

# Why Homeschooling Is Important For America

EDUCATION AT THE CROSSROADS

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We Americans are a very special people. Something in our psyche, in our culture has set us apart from other nations. In fact, people in other countries cannot understand why so many Americans have such a deep distrust of government. But when these foreigners arrive in this country as immigrants and expect to find themselves in the land of the free and the home of the brave, they find themselves in the land of bureaucratic regulation and educational confusion.

They settle in cities where the crime rate is probably much higher than in the countries they left. Yet, few return to their countries of origin because they detect something in America that is different and not to be found anywhere else: the deep sense of hope, an indefatigable entrepreneurial spirit, boundless energy, the religious fervor of millions of individuals who are trying indeed to restore America to what it once was: a nation under God, a land of unlimited opportunity and limited, unobtrusive government bound by a Constitution based on Biblical principles. Ayn Rand, the novelist, put it in these words:

"The most profoundly revolutionary achievement of the United States of America was the subordination of society to moral law."

That moral law, of course, was Biblical law. Early visitors to America remarked on that aspect of the American way of life. Alexis de Tocqueville, the French historian who visited America in the 1830s, wrote:

Upon my arrival in the United States the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more I perceived the great political consequences resulting from this state of things. . . .

In the United States the sovereign authority is religious, . . . there is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America, and there can be no greater proof of its utility and of its conformity to human nature than that its influence is powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation of the earth.

Christianity, therefore reigns without obstacle, by universal consent; the consequence is, as I have before observed, that every principle of the moral world is fixed and determinate. . . .

The safeguard of morality is religion, and morality is the best security of law as well as the surest pledge of freedom.

Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power.

America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.

How far we have come from that benevolent state in which Biblical law set the moral standards of American society. Today, what we have in America is the subordination of society to bureaucratic law, the law of the state. Yes, these laws were enacted by the legislators we elect. But too many of these legislators no longer believe in the primacy of Biblical law. They believe that man's law is superior to God's law. We call that philosophy humanism, and that's the philosophical foundation of liberalism.

Liberalism goes under many guises: progressivism, socialism, collectivism. No matter what you call it, its most significant principle is its rejection of God as the true sovereign over our nation. And, of course, this has serious consequences for the family and for education.

Humanism is an organized religious-philosophical movement dedicated to the overthrow of Christianity. The humanists declared war on Christianity in 1933 with the proclamation of its Humanist Manifesto which states:

Religious humanism maintains that all associations and institutions exist for the fulfillment of human life. The intelligent evaluation, transformation, control, and direction of such associations and institutions with a view to the enhancement of human life is the purpose and program of humanism. Certainly religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows, in order to function effectively in the modern world.

In other words, the humanist program calls for taking control of and transforming all of the cultural and religious institutions and associations of the nation so that they will be made to effectively advance the humanist agenda. No other religion in America calls for taking over the institutions and associations of other religions. We are supposed to be living in a society where religious freedom is respected by all religions. But we have it in the words of the Humanist Manifesto itself the intention of humanists to reconstitute everybody else's religious institutions, rituals, and ecclesiastical practices to conform with humanist goals.

Nowhere has the philosophical conflict between humanism and Christianity been better explained than in Dr. Rousas J. Rushdoony's classic book, *The Messianic Character of American Education*, for it is in the field of education that the conflict has raged most intensely. It should be noted that one of the signers of the Humanist Manifesto of 1933 was John Dewey, father of progressive education.

Dr. Rushdoony demonstrates that humanism not only threatens Christian education but educational freedom in general, because there is a link between religious liberty and educational freedom. Americans are slowly becoming aware that spiritually and morally, education is basically a religious function, even when it is atheistic, and Christian education is hardly viable without religious freedom. As Dr. Rushdoony writes:

Among Nietzsche's manuscripts, after his death, was found a slip of paper on which he had written these words: "Since the old God has been abolished, I am prepared to rule the world." This is the meaning of humanism's inescapable totalitarianism. Total government is a necessity, and everything in man requires it. If there is no god to provide it, then man must supply it. . . .

In the United States, the efforts of federal and state governments to control churches and Christian Schools are the logical results of their humanism. There must be sovereignty and law, and it must be man's, not God's, is their faith. Clearly, we are in the basic religious war, and there can be no compromise nor negotiation in this war. Humanism seeks to abolish the God of Scripture and rule the world.

In America, the ultimate aims of humanism can only be achieved through the control of children and their education. The strategy to achieve that goal was perhaps best outlined by John Dunphy in the *Humanist* magazine of January 1983, in which he wrote:

I am convinced that the battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as proselytizers of a new faith; a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being. These teachers must embody the same selfless dedication as the most rabid fundamentalist preachers, for they will be ministers of another sort, utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to convey humanist values, whatever subject they teach, regardless of the educational level--preschool, day care or large state university. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new--the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism, resplendent in its promise of a world in which the never-realized Christian ideal of "love thy neighbor" will finally be achieved.

That statement should leave no doubt in the minds of Christians as to what kind of a spiritual war is being waged in the public schools. The humanists act as if they have a fundamental right to proselytize Christian children away from the religion of their parents.

The fundamental issue, therefore, is the ownership of children. Do humanists have the right to indoctrinate children in the public schools with humanist values without the knowledge or consent of the parents? On this issue, Dr. Rushdoony writes:

The first and basic premise of paganism, socialism, and Molech worship is the claim that the state owns the child. The basic premise of the public schools is this claim of ownership, a fact some parents are encountering in the courts. It is the essence of paganism to claim first the lives of the children, then the properties of the people.

That statement by Dr. Rushdoony was starkly dramatized last March in a middle school in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, where 59 sixth-grade girls were forced to strip and submit to a genitalia examination against their will and without their parents knowledge or consent. They were herded into an examination room, forced to strip, lie down on a table where their genitals were probed by a female doctor. The frightened girls were not permitted to call their parents or refuse to be examined. This was probably the most egregious violation of student and parents rights on record.

During World War II, when people were rounded up and sent to concentration camps,

the first thing their captors forced them to do was strip. The purpose of the stripping was to deprive these captives of any notion of privacy or personal dignity. The stripping meant that they were now the property of their captors who could do to them whatever they wanted. The educators in Pennsylvania who forced these girls to strip and submit to a genital examination may not be Nazis, but their behavior suggests that they are operating on the same premises of body ownership--a new kind of American slavery which our dictionaries have yet to define.

There are also cases in which compulsory school attendance laws have been used to deprive parents of their children. The most egregious case I know of is that of Barry Bear, an 18-year-old youth, who has spent the last five years in state custody in Iowa because of truancy. Barry's mother, Anna Bear, is a white woman married to a Native American with whom she has had four sons and a daughter. The family lives on a reservation near Tama. Barry is mildly retarded and has what the public schools like to call "special needs." But like many retarded children, Barry suffers from a variety of ailments, mainly gastro-intestinal. And so, when it came to attending school, Barry was absent a great deal. However, that should not have bothered the government, since Anna Bear taught school for twenty years, was certified, and could teach Barry at home.

However, in May 1989 the Iowa Supreme Court ordered that Barry, then 12, be forced to attend school. His parents refused. And so in 1991, after a long court battle, Barry was removed from his home and placed in foster care. By 1996, Barry had been in state custody for five years. He was in four or five foster homes, four or five public schools in which he learned how to tie his shoelaces but not much else. He was then committed to a residential hospital where he was drugged and became addicted. This mild, gentle boy became a violent young adult who wanted to go home and be with his parents and brothers and sisters, but the state would not let him go home. When he finally reached the age of 18, beyond compulsory school age, the court refused to release him. However, he was permitted a home visit with the provision that his parents would return him to state custody. They refused to return him and are now living in another state. Why is the state of Iowa so determined to exercise their claim of ownership over this young man? Because they want every homeschooler in Iowa to know who actually owns the children.

And we know why. The *Des Moines Register* of Jan. 12, 1989 carried the following small item under the heading of "Statehouse Briefing":

Iowa prosecutors are seeking more power to intervene in truancy cases and have suggested law changes that could give county attorneys more tools to use against fundamentalist Christians who want to teach their children at home.

Recommendations from the Iowa County Attorneys' Association include a change in the state's juvenile code to add truancy to the list of reasons officials can start proceedings that can lead to removing the child from the home or to terminating the parents' rights to their child.

Thus the humanist state can legally kidnap any child it wants through the compulsory education laws, and keep that child prisoner for as long as it wants. Which means that

the issue of Christian liberty can only be resolved in a philosophical confrontation between Christians and the state. I say philosophical confrontation, not a physical confrontation, since the government has shown little restraint in its handling of citizens who disagree with its laws. (The ATF called out the U.S. Army with tanks and helicopters and 70 armed agents just to serve the hapless David Koresh with a search warrant for what? -- a technical gun violation which would have gotten Koresh maybe 3 months in jail *if* found guilty. And no one in Washington has found out where the government got the authority to stage a military attack on a religious community just to serve a search warrant.)

Which means that you don't confront the government physically if you want to survive. As long as this ideological civil war can be fought in the courts and in the polling booths and by the legal actions of its citizens, there is no reason for physical confrontation.

Our goal must be the recognition of God's sovereignty over this nation. The principle of God's ownership was implicitly understood by the Founding Fathers who wrote the U.S Constitution and upheld God's sovereignty over man. George Washington, in his inaugural address in 1789 after being sworn in as first President of the United States under the new Constitution, said:

Such being the impressions under which I have, in obedience to the public summons, repaired to the present station, it would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations and whose providential aids can supply every human defect;

No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.

We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained; and since the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered as deeply, perhaps finally, staked on the experiment.

Thus, it was clearly understood at the very birth of the American republic that God's sovereignty ruled over the United States and that as long as the civil government remained subordinate to God's sovereignty, it was legitimate and thereby supportable by Christians.

But the introduction of secular, government-owned and -controlled schools and colleges began to erode that basic understanding in the minds of the American people. Statism, the philosophy that the state is the supreme power, slowly absorbed the loyalty of America's academic elite.

Slowly but surely the concept of religious freedom gave way to that of religious toleration. The original concept of religious freedom meant that the state had no jurisdiction over the church, its schools, or its affairs. But the new doctrine of religious

toleration meant that the state granted certain privileges to churches and religious schools at its own pleasure, privileges, such as tax exemption, which could be withdrawn at any time for some "compelling state interest." Dr. Rushdoony writes:

The fact is that religious liberty is dead and buried; it needs to be resurrected. We cannot begin to cope with our present crisis until we recognize that religious liberty has been replaced with religious toleration.

We may be able to live under religious toleration, but it will beget all the ancient evils of compromise, hypocrisy, and a purely or largely public religion. It will replace conscience with a state license, and freedom with a state-endowed cell of narrow limits. This is the best that toleration may afford us in the days ahead.

This basic philosophy of statism and religious toleration has important ramifications for the Christian family. Dr. Rushdoony writes:

In Scripture, the family is the basic institution of society, to whom all the most basic powers are given, save one: the death penalty. (Hence, the death penalty could not be executed on Cain.) The family is man's basic government, his best school, and his best church.

To review briefly the basic powers which Scripture gives to the family, the first is the control of children. The control of children is the control of the future. This power belongs neither to church nor state, nor to the school, but only to the family.

Second, power over property is given in Scripture to the family. . . . God gives control of property into the hands of the family, not the state, nor the individual.

Third, inheritance in Scripture is exclusively a family power, governed by God's law.

Fourth, welfare is the responsibility of the family, beginning with the care of its own.

Fifth, education, a basic power, is given by God to the family as its power and responsibility. The modern state claims the right to control and provide education, and it challenges the powers of the family in this area also.

Humanistic statism sees control of the child and the family as basic to its drive towards totalitarianism.

I think you can sense now why the homeschooling movement is so important to America during this time of cultural conflict. The means to restore Christian liberty and Constitutional government are limited by the very circumstances of the battlefield. The battlefields of this civil war are to be found in the court houses, the legislatures, the media, and most important of all, in the actions that citizens can take to further the cause of freedom and Godly government.

One of the most important actions families can take is to remove their children from the government schools and homeschool them. By now about a million families have made that choice, and their actions have had an accumulative effect on American life that is only now beginning to be felt.

While the government asserts implicitly in court decisions here and there that it owns the children, it cannot say so explicitly to the public at large for fear of provoking a

violent reaction. And so school districts subtly assert the state-ownership principle by requiring parents to request permission to homeschool and requiring homeschooled children to be tested. Some school districts require more and some less, depending on the disposition of the superintendent. But in some districts, where humanist superintendents refuse to acknowledge parents' rights and impose onerous conditions for homeschooling, parents have had to fight in court to defend their God-given right to educate their children as they see fit.

Despite the obstacles involved, the withdrawal of children from the humanist state system is significant because it means that those children will be free from statist, humanist, indoctrination. It means that that Christian family will be free to raise their children in a godly way, in a way that conforms with the principles and values of the founding fathers. These are the children who will mold America's future and restore God's sovereignty over our government.

What is also important is what the homeschool movement is doing for the Christian family. Homeschoolers are rediscovering the benefits and joys and blessings of family life. For it is in the family that love for one another and love of God is nurtured. The very act of educating one's children is a godly act called for in Deuteronomy. And therefore, it brings the Christian family in obedience to God's law and reestablishes the family as a unit governed under God, equal to the civil government. American civil government was never meant to usurp, replace or negate family government.

The civil government must respect family government for they both derive their legitimacy from the same divine source. But today's civil government has done all in its power to make the family totally subordinate to the state by taking control of the children through compulsory attendance laws and using state social agencies to undermine the integrity of the family.

It is true that dysfunctional families pose a serious problem for society. But in the past it was the church or private agencies that dealt with such problems. Today, when the state takes control over a family, it plays the role of God. Social workers place children in foster homes that sometimes turn out to be worse than the homes they were taken from. And, of course, drug addiction and unwed teenage motherhood has exacerbated the dysfunctional family problem. Detached from God, these people become the victims of their own innate depravity.

But we should not lose our freedoms, and parents should not lose their rights simply because a portion of the population acts irresponsibly and self-destructively. We cannot expect the drug addicts and unwed teenage mothers on welfare to save our country or our freedoms. Nor should we let them prevent us from doing what has to be done to restore America as a nation under God.

And so, the homeschool family is on the frontline of this civil war, and we can only win this long, drawn-out conflict one family at a time. The quiet revolution is taking place right under the very noses of the humanists, and there isn't much they can do about it.

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Meanwhile, the homeschooling family is creating a revolution in American family life. The Christian family that lives in obedience to God sets a standard of morality that will stay with their children for the rest of their lives. That even some home-schooled children may go astray is inevitable, knowing what we do about human nature. But the vast majority are becoming the kind of citizens we can all be proud of.

And so, the reconstruction of the American family is one of the great benefits of the homeschool movement. The homeschooling family creates a generation bridge instead of a generation gap. The popular magazines like to talk about the differences between the World War II generation, the postwar boomers, and the present Generation X-ers as if there are insoluble conflicts among them. Not so among homeschooling parents who pass on to their children their spiritual and moral values, thereby creating and sustaining family continuity unto several generations.

Homeschooled children learn to respect their parents' intelligence, and the parents, who know their children better than any stranger could, enjoy teaching their children. I myself have no children, but I've always thought that one of the greatest pleasures of parenthood must be the act of instructing one's own children in all that is good and valuable, showing them what a wonderful world they were born in, what a wonderful God we have that has given us life and inspired our founding fathers to create a country of such great freedom. What a joy it is to introduce a child to poetry, or great music and art, or the wonders of nature, or to playful puppies and kittens, or to horseback riding, swimming, ice-skating, and heaven knows what else.

Did you know that homeschoolers learn better than public schoolers? Wherever homeschoolers have taken standardized achievement tests, they've come out ahead of the public schoolers. Why? Because the home is a better place to learn than a school. One-on-one teaching is more effective than the classroom. Also, at home the preschoolers learn from their older siblings. They can't help but learn because they hear it and see it all around them.

Did you know that Rebecca Sealton, the 13-year-old girl from Brooklyn, New York who won the 1997 National Spelling Bee is a homeschooler? Many public educators assert that correct spelling is no longer important. Well, tell that to Dan Quayle.

And did you know that homeschooling parents learn more than their children? (You can imagine how many new words Rebecca Sealton's parents learned while teaching their daughter!) Quite an interesting phenomenon. Many parents don't realize that when they begin teaching their children math or grammar or history or a foreign language they are also learning these subjects. In fact, because homeschoolers generally use phonics to teach their children to read, they improve their own reading skills by learning the phonics they didn't have when they were in school. Most of today's young homeschooling parents were taught to read by the Dick-and-Jane look-say method and were deprived of the kind of intensive phonics necessary to become a good reader. Thus, learning phonics through teaching it to their children has been

enormously beneficial.

Another important benefit of homeschooling is that the home is a safe haven for the children in a world awash with drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, violence, and moral corruption. Children need all the protection they can get. If you want a child to get involved with drugs, send him or her to a public school, the principle market place for drugs in America. That's where peer pressure is used to hook a child. If you want your child to become suicidal, just give him a good dose of death education with all of its morbid content. If you want your child to become sexually active, just give him or her explicit sex education beginning in kindergarten with instructions on how to use a condom. If you want your child to lose his religious faith, just subject him to endless lessons about evolution, critical thinking--which means criticizing your folks and your religion. If you want your child to start putting rings through his nose, and safety pins in his eyebrows or navel, send him to a public school where his peers will persuade him of the beauties of self mutilation.

Homeschooling provides healthful socialization, not the negative kind you get in the public school. In homeschooling, brothers and sisters get to know one another very well and they become lifelong friends.

In the public school, brothers and sisters go their separate ways, bonding with their own clique of friends, engaging in mischievous behavior, drinking, smoking, dating, getting high, listening to acid rock music, having sex.

Homeschooled kids get to know other homeschooled kids. Their Christian code of morals determines their behavior. They believe in courtship, not dating. They are future oriented, planning to have long, healthful, productive lives. The public school teenager lives for the moment, the thrill, the party. Otherwise, they are bored, hanging out at malls or parking lots, killing time before going home to surly parents.

But perhaps the greatest dividend that homeschoolers enjoy is the taking back and mastery of their own time. Time is one of the most precious commodities a family has, and the more time a family can devote to its own improvement and enjoyment the better it is for all of its members. Public schools squander the best time in a family's life. They rob the family of the time that could be spent together, learning, playing, and creating. The state wants that time in order to do its work of indoctrination. But that time belongs to your family.

Another development among homeschoolers is their political awakening. They know that they must get more God-fearing men in the Congress and state legislatures. They made quite a difference in the elections of November 1994. You must become politically active and stay politically active, for the other side would like nothing better than to get politicians in power who will vote to make homeschooling illegal.

The point I am trying to make is that homeschooling represents something more than just an alternative style of education. It represents a whole new way of looking at

family life in today's high tech America. A healthy, close-knit family life is not only important for parents and children but is also society's most important social value. We neglect family life at our peril. We know that there are people for whom a career is more important than raising children. That's why there are so many children in day-care whose bonding with their parents suffer because of emotional neglect. Many of these parents believe that they have no choice if they want to live in an upper middle class lifestyle.

But it's amazing what families can do when they put their minds to it. I know that there are parents here whose children are in public schools and for whom homeschooling is simply not a viable alternative. But these parents should be made aware that their children are at risk in four significant ways in the public schools: Academically, because of the teaching methods used which create learning disabilities; spiritually, because of what is being done to undermine traditional Christian beliefs through values clarification, situational ethics, death education, multiculturalism, etc.; morally, because of sex education and the drug culture which flourishes in the schools; and physically because of the weapons in schools, the assaults, robberies, etc.

Because of these risks, parents with children in public schools should get to know their children's teachers, the principal, and other parents. They should read their children's textbooks and give their children little tests at home to see what they are learning and how they are progressing in the three Rs. They should seek to have their children exempt from sex education and death education, and they should supplement the public school education with good Christian teaching at home.

In other words, you ought not to rely on the public school alone to do the job of educating your children. You must be involved, and you must carefully monitor what your children are being taught. But, hopefully, many of you will look into homeschooling as a possible alternative to your present situation. Like so many veteran homeschoolers, you will feel inadequate at the beginning. But it won't take long for you to discover that you can indeed do it. It's a learning experience for you and the whole family.