of course, like every parent, new parent, the lights are coming on and you're thinking, well, this actually has some gravity here because how I do instruction and formation for my kids in my home is a big such such a and a large question now. So, we asked that question, like Rylee said.

Ben Applebee [00:07:59]:

We found of course, there was lots of trial and error even before your your first seminar was discovered. And, but, yeah, it was the way to have them in the home close to us where, yeah, we didn't need to have even some other homeschool options where there's a kind of a government overreach. We're we're in Southern California as you said, so we couldn't do that with with integrity. So, we can we can design the schooling using your curriculum, using faith formation stuff that we're doing in the local church, And, you emphasize this as such a in your conferences as such an, something maybe easy to forget that you're still a family inside the home, and there's nurture and attachment and all of this stuff that's really lighting up their brains, not just IQ, but EQ. And and, man, even when I just heard that secondhand when Rylee came back, it just made all the sense in the world for our for our kids.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:53]:

Yes. So how did you decide to have this beautiful large family?

Rylee Applebee [00:08:59]:

Yeah. I think for us, it really wasn't our original vision. It was God just continuing to, pull on our hearts, Yeah. And expand our family. Ben and I, when we early, right after we got married, spent a lot of time doing international missions. My major in college was global studies, and we got married. We were one of those ring by spring christian collagers who got married in college.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:29]:

Yes. Yes.

Rylee Applebee [00:09:30]:

Yeah. And so our honeymoon was actually my global learning term where we went and lived in Peru with a homestay family And we are just exposed to, the international church and children and their needs. And we realized that we had a heart for adoption after working there in Peru. And then in Sri Lanka, we also spent many months working there and just seeing the needs of children just really drew our hearts towards adoption. So when we got back, we started looking into international adoption and just

the price point for that was unrealistic with Ben working in ministry and us being so young. So we looked into foster parenting and that, yep, really was a huge way God chose to grow our family.

Ben Applebee [00:10:22]:

Yeah. We, I have a distinct memory. I was in South Africa for a college term. We weren't even engaged yet and it was like I don't even know how I had a phone that could call back home, but it was like that typical courtship thing. Like, hey. I'm I'm really into adoption. Are you? Are we are we on the same page with this rather significant, premarital question? And and we both were like, yeah. We're all in for this.

And, actually, we went to our foster care licensing classes at a wonderful large church down here. Saddleback was hosting them at the time, and so thankful for that origin story. We had 2 biological kids at the time, and we got licensed. And the first multiplier was that we got 3 girls from 1 birth mom. So that was that was, yeah, that was compounding. Mhmm.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:05]:

That was instant. Right?

Ben Applebee [00:11:07]:

Yeah. Exactly. And then we had mentors that were just they had a lot of your DNA. They had a lot of generational covenant kind of theology, in the water, and we just really drank that Kool Aid. And and at that point, it was off for the races. Lord, it's your will, your sovereignty. We're open. We're offering our bodies and our family planning to you to have your way. So that was how it kind of started to snowball.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:31]:

Oh my word. And then the challenges of, as Rachel wanted us to talk a little bit about homeschooling during transition. So you're, you know, getting a baby or birthing a baby or, you know, how how has how have you been able to maintain the rhythms of homeschooling? And maybe they've looked very different during those transitions, which you know I'm all for, you know, going with that flow. But how have you been kind to yourselves in those transitions and allowed yourself some grace?

Rylee Applebee [00:12:05]:

Yeah. I think for us in those transitions, Ben, reading aloud at night has been our saving grace because if nothing else, we're reading aloud. And even in those transitions, he is able to do that. So, Ben, every night, we have 3 bedrooms that are situated close together until he's taken your book list. And over the years, read I mean,

now it's gotta have been hundreds of books, but, from there or from our history, if I'm in a particular season where I really am not able to do as much reading aloud, I'll give him an American history book and say, hey. Will you read this to the kids? And that reading aloud at night, he'll read for at least 45 minutes every night. And so to me, that has been so helpful in those seasons where, maybe we're not doing as much history. And then the, this the way that you set it up, I think, is so easy to do little bits and continue. So if they're just doing, like, 10 minutes of math a few times a week and, doing their Getty Dubay. Those are little things they can keep doing. Yeah. Their handwriting. And so they'll be able to keep up with that and doing the reading aloud at night. So even in those seasons, we still are able to do some school.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:28]:

That's beautiful. And what I tell my larger families is every time you have a baby, that's the most important curriculum you could ever model and use. And you're saying we value life. We welcome children. They are a gift, not an inconvenience, not an interruption from our very important schedule. They are the schedule.

Rylee Applebee [00:13:54]:

Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:55]:

And so teaching our kids to be parents, I think, is the most important thing we'll ever teach them other than to love Christ. And so what you're doing is modeling, the value and and just the hospitality of the Christian world toward children. That we're the ones that pick up children from the dump and abandon on the streets because we value the value of a child. And that's God's heart Yes. For this world.

Rylee Applebee [00:14:26]:

So true.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:27]:

Changes everything.

Ben Applebee [00:14:28]:

Yeah. And I I don't I don't wanna be too obvious, but I think that's part of what I was trying to point to earlier about the home and the school, that it's still a home too. Like, we're at that we're in the house, so the things you're you're this is all you're saying over the years, but, you know, you're still you're in the house now, so you're getting a benefit from the things that are moving and shaking inside the house. So, you know, there's this crazy thing. Maybe you've heard this term, and and, hopefully, this is

creates some positive tension for anyone listening. But believe it or not, Carole, they have a thing right now called parentification. And, apparently, it's the thing when you let your kids do too much as if they're grown ups. And and, again, we we were raised on this amazing thing.

Ben Applebee [00:15:06]:

I'm pretty sure it comes from you about being persons. I mean, they're persons, you know, at at early age. And so From

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:11]:

Charlotte Mason, really.

Ben Applebee [00:15:12]:

Yeah. Okay. That's right. Yeah. Yeah. And so that's the classroom during transition. Another thing I just wanted to name, and and you've said this so many times. I we laugh every time you call out Southern California people for being afraid to go outside.

Ben Applebee [00:15:25]:

Right? And so, you know yeah. When as soon as Rylee if she's birthed a baby, she's she's healthy and strong enough to walk around. Man, we're going to our favorite hikes and nature trails and

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:35]:

But back today.

Ben Applebee [00:15:36]:

Yes. Yep. School's in session. It's everywhere. Rain or shine. Right. That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:41]:

Oh, I love it. Yes. We do laugh about this because the Minnesotan families that I do a seminar for every year, they're outdoors more than any of my other families. It just cracks me up. And the California families are indoors more than any families, and it just breaks my heart. But when you live with the smallest thermometer in America, I think San Diego actually technically has the smallest thermometer, but let's say, you know, 82 is kind of where it sits in San Diego most days. And and then you think of families that their kids are outside playing in ice storms, and it's like it's a mental thing. It's it's weird.

You know, I love storms myself personally. I love wind. Like, when I go paddleboarding here in Oklahoma, I love when the there's waves and there's it's a little choppy on the lake and and my people who I bring with me sometimes they're just dying back there.

And I'm like, I'm loving this. Like, I love this challenge. I love the excitement of weather, wind, and rain, and snow, and, like, embracing the outdoors and all the bumps that come with, you know, the outdoors. California doesn't have a lot of bumps, which is why it creates such melba toast people because it's like, oh, it's windy. Oh, there's Santa Ana's here. It's like, get over yourself. Get outside. Yes. Right?

Ben Applebee [00:17:02]:

So it's football season. What about some healthy competition is what I wanna say, Carole. Like, California, this is your call out. We can't let Minnesota beat us anymore. Alright? This is we're in the land of sunshine, so, Lord, help us get outside.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:18]:

That's right. That's so true.

Rachel Winchester [00:17:20]:

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 Podcasts 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.