

## **“I hate reading”**

by Elrina du Toit © March 2013

"I hate reading! I never want to read another book in my life!" These are not the words any homeschool mom would like to hear, as it makes you feel discouraged and wonder about where you have gone wrong. It makes you wonder if you are doing the right thing and if this thing you do is the best for your children. It makes you doubt your own capabilities.

This was my daughter's words when she was 6 years old. By then she had been forced to read to me every day, for a year, as her mother was so afraid of her getting behind, and not staying with what the children at school were doing. I felt that I must be able to show those who watch us with hawk eyes that this thing we do, works, and that this is the outstanding option on educating my children.

But this outburst has caused me to stand still, and I told her that she will never have to read a thing in her life if she doesn't want to. I kept on reading to her and I could manage to reign in my own anxiety on this topic for about a year. Then after the year I started getting easy readers and negotiating all sorts of tricks to get her to read again like I will read two pages if you read one. But I was reminded of my own promise very soon and then I had to back off again. Finally after months of chewing nails and waiting on her readiness, she started discovering the joy of reading on her own. But to this day she does not like reading to me at all.

With maths we have walked the same path. I had to hear how she hated maths when she was 8 years old. I then decided again to pack away the maths books, and continued with other things all the time worrying that my child is getting behind. After about another year she finally decided that she is willing to do maths as she needed it to become a veterinarian. What a relief!

There was also a time where languages had to be put aside. What is it that I am doing wrong the whole time? Why do I get a hateful reaction to about everything I try? Why do I feel as if my own fine-tuned plans are always failing? I try my best to make it fun, make it nice, I buy beautiful interesting books, but the angry reaction stays the same?

This year I had a revelation. It is not the subjects such as maths, or language or writing that the children react to and then hate - it is the pressure, the fighting and the resulting anger that affect the relationship badly, which the child hates. Every time there is something that needed to be done where pressure is applied, there is a struggle and angry words and everybody is upset with each other. For what? Is the seven times table really so important to do now? Is it really necessary to force a child who struggles to write to do this everyday?

I am not saying that children can just be allowed to do what they want and that they do not have to take responsibility or not tackle things which are challenging, but how much fighting needs to happen in the process? How much personal internal motivation does the child have in himself to do something, or is it really us driving the children with our own agendas, plans and curriculums? How much are we doing what they enjoy or how much of what we do interests them? Or are we only doing what is prescribed by some curriculum to calm our own anxiety of getting behind? How much of what we do is really only for our own consolation, but in the process we lose our children? Could it not then have been better for them to be at school anyway as 'school' at home is only a fight.

I still struggle to let go and not apply pressure, and I must remind myself continuously that the relationship is more important than the work. I try to motivate without fighting and I try and help her learn responsibility, but I

have to admit that I had to let go of my own agendas and my own plans. This was necessary for the relationship to heal.

It is terrifying for me to not be in control and hear what all the other homeschoolers are doing with their children ! It is intimidating to not have a well thought through plan or formula. But this does not mean that I am not doing anything. This only means that I have put my own plans aside and that I now as a child of God wait on His guidance. It means that I am sensitive to what my child's interests are and that I do things with her which makes us both laugh and enjoy.

Kyle Miller said: "God's initial goal for Christian homeschooling families is not the raising of godly children. Instead, God's wonderful, but subtly hidden agenda is that the homeschooling experience be so challenging for the parents that they feel the need and hunger for a closer walk with their Heavenly Father."

As I walk a closer path with my heavenly Father, He gives me wisdom, strength and plans. He also brings healing and restoration in our relationships.

So, relax, be calm, let go, follow your heart, trust in God, listen to Him, walk with Him and everything will fall into place.