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Ready, Set, Test!

A newcomer to the oft-overwhelming world of home schooling, Cindy was experiencing more doubts on this day than any other previous. Prompted by a few friends who were veteran homeschoolers, Cindy was trying to decide whether to test her children at year's end. Some of the moms she conversed with pointed out the peace of mind that comes along with administering the SAT or ACT tests to the children on a yearly basis. It provides a gauge of sorts, helps a mom know where each child's strengths or weaknesses lay. But Cindy worried, what if the tests reveal major weaknesses? How will I summon up the courage to continue homeschooling next fall? And how exactly does one "test" one's own kids? Before Cindy could work through that daunting issue, a totally different opinion on testing was set forth by some other moms. "Don't test at all," they cried. "Why do you need someone else's standard to tell you what you already know? It's just a waste of time and standardized testing gives in to the whole 'secular' worldview of what's valued. Don't do it, Cindy," they warned.

After listening silently to a rather heated exchange between these opposing camps, Cindy was even more confused. Why did I open my mouth, she wondered. What

puzzled Cindy most was how opinionated each mother seemed to be. Every one (excluding herself) had a voice in the matter . . . and made it known. Cindy then realized that it was probably good that these mothers did have such strong sentiments because she'd heard every one of them tell stories of how they'd had to defend their school of choice on countless occasions. Maybe, Cindy decided, taking issue, if done with respect, wasn't such a bad thing. For sure, Cindy knew she'd be welcome within this group of fiercely proactive moms whatever choice she eventually made. On her way out, Cindy received pats on the back and promises to pray for her as she decided. "Either way," one mom confided, "you can always change your mind next year. It's one of the benefits of being both mom and teacher."



Make my joy complete by being of the same mind maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than yourself.

—PHILIPPIANS 2:2–3

Dear Lord, each and every day I am learning something new about this venture called homeschooling. I'm most definitely still riding the upper edge of the learning curve. Today was yet another good example when I felt completely out of my element. But as I followed the conversation and paid attention

to the arguments posed, I came away with new insight. True enough, my friends and their strong opinions did surprise me. Still, I understand why they have developed certain viewpoints. They've all had to defend their positions on every aspect of home educating so many times that they've learned to be prepared. I can learn from them. I realized that no matter what decision I make on this particular issue, I need to gather the facts, organize the information, and then be courageous enough to stand behind it. Not that I won't make mistakes, but I can see that there is a mind-set I must develop. Help me learn how to sift through the myriad voices I hear. Give me the wisdom to discern between what is good and what is best for my family. Make my senses keen and my responses gracious, yet honest. Lord, I am not certain of the many turns in the road this homeschooling will take us. It does give me reason to pause and hesitate. Yet I am confident that as I seek your guidance and learn from the experiences of others who are farther along this road than I, all will be well. I give you thanks for your readiness to hear my cries of distress and how quickly you bring in the troops to assist me. Help me this day recognize what a stalwart group of supporters I have in my fellow homeschooling moms. They bring my heart joy and reassurance even if they do overwhelm with me their zeal at times. Amen.

We must decide if we will impress people or have an impact on them.

—JUD WILHITE IN *Faith That Goes the Distance*