

What Did I Get Us Into? Curriculum Regrets and Learning From Your Mistakes

Episode 248

Rachel Winchester [00:00:01]:

If you've ever been in the middle of a lesson or school year and thought, what did I get myself into? This episode is for you. Today, we're diving into what to do when you feel like you chose the wrong curriculum or need a course correction. You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively and enjoyably. Carol Joy Seid has been helping families homeschool for several decades now. And I'm Rachel Winchester, a fellow homeschool mom to 3 kids. In this episode, we discuss admitting when you've made a mistake, finding the right approach for your family, learning from experience and so much more. Listen in.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:44]:

Well, I hate to tell you this, but Carole is back out on her side porch today in her sun hat glowing, looking at her fragrant herbs in the pots and her tomatoes. Anyone with snow on the ground right now is not happy with you.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:04]:

They're weeping and beating their breasts.

Rachel Winchester [00:01:06]:

Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:07]:

But I can't help it. I just I'm living the dream, girl.

Rachel Winchester [00:01:10]:

You are. And you're modeling for us. You tell us to go outside, get all these hours outside. You're modeling for us how to live a life outdoors. So Yeah. Oh my goodness. Today, we're gonna talk about some curriculum. You know, you might be at the point in the year where you're thinking, what have I gotten myself into? Why did I spend all this

money on this thing, this book, this curriculum that I do not want to use, my children hate? So we're gonna talk about that.

Carole, I think you have some experience buying some curriculum that you ended up not liking so much.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:48]:

Oh my word. Yes. I would go to the, we had a little darling curriculum shop in Costa Mesa. I think it was called Shekinah. And it was run by this precious homeschool mom in her house, you know, living room and maybe her garage. And I would be at bible study, like, midweek, and then I would just swing by, kinda like going by the liquor store if you're an alcoholic. And I would just swing by just to see what was in the offering over there, and I would come home with all this expensive stuff. And my husband would be like, do do we really need that? I'd be like, yes.

Can't live without it. It's it's the latest and the greatest. And then within 2 weeks, I absolutely hated it. And then I would but you'd think I would learn. You know? But they didn't have 12 step groups for this type of problem back then. So then I'd swing by and buy something else. And that, Rachel, is what led me to the happy decision to write my own methodology and my own I hate to even use the word curriculum, but, you know, that's when I began to create the history curriculum and things just as we were, you know, going through life. And I didn't want someone else to tell me what to do at 9 o'clock on Tuesday, and that's, you know, what people were paying all this money for.

But I'm just way too much of a free spirit. And didn't want I mean, that's why I was homeschooling in the first place. So if I had to march to someone else's drum, I could have just sent my son to school. But, you know, it was the belief that I wanted to do this myself, but yet then you're again turning the reins over to someone else who doesn't know your child, doesn't love them. You're back to buying a 42 long for all your children.

But what if you have a 48 short or, you know, whatever? You've gotta be able to custom make the suit for your children, their interests, their passions, what brings them delight. And so canned curriculum just doesn't meet that need. It's good to have a great math program. And as your kids get older, a great science curriculum, But you don't need people holding your hand every hour of every day in my opinion. That's not why we homeschool.

Rachel Winchester [00:04:14]:

Mhmm. Yeah. What do you think, you know, kept you going back to the store? Like, what do you think keeps people going back and saying, well, you know, they kind of purge the curriculum closet, and then next thing they know, bam, they've got more things in the closet. What kind of causes that cycle do you think?

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:34]:

Yeah. I think insecurity, thinking that the experts, quote, unquote, know better than you do. I think it's also some FOMO, fear of missing out. Like, well, you know, you go to the support group and, like, well, we're using this, and it's so wonderful. And you're like, and then you jump in the car and drive 90 miles an hour to go by, or nowadays, you might just press a button on your computer or your phone. But it was like, I think, the adult peer pressure. We start to question ourself, our confidence, our authority as as the educator to our children. Mhmm.

And so that's why sometimes we just sometimes we just have to put our hands over our ears and sing la la la la la when people are talking because, God has called you as a parent to to be the primary influencer and educator in your children's lives. And we so often give that privilege up, and and god does not call us to give it up. And someday, you know, when we meet God face to face, he's gonna say, what did I what did you do with those children I entrusted you with? And and it's the onus is on us. It's not on us following someone or, modeling ourselves on someone or it's us. It's us and our child with the Lord. And so not giving that up, knowing that his callings are his enablings. And so if he calls you to disciple your child, to mentor your child, he will equip you. It doesn't mean you can't bring a team to bear.

Of course, you can, but always knowing that you are the last and the ultimate authority as parents, as influencers on your children.

Rachel Winchester [00:06:28]:

Because kind of if you're you know, we're talking about if there's a curriculum where it's telling you, read this book, these pages, this time, kind of divvying your kids up. You know, your your 4th grader's got this going on. Your 2nd grader has this going on. Your kindergarten or all these things. You know? Then you're spread too thin. You're Yes. Trying to balance all these different levels and things. What what do you say when you have people, you know, consulting with you and they are at this point where they're like, I've done this.

You know? What do I do? Especially if they're totally invested in it several 100 you know, 100 of dollars and they've tried to make it work or something. What do you kind of advise people to do?

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:15]:

Yeah. I think it's it's really important to admit that you've made a mistake. And, as the saying goes, don't throw good money after bad money or whatever that statement is. I don't know. I probably miss misquoted that proverb, but I guess, like, know when to, as they used to say, at Calvert Chapel, know when to take it outside and shoot it. Like, it it's not working and admit it instead of, well, I'm just gonna keep putting this on life support. We're miserable. My children are crying. I'm dreading this, but we're just gonna plug through because we spent x amount of dollars on this. No. I mean, just kinda cut your losses and move on. Sometimes when I'm being really, you know, a little bit sassy, someone will tell me what they're using, then I'll say, do you have a wood stove? And they always giggle because they're waiting for that permission. You know? And I just gave it to them. It's like, just admit you made a mistake. You know, donate it, sell it, whatever you wanna do. Someone would love to have it, but don't don't inflict it upon yourself or your children if you feel like it's a poor fit. Just admit and move on.

Rachel Winchester [00:08:32]:

Yeah. So maybe you said, you know, you wanna find a curriculum for some of these subjects. You know, you might find a curriculum for math eventually for when your kids are older, science curriculum. Kind of how do you encourage people to find something that suits them?

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:48]:

Yeah. I think, visiting with friends who are using various curriculum products. And, of course, most curriculum products today do have videos and things on their websites as well. But there's nothing like interviewing children, seeing it being used in a family. You don't wanna be a burden to your friends, but just saying, could I come over? I promise I'm not gonna get into any conversation with you. I just wanna be there when you're doing thus and such. And we'll be there 15 to 20 minutes max, and I'm gonna bake cookies and bring them to you. Like, you know, don't burden people, but there's nothing like seeing something in action and in practice, especially for your children to see something in practice.

Where they could say very often when I'm working with a family I'm consulting with, and I'll say, well, here are 3 or 4 curriculum that I think you might wanna look into for, say, math. And then, and I'll say and include your children in this process. If there's a video online that they could see, if there's, a friend they could visit and see the workbook or whatever it is, that way your kids, you know, as they say, has have skin in the game. They feel like they it was their decision, not yours. Not that this is a democracy. Heaven forbid. It's not. But when we're picking curriculum, it is nice to just

for a child like, I was consulting with a family yesterday, and the mother was telling me about a curriculum they've discovered.

And, I'm sorry. I can't remember what the curriculum was right now because I talked to so many people, but whatever it is, the the their family was really happy with it. And, but they looked at some other curriculum products, and the daughter said to their mom, I could not watch a video with that person every day. Like, you know, a child can kind of have kind of a reaction to something. And it's good to know that before you've plunked down, you know, your money for for a curriculum. So, anyway, I think, you know, really doing your homework before and not being so, trigger happy with purchasing things like I was. But, you know, be like the noble brands. Go home and study and see if these things be true.

Even if your friend loves it, even if their child loves it, doesn't mean your child and you will.

Rachel Winchester [00:11:00]:

Yeah. So if you're not using a curriculum for all the different subjects when your kids are in elementary and middle school and stuff, what are you using then?

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:11]:

You're using what Dr. Moore said to use the trinity: a library card, a math program, and a bible. That's what he said. And then I say, well, if you're a really big spender and a handwriting book for, like, \$10 or whatever it costs, the Getty Dubay handwriting. So it's very, very simple. It's not, a curriculum driven approach. It's a great books curriculum. It's a literature-based approach to education. Where have I heard that before?

Rachel Winchester [00:11:43]:

Sounds familiar.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:45]:

I know. I don't know where I put that. On a billboard somewhere. So that's what I'm thinking is we bring in what I call holy hardware, and it separates us from our children. And it creates resentment and just it's like a drag. That's an old hippie word. It's a drag. That's what I feel like.

It puts like a, a parking brake as you're trying to drive your car. And so don't let your children and you be separated. Like, be with them, face to face, engaging with them, and you are the primary teacher. Doesn't mean you can't use resources. Of course, you

can. But not if it's driving a wedge. So, you know, is it, is it delight directed learning? Are your kids clicking their heels when they get to do it, or they, you know, hopefully not crying, but many times, children are crying.

And I don't know about you, but that would be a huge red flag Yes. If I were in that situation. I'd be like, you know, learning is work, but it should not be pain.

Rachel Winchester [00:12:51]:

Mhmm. Yeah. I've heard a mom say, you know, oh, it's just 3rd grade. They have to get through it, and it's just really unbearable, basically. And, you know, not then using that intuition to be able to say, I think that something's off here. And it doesn't mean my child isn't smart. It doesn't mean that they can't learn or anything like that. It just means this is not the right thing at the right time.

I think that's a big thing because I also had a friend who she, this year had a second child, you know, kinda join in the schoolwork. And so what worked previously with just having one child and doing the math lesson and all that kind of stuff wasn't working anymore because neither of her children read yet. And so she was trying to help having two now it's like neither of them read, so the instructions have to be read to them and all these things. And I just told her, this to me is why I do games with my kids for math. Like, we do games. We do things that do not require literacy in order for them to because then they can have ownership of it, and it's enjoyable. It's fun. We make the game one time or they learn how to play the game one time and then bam.

Infinite math lessons that they can continue to return to at their leisure. You know? And so I just you know, sometimes we make things more difficult or we don't take into we don't give permission to say, oh, you know, actually, I'm having my non-reader is having to be reminded that he's not a reader while he's doing his math lesson. You know? And then it becomes so

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:36]:

Shaming.

Rachel Winchester [00:14:37]:

Yeah. And difficult. And she can't read two separate instructions at the same time and lead them through. And so, yeah, just getting kind of married to one way of doing it rather than letting it be an organic process that okay. So while my kids are not able to read, it's gonna be best if we can do things back together, everything together.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:59]:

And I think, not doubting your common sense. You know, we've been intimidated. Leave this to the experts. Don't try this at home. Who says you're the expert? Doctor Moore used to say to us all the time, and I love that because we have been beaten down as a culture thinking that, you know, it's gotta be a certified teacher, but no one knows your child as well as you do. And so the beauty of this is you can say this isn't working. Having confidence in yourself that God has called you to do this. And so just just that, like, who says we have to do this? Just that attitude.

You know, I talked to another podcast about a family that used to watch commercials on TV and shout back at the television set. Who do you think we are? Do we look stupid to you? Like, they train their children to be, you know, savvy consumers or nonconsumers. And in the same way, I think, for curriculum products, don't let them make you feel like you don't know what's what. Because if the holy spirit is grieved as you're doing something with your kids, listen to the holy spirit. There's a reason that it's just like, I don't feel good about this. My kids look like they're being tortured. Everyone's yelling and crying and having a stomachache. Do you think there's something wrong here? Yeah. So listen. You know, you really you really do know best.

Rachel Winchester [00:16:24]:

Yeah.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:24]:

Mother and father know best.

Rachel Winchester [00:16:27]:

Yeah. And fostering that, is this cultivating a love of learning in my children? And if it's not, then starting to follow that trail down down the line of why isn't it fostering a love for learning? You know? And if it's because if you go through too many years of not fostering a love of learning, it's gonna not be they're not gonna enjoy learning, which is the whole goal of this, is that they love learning their whole lives and that they have curiosity and want to explore and keep keep learning. They're never gonna know everything. So

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:02]:

Well, Rachel, when you said that the mom had said to you, it's just 3rd grade and they just need to get through it, my stomach just kinda turned when you said that. Because excuse me. As you said just now, what you're doing is you're inoculating them against the love of learning when you when you say, well, they're just gonna be miserable for a

few years. It's like, no. This should be, like, loving learning. And if they're ready because as John Saxon used to say, we love what we're good at, and we like what we we're good at, and we're good at what we like. It becomes kind of a self fulfilling circle of, I'm good at this.

I'm really smart. I think I should do more of this instead of, I hate this. Mhmm. And when can I get out of here and join the merchant marines? That's, you know, our children's first exposure to school. I really want them to be like, I am so smart, and this is so fun. Mhmm. And if they're not having that reaction at first, it's probably because they're not ready. And that's the piece that most families are just not pulling into the equation.

Are they ready? What is misery 1 year, a year later could be total joy and success and balloons falling from the ceiling with joy. Like, what changed? Oh, they had a birthday, and the developmental milestone was crossed. And now they love it. But we think, well, it's just like pulling a tooth. Just keep pulling. It's gotta come out eventually. No.

Wait until it falls out and then all the difference.

Rachel Winchester [00:18:37]:

Absolutely. And I think it too brings to light. You know, you might not just have paid money to have the curriculum itself. They may have also paid money to then be a part of a program and under someone else's jurisdiction and so not really have the freedom to actually make that decision, to say, no. We're not gonna do this because they have that added pressure of, well, he has to come to class on Tuesday with this done, or else I get in trouble with so and so. So I do think realizing what you're giving up when you co opt in these ways of just if someone else is telling you what to do, you aren't able to respond to your child in the same way that if you don't have that above you, you have full freedom as the parent to make that decision. But if you say, let's come under someone else's authority, let's share this authority with someone else, then it it transfers your authority as the parent, and you don't have that freedom to say, I'm the expert. I'll make this decision.

Let's take a break for a couple weeks and see what happens even. You know? But if you have to have your homework assignment turned in in a few days, you don't have that option.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:55]:

That's right. That's really, really good, Rachel. It's giving up our autonomy, which is why we homeschool is to have autonomy. But we give we and then we just go from the

frying pan into the fire. You know, we've we've left the autonomy of the school, but now we're under someone else's autonomy. And, my philosophy is I'd rather you just send your child to school. At least it's clean. It's honest.

It's like this is whose authority you're under? But this kind of one foot on the dock, one foot in the boat, you're gonna fall in the water. It just doesn't work for long. Most families do it for a couple years, maybe even just 1 year, sometimes a semester. And they're like, get us out of the straight jacket. And they come, you know, talking to me, and I'm like, yes. Yes. So it's it's hard because I just don't think we're confident enough. And and the only way we build confidence is doing it.

The more we do it, the cockier we become, and I like to see that. I like to see that. 1st year homeschoolers were all kinda chewing our nails to the bone, like, I don't know. I don't know. But then after you've been doing it a couple years, you're like, don't tell me what to do. Like, we just we know that this works, and our kids are thriving. We're happy. I mean and it just builds this beautiful kind of wall that's impenetrable around us.

That we're not blown by every wind of doctrine that comes through. What's the latest flavor of the year in homeschooling? And then everyone jumps on that bandwagon, but a confident homeschooler says, nope. Thanks anyway. Nope. Kind of like a weaned child. We're satisfied. We're at peace. We're not looking over our shoulder.

Rachel Winchester [00:21:43]:

Yeah. I love that. I love that. I think that's what every parent wants to have. And you get that by putting the blinders on and just defining this is my philosophy of education based on children's development, based on what has been done, all the things we teach in our basic seminar. So if you haven't listened or you start feeling you lack confidence, that's why we re listen to those things over and over again. We get these books that we can read and remember. Okay.

This is what the true experts who have done the research tell us. And we can, you know, read the testimonies of families who the Moores wrote about in their books and and so many others, but that's really what gives that confidence to then say, I am totally not doing something out of left field here. So many people have done this, and it's been really successful. And I'm gonna just do it in that confidence that even if hardly anybody around me is doing it the same way, that I I'm really just gonna trust the process and and lean into that enjoyment of learning together as a family.

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:55]:

I love that. Yeah. And do your homework. Educate yourself so that you can educate your children. Mhmm. So that's why in the basic seminar on our first page of handouts, we list, you know, various books, and they're not a lot of them because I try and keep it really simple as you know. But reading, the successful homeschool family handbook, reading better late than early, reading, Susan Schaeffer Macaulay's For the Children's Sake, Ruth Beechick, just a few books, the Colfax family whose kids all went to Harvard scholarship. As you read those books, your armor gets thicker and thicker.

And then when, you know, aunt Matilda says, wow. You know? I don't know that. You're like, well, actually, aunt Matilda, let me tell you the research from Stanford and from, you know and because it it puts you in the driver's seat. You're confident. You're you're not arrogant, but you're also not apologizing because you know what the research shows, and there's bushel baskets of it. So you're not flying blind in your airplane. You've got the maps. You've got the research, the time proven things that have shown that the tutorial method exceeds all other forms of education.

You've got the research that shows that the later a child learns, actually, the better of a reader they become. That the younger they are, the higher incidence of reading failure there is. Like, when you can show research from all the major universities, internationally as well, it gives you kind of a a shield round about you that protects you from adult peer pressure. And second guessing because James said a double minded man is unstable in all his ways. And when I take histories on my families that I consult with, so often they're like, well, we started with this, then we did this, then we did this, then we did this. And I'm thinking how much money was wasted, but more importantly, how much stress was created in the mom's life and in the children's experience with education. That was a dud. Now we'll do this.

That was a dud. And I speak from experience because I did the same thing. But back in those days, I couldn't take someone to lunch. There wasn't anyone to take to lunch and pick their brain because nobody homeschooled, you know, that that you knew, or there weren't teenagers you couldn't interview. But now we have so many people who have used this method, and it's so fun, Rachel, to see. People come up to me in my seminars now. It happens all the time now, and they say, my mom homeschooled us with your method, and now I'm here to homeschool my children with this method. So see, that gives you an ability to interview people, talk to people, and say, what was what do you wish your mom had done differently? What blah blah.

You know? And learning from history's mistakes, doing your homework, not just taking my word for it, but being like the noble brands and seeing if these things be true.

Rachel Winchester [00:25:59]:

I love it. Well, thank you for teaching your method, discovering your method, and sticking with it for so many years. So many families have benefited from it.

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.