Creating Margins So Homeschooling Works for Real Life-Part 1

Episode 331

Rachel Winchester [00:00:01]:
What do you do when the pressures of homeschooling and being with your family full-time bring you to a breaking point? If you've ever felt yourself spread thin and struggling to be kind to your nearest neighbors, this conversation is for you. 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 through her literature-based approach In this episode, Carol talks with consulting client Mellany Zepelak about how learning to create margin in her life and receive God's love has transformed her family life. Are you ready to reset your family's relationship with screens so that you can connect more deeply with one another, with God, and nature? Unfortunately, aspects of childhood that were largely assumed in past generations have gone the way of the dodo bird. With our Unplugged Childhood Bundle, we'll help you tame the media lion, Cultivate a love for nature and give your children lots of time for unstructured play. After listening to the Unplugged Childhood Bundle, you'll have the vision and tools you need to give your children the precious gifts of innocence, boredom, and resilience. Use coupon code PODCAST at checkout to receive 15% off your order.

Rachel Winchester [00:01:15]:
Visit our online store, homeschoolmadesimple.net/store, to get the Unplugged Childhood Bundle today. Now let's get into the episode.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:24]:

Welcome listeners. I am sitting with my friend on a screen, sadly. I wish you were here sitting in the sunshine with me, but my friend Mellany Zuplak from the fair state of Minnesota.

Mellany Zepelak [00:01:35]:
Hello.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:36]:
And she and her husband are raising 3 amazing children, homeschooling them. And Mellany has kind of a sweet story that I felt would encourage you all as well. So welcome, Mellany.

Mellany Zepelak [00:01:50]:
Thank you, Ms. Carol.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:52]:
So tell our listeners how we began kind of the relationship that we have.

Mellany Zepelak [00:01:59]:
Well, we first came to one of your seminars as an encouragement by a couple of friends, and at that time our oldest was only 2 years old. So we have been learning from you for a decade already. Um, wow. I think so.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:19]:
Was I 12 years old at the time?

Mellany Zepelak [00:02:21]:
You must have been. Yes. Um, and then when he was, had just turned 5, my husband and I started to consult with you specifically regarding education and how do we do this homeschool thing? Because I was one of those people that was Really?

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:42]:
I don't know if I knew that.

Mellany Zepelak [00:02:46]:

Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:47]:
Okay. What changed your tune?

Mellany Zepelak [00:02:49]:
You know, we landed at a church in the Twin Cities that had a lot of homeschooling families. And so a lot of my preconceived thoughts on home education were obliterated as I got to know these amazing children, how they would sing and dance and They'd stop, they'd look me in the eye, they'd answer my questions. They wouldn't just run away with their friends and completely ignore that some adult is talking to them. They were thoughtful and respectful. And so that was one thing. And then really close friends of ours decided to home educate, and we were really blessed by them. They were following your method. And then ultimately it was the Lord.

Mellany Zepelak [00:03:33]:
We were on our way to one of your seminars and we were looking into— there's a— a school in the Twin Cities that's a Charlotte Mason school, and it's a really great school. We were looking to set up a time to go tour that, and Pete, my husband, was saying, he just turns to me and goes, I think the Lord's calling us to homeschool. I think we just need to say yes. And so that was the beginning.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:59]:
Wow, that's lovely. And then what, about 5 years ago, Something in our relationship kind of shifted, and that's been really, really sweet. So talk about that, please.

Mellany Zepelak [00:04:12]:
Yeah, I actually found the original letter I sent to you. Can I read some of it?

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:17]:
Yes, I'd love you to.

Mellany Zepelak [00:04:18]:

Okay, this is me now, for the listeners. This is me writing to Carol. So I said, you are the one that I know the Lord wants me to pursue. The reason is that you embody the kind of person I'd like to become. You See and praise the good in all you see, and you have launched a ministry to serve and grow families for God's Kingdom. One of my spiritual gifts is discernment. As we know, every gift comes with a shadow. The shadow side of discernment is that I so often see what is not right and where I and others need to grow, yet neither I nor others are motivated by someone telling us how we're doing it wrong.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:59]:
Whoa.

Mellany Zepelak [00:05:00]:
And, um, then I went on and I said, I know from your seminars and personally working with you through consulting how authentically you praise, and it is motivating. And I want to become like that for myself, my husband, and my children. And then I shared a scripture that's so personal to you that I didn't even know at the time, but Ephesians 4:29, do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And I told you I'm praying for— praying this verse, and that the Lord would help me live it out daily, and in the process, grow me in cheerfulness, contentment, and gratitude.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:47]:
That's beautiful, and you're absolutely right. So from the time that I lived in the Christian commune back in the Jesus Movement, I remember reading that scripture from a little green Gideon's Bible when we were outside there in California one day and kind of camping on that and reading it to everybody else. Like, you guys, listen to this. You know, we were all new Christians. And that scripture, let no unwholesome word proceed forth from your mouth, in the King James. And I just remember it impacting me. Have I practiced it all the time? No, I have not. But I loved that the Lord spoke spoke to you through that same verse as he had spoken to me.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:30]:
So then what happened?

Mellany Zepelak [00:06:32]:
So then, um, I started working with you almost monthly for about 2, a year to, and then we spread it out. Then it wasn't quite as frequent, but over, over a couple year period.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:47]:
Um, 'cause I felt like it was almost 5 years. Am I crazy that we've been coaching together, or am I crazy? Maybe I am.

Mellany Zepelak [00:06:54]:
Um, it was, well, consistently, okay, 2022 is when I went back.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:02]:
Okay.

Mellany Zepelak [00:07:02]:
So I guess that's 3-ish years.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:05]:
Okay. Got it. So then we started working together and, and you said—

Mellany Zepelak [00:07:09]:
Working together with that being the start and like the main theme. And as I was going through all my notes From, from these past few years, that theme continues in almost every consulting time that we have had.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:26]:
Yes.

Mellany Zepelak [00:07:27]:
Yeah, that theme has, has continued, but a lot of things came forth from that. Um, there were, there's a lot of encouragement from you, but there's a lot of obstacles for me that I had to overcome. And—

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:42]:

Yeah, talk about those. If you don't mind.

Mellany Zepelak [00:07:44]:
No, I don't mind. One of the obstacles, one of the first ones you helped me to address is, um, having margin and you really encouraged me to have some self-care.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:59]:
Mm-hmm.

Mellany Zepelak [00:08:00]:
And at that time, I, I was already getting a brief weekly break with my husband. We had worked it out so I'd get a few hours every week to just go out by myself. Um, but I remember so specifically you told me when you have no margin, the niceties of life are the first things to go. And so you said patience, fun, humor are replaced with impatience, meanness, and being temperamental. And I was like, yes. And, and so—

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:32]:
Oh dear, you're reading my mail right now. I'm getting totally convicted by what you just said. It makes me think of my pastor, Chuck Smith. He used to drive down the road in California and he would be listening to K-Wave, our radio station, and then his own program would come on with, of course, teaching that he'd given. And he'd be getting— he'd say, and I was getting ministered to by it, and I didn't even remember saying that. It's like, That's so convicting, Mellie. That, I don't know. I think you need to repeat that one more time because I should probably tattoo that now on my chest.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:12]:
Okay.

Mellany Zepelak [00:09:13]:
Sounds good. If you have no margin, the niceties of life are the first things to go.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:18]:
Wow.

Mellany Zepelak [00:09:19]:
It's, it's the truth really. And so you encouraged me to take more of an extended break. More consistently. So you said ideally quarterly to get away, you encouraged a weekend. Um, and then you said at least 2 times a year. So working with my husband, we worked it out. So now quarterly I get at least an overnight.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:46]:
Awesome.

Mellany Zepelak [00:09:46]:
And it is really a life-changing piece. And the other piece of that, that you told me Is seeing and praising the good. So blessing others, being able to see that in others, and self-care are connected. And it's true, even on my weekly time away, getting a couple hours, you know, 2 to 4 hours out of the house once a week, when I come back, things that were bothering me before, or— They don't bother me as much anymore because I just have had like time to replenish or time that somebody is not hugging my leg or needing something, or I walk in the door and, hey, Mommy, I want to tell you this, this, and this, which is wonderful. Um, but sometimes I just need a break from that. So.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:40]:
That's right. And how has it changed your child rearing? experiences then since you've been reprogramming your mind?

Mellany Zepelak [00:10:51]:
How has it changed it?

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:53]:
Yes.

Mellany Zepelak [00:10:53]:
Oh.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:54]:

Or has it?

Mellany Zepelak [00:10:55]:
Yeah, it has in a significant way. One of the first things that I will say that I am really aware of is if a particular child or myself, you know what, I'm going to use a story of myself and then I'll connect it to my kids if that's okay.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:14]:
Okay, great.

Mellany Zepelak [00:11:15]:
Um, there was a morning, it was a morning, and if one more person said mommy, I think I was going to scream. And we were all headed somewhere. I, I, I can't even remember where it was, but we were in the car and someone said something and I responded in a really harsh way. And my husband gave me that look. That look was, that was like, whoa, that was harsh. And it just made me mad because I, I was just like, I knew how I was being and I didn't want to be that way.

Rachel Winchester [00:11:56]:
Yes.

Mellany Zepelak [00:11:57]:
But I just, ah, I was just done.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:01]:
Yeah.

Mellany Zepelak [00:12:02]:
So we got out of the car and my husband told the kids to go ahead and go in that he was going to talk with mommy and I was like, oh boy, here it comes. And what he did is he put his arm around me and he said, hey, how you doing, lovey?

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:21]:
Oh.

Mellany Zepelak [00:12:22]:
And I was just stunned, stunned silent. Um, I didn't want him to be kind. I didn't want kindness. I, I was, I was being really cranky and really mean and I knew it. And so I, I kind of wanted the, hey, you better shape up sort of speech. Yeah. And instead he continued and he said, um, we love you. You know that, right? Like, I love you.

Mellany Zepelak [00:12:49]:
We love you. And so then of course the tears came.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:54]:
Yeah.

Mellany Zepelak [00:12:54]:
And it just melted, like all of the harshness, all of it melted because I just needed to know that I was loved in that moment.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:04]:
Yes.

Mellany Zepelak [00:13:05]:
And so I share that story because now I recognize that in my children. When I see any of them kind of harping on other people, getting really— being touchy with their siblings or trying to get in the way or just Being kind of cranky, when my initial response wants to be to yell or to correct, I now know, go over and rub the shoulder or give the hug and say, hey, how are you doing today? Like, is there something that you need? Seems like you're struggling.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:49]:
Mm-hmm.

Mellany Zepelak [00:13:50]:
And so just this whole idea of Seeing and praising the good, of looking to bless. It's, it's like God's upside-down kingdom. He, he does things in the complete opposite way that we usually think to do it.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:09]:
Yeah.

Mellany Zepelak [00:14:10]:
And, you know, somebody's being cranky or mean and you bless them and it just changes everything. And so then I also notice, I am also starting to notice that if my kids are starting to pick on each other and stuff too, it might be a sign that, that I'm doing that to them at that time.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:30]:
And that you've created that environment in your home and then it continues with them.

Mellany Zepelak [00:14:36]:
Yes. And so then I realize, okay, now I need to shift focus. I need to shift focus and start looking for And blessing.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:46]:
Wow.

Mellany Zepelak [00:14:47]:
So yeah. Wow. Woo.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:49]:
So how did you first break these negative patterns?

Mellany Zepelak [00:14:54]:
I think it's something that, well, there's some very practical things. Um, one of the first ones is that you said to me, when someone hasn't received the blessing, they don't know how to give the blessing. But that I am to give the blessing and not wait to receive it, that I have received it from Christ.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:18]:
Amen.

Mellany Zepelak [00:15:19]:
And so, um, one of the first places I had to go is learning to listen to the Lord and really look at those scriptures that say, what does the Lord say about me? And about you.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:34]:
Okay. So what is— you started with first getting your tank filled, right? Oh, go ahead. So what does he say about you?

Mellany Zepelak [00:15:43]:
That he loves me, that he delights in me, that he rejoices over me, that I am wonderful.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:52]:
Mm-hmm.

Mellany Zepelak [00:15:55]:
You told me about a book. Is it The Singing God by Sam Storms?

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:59]:
Yes, by Sam Storms. Yep.

Mellany Zepelak [00:16:02]:
So I've been reading that book to just encourage my heart on, on these truths of what, what does the Lord say about me? Because I used to, in, in the culture I grew up in and the, the religion I grew up in, I used to view God as a God that was like pointing at me and telling me all the things that I did wrong.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:26]:
Yes.

Mellany Zepelak [00:16:27]:
Um, but my 6-year-old recently drew a picture of God. And his arms are open wide and he is smiling. And he has it posted up next to her bed. And the Lord has been teaching me, that's how I look at you. I look at you and I am smiling. I, I delight in who you are.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:55]:
Wow.

Mellany Zepelak [00:16:55]:
And so. I can't give what I don't have. That's something that I've learned from this. So it has been a journey for me to learn to receive from the Lord and receive his love, to be relaxed in his love. And part of that you taught me because I came to you in one of our consulting times and I said, how do I teach my children how to have a quiet time? Do you remember this?

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:25]:
Mm-hmm. No.

Mellany Zepelak [00:17:26]:
You had said to me, well, quiet time equals lap time.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:32]:
Oh.

Mellany Zepelak [00:17:34]:
Sitting in God.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:36]:
I don't remember anything.

Mellany Zepelak [00:17:39]:
See, you have so much profound wisdom and insight, you don't even know.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:43]:
You see it because it's the Holy Spirit. I have no memory of it. So what did I say? Lap time, meaning, go ahead, flesh that out, please.

Mellany Zepelak [00:17:51]:
What does that mean? Meaning sitting in God's lap.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:55]:
Oh.

Mellany Zepelak [00:17:56]:
Being with him, resting in his love. You said teach your children that quiet time is a time to receive and let God love on you, to let him hug you, to let him hold you, to experience his love for you. And you can relate it to you cuddling with them, that God wants to cuddle with them. And so I'm like, wait, I need to know this for myself.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:25]:
Don't we all? Yes. Yes. Wow. Wow. That's powerful. So that was the first thing that started to change?

Mellany Zepelak [00:18:37]:
That's the first thing that truly started to help things change.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:41]:
And then what about when you would send me little tallies or what? What? Tell me, talk about that.

Mellany Zepelak [00:18:47]:
I was so mad at you about that.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:48]:
Why?

Mellany Zepelak [00:18:50]:
Because you said to me, Mellany, I want you to keep score. And it was so good. It was so good. So for the listeners out there, I'm looking to affirm my children and affirm my husband. And Carol's like, I want you to keep track. I want you to keep track. And I would send her. So I try to figure out a way, like, how do I keep track? So I had initially, I put something around my wrist.

Mellany Zepelak [00:19:15]:

And I'd like carry this pencil around and like try to make these tally marks and that didn't work well. And then I figured out a sticky note method that worked better. Um, but it, it's good. Keeping track is good. 'Cause you encouraged me in a way that, 'cause I came to you and I was like, this feels weird. This is really uncomfortable.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:39]:
Yeah.

Mellany Zepelak [00:19:40]:
This feels really over the top. And you said, Mellany, this is a new language for you. You need to practice your new language. And you said, this is like chipping away at granite. It doesn't just happen overnight. And so it was a good thing to start to see the tallies go up, but the better thing was realizing that I can't do this.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:07]:
Mm-hmm.

Mellany Zepelak [00:20:08]:
On my own. And so, um, it started, it brought me to a place of repentance, repenting of harsh replies, repenting of patterns that I've seen in the trajectory of my family history, repenting and trying to do it all on my own, and then asking the Holy Spirit for help. Um, Lord, show me. Show me what my children are doing well. Show me what I'm doing well. Show me what my husband is doing well. And then also part of that process of the Holy Spirit and the tallying was asking my children for do-overs. And I feel like this was a powerful part of my growth in this area, but also of connecting with them and connecting our hearts.

Mellany Zepelak [00:21:05]:
I remember there was one morning I was working with my daughter and we were, I think, doing math, and I was getting really frustrated and I responded to her in a very harsh way.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:21]:
Yep.

Mellany Zepelak [00:21:22]:
And kind of immediately an unashamed 'Cause we were doing, I was tallying affirmations at this time and I just put my head down and started crying. And I sat up and I looked my daughter in the eyes and I said, Sophia, can I please have a do-over? And she's like, yes, of course, mommy. You know, like, like all cheerful. And so I, I did it over in the way that I desired to do it, which was patient and kind and in an understanding way. I apologized to her, but then I started to bemoan, oh, that I keep doing this. Why am I, why do I keep doing this? And, um, my son who had been listening to the whole thing from his room.

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:19]:
Mm-hmm.

Mellany Zepelak [00:22:19]:
came out. And he said, he said, it's okay, Mommy. At least you recognize it. You're always telling us the first step is to recognize that you're doing something because you can't change if you don't recognize it. And then I just lost it. He gave me a hug and I was just lost it because not only was he blessing me, but And I realized that my children were learning from me even as I'm not perfect. I'm messing up in this. I've come to learn that if my children see that I'm in process and that I go to Jesus, then I am teaching them that it's okay for them to be in process and that they can go to Jesus to help them too.

Mellany Zepelak [00:23:10]:
Woo!

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:11]:
That is incredible.

Rachel Winchester [00:23:14]:
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's

commandments are not burdensome. What he calls you to do, he will enable you to do. Blessings.