Essential Reading About Motherhood and the Value of Home

Episode 341

Rachel Winchester [00:00:02]:
You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. This week, I'm sharing the books we encourage families of preschoolers to read. These will help you gain an apologia for these early years and give you a vision for the foundation you're building for a lifelong love of learning. 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. Visit our online store, homeschoolmadesimple.net/store, to get the Unplugged Childhood Bundle today.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:57]:
Now let's get into the episode. This year at our in-person seminars, I've had the chance to teach a preschool breakout, which has been really fun. Hopefully a lot of you have gotten to come, and if you're interested in learning more about the preschool years, I definitely invite you to come to 2027 Homeschool Made Simple seminar and join me for the breakout. But today I wanted to share with you some of the books that I mentioned during that talk and what I would consider Essential reading for the preschool years and really just to establish a foundation for your family culture and for a love of learning and a lifestyle of learning. So I'm going to talk about, let's see here, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 books.

Don't let that intimidate you. I just was grabbing a few things and then, you know, I had to grab a couple more here and there. So.

Rachel Winchester [00:01:55]:
You don't have to read them all at once, and they're varying lengths and things. So anyway, let's start with the first book I have here is For the Family's Sake: The Value of Home in Everyone's Life. It's by Susan Schaefer Macaulay, and I love this book because it sets the tone for family culture. I like to think of family culture as like the culture that you use when you're making sourdough or really anytime you're fermenting something. A few years ago, I made kefir like all the time, and you take these little grains and you make— mix them with the milk and you leave it on your counter, and then after some time passes, then now you have kefir, and it totally changes the, the milk and becomes this delicious drink. But that's how I think of our family culture. It's just these little grains, but it has this lasting effect that makes something quite tasty. And so some of the chapters that she talks about, she talks about just the home and how to have like routine and giving your kids an anchoring through the home atmosphere.

Rachel Winchester [00:03:04]:
And one of the quotes that I share in the preschool session is about how she was writing this in, I think 1999 it was. So she was saying then, she was saying, How the mom who wants to stay at home with her children was demeaned by society and considered to be, quote, stuck at home with her youngsters. And how much more has that, you know, vitriol in some cases toward women who want to stay home and take care of their children and make a home for their family seen as something not worth anybody's time? And yet it's having really terrible effects on our children and on our society for people to not be prioritizing the home and the making of a home. And so this is like homemaking 101, you know, it's just great. She talks about the infrastructure of routine, of beds, balance, and books, contentment, thanks, and enjoyment, daily rhythms. And then she even talks about rhythms throughout the year. She has a writing style that is very similar to her mom, Edith Schaeffer's, in that they both kind of meander through a thought, which is— it really feels very conversational. And so it is just really enjoyable.

Rachel Winchester [00:04:32]:

Let's see, I'll just read you a little quote to give you a little taste of it, and then we'll go on to the next book. The home is to be like the house safely built on a rock because enough time and resources have been devoted to everyday ordinary life. This house is stable with continuity. It's sure, dependable, and built on the only true foundation, Christ. The prodigal child cannot return home unless the home carries on whether children are there or not. Jesus cannot comfort us when he says that he goes ahead beyond death through the resurrection to prepare a place for us unless we understand that such a settled vision of life is good. We cannot give this our abstract approval as to an idea. We are meant to demonstrate abundant life in the place where we live now, our everyday lives.

Rachel Winchester [00:05:22]:
So definitely pick up that book, For the Family's Sake by Susan Schaefer McCauley. Now the next book is one that I read early on, and it is called Loving the Little Years: Motherhood in the Trenches by Rachel Jenkovic. I personally love Rachel Jenkovic and Her mom and her sister's writing have been really helpful to me because she packs a punch. You know, when you're feeling sorry for yourself because you have a lot of kids to take care of, or you've got to make dinner again, or the laundry has gotten dirty again, you don't really need someone to come and stroke your ego. You need somebody to just say, "Get up! It's not getting done any faster without you doing it." So, but in a very encouraging way, I feel like Rachel. Rachel is a great cheerleader, but also she does not sugarcoat things, and that is a real mercy and good thing to happen to us. She says, mothers of little people have the most challenging and important job on earth, but it is a humble job, and it takes the eyes of faith to see the fruit of a coming generation of faithfulness. This book is about hardship and humor, sacrifice and satisfaction.

Rachel Winchester [00:06:40]:
That's actually in the foreword that her mom wrote for the book, Nancy Wilson. But a few of the chapters, Welcome to My Circus, or In the Rock Tumbler, that one she talks about the sanctification of being in like a rock being jostled around in a tumbler versus the way that a gentle stream rolls over rocks and it gradually over time has an effect. But then in the rock tumbler, it's the rocks are, the shape of the rock is being changed as it is being pounded, you know? And so,

sometimes we're sanctified by a gentle stream rolling over us, and sometimes we're sanctified by being in the rock tumbler. And so, she has some just really great analogies, and it's just really helpful. Short chapters, so it's extremely readable. You could just pick this up if you're having If you're needing some encouragement, it's a great one. She also has another one called Fit to Burst, which is also really great. Okay, then I talk about the book called Being There: Why Prioritizing Motherhood in the First 3 Years Matters, and this one is by Erica Komisar.

Rachel Winchester [00:07:56]:
She is not coming from a Christian background or perspective, very much a psychologist, but I read this book when I was pregnant with my third child. And so I had already been home with my other 2 children and, you know, didn't plan on changing anything. But I read— I learned about this actually through a podcast episode that Carol did with her friend Catherine Ruck back toward the beginning of the podcast. I think it was episodes 24 and 25. But they, they talked about attachment, which is a lot of what this book is about. Some of the quotes that she opens with are this one from C.S. Lewis, children are not a distraction from more important work, they are the most important work. And then Jessie Jackson said, your children need your presence more than your presents, gifts.

Rachel Winchester [00:08:51]:
And then Jill Churchill said, there is no way to be a perfect mother and a million ways to be a good one. So in part 1, she talks about the mother's presence. And I think even if you're already home with your kids and you see it as valuable, reading a book like this only further solidifies that and encourages you that by being present with my baby, by responding warmly to my young children, I am giving them everything that they need to succeed and to have a good foundation for their lives. And she also talks about when people can't be there, you know, when and how to choose surrogate caregivers if you are not able to be. And she talks about then part 2 is the cost of being absent. And then she ends with changing the conversation. Chapter 9, why don't we value mothering? And then chapter 10, where do we go from here? So it's really interesting that a psychologist, secular psychologist, is talking about these things, you know, or psychoanalyst, I should say, is talking about these things. It's common grace, you

know, it's common grace that we see that children need their mothers and that mothering is extremely important and that it's actually a scheme of evil and wickedness to demean that role and to remove children from their mothers or to not attach, you know, with your children.

Rachel Winchester [00:10:26]:
So that is a great encouraging read if you you don't understand why it's important, this will be very enlightening and helpful. Another book that I really appreciated in my early years of parenting was a book called Simplicity Parenting, which is by Kim John Payne. It's subtitled Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier, and More Secure Kids. And he talks a lot of practical things in this book. About the ways to apply simplicity across the board in your home and in your parenting. So he talks about one of the chapter two is called Soul Fever, which is about the signs in a child that show you that they are overstimulated and that their life is not simplified. You know that they are have too much going on in their environment, in their schedule, in their exposure to the adult world. And so he kind of describes what that looks like, and then he spends the, the rest of the book talking about, you know, a child's environment, like the toys that they need and what makes a good toy and how you can declutter and have fewer toys and the type of toys that invite deeper play and engagement.

Rachel Winchester [00:11:54]:
He says a smaller, more manageable quantity of toys invites deeper play and engagement. An avalanche of toys invites emotional disconnect and a sense of overwhelm. So I know that a lot of times we can feel like, oh, there's so much stuff, or these things were given to us, how can we get rid of them? Or my kids will be upset. But really, we have to be always monitoring our children's environment because if you're having any signs of overwhelm in your kids, it could very well be coming from The clutter or just the stuff that's in your home and the environment that they're living in. He says, if you give a child less and less complexity, they become more interested, and this cultivates true powers of attention. So he also talks about rhythm, establishing your family rhythm, and giving your children that predictability that helps them know what to expect. And then lastly, I think this is really important. He talks about screens come into

this, but also just conversation in general about how a lot of times screens expose children to adult things that they don't need to know about yet.

Rachel Winchester [00:13:12]:
And so it robs them of their innocence because they've been saturated in media, and that then that overwhelms children because they're having to filter out the adult world on their own, and we don't, we don't need to leave them in that. So we need to protect them from the adult world, and that involves protecting them from technology, protecting them from conversations that they don't need to hear right now, and listening to them. Children need to know that they have a place in a good world and a future of promise. So we want to be speaking hope over our children's lives, and he has so many practical tips that will be really helpful. So that's Simplicity Parenting by Kim John Payne. And then another book is The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast, Too Soon. This is by David Elkind, and he wrote this many years ago. He was a psychologist in the time of Dr.

Rachel Winchester [00:14:17]:
Raymond Moore and Dorothy Moore, and he especially focused early childhood, and so this book goes into Piagetian thought, which Piaget was a Swiss psychologist who we talk a lot about in the seminar, but also he just goes into why children need a slow, unhurried childhood and some of the ways that you can see if a child is feeling stressed and hurried, and then what we can do to protect our kids' childhood so that they're not growing up Too Fast, Too Soon. So kind of overlapping with Simplicity Parenting, I would say, um, but a little bit more theoretical than practical. Then of course I can't do a preschool episode without mentioning Better Late Than Early by Dr. Raymond Moore and his wife Dorothy Moore. This is very research-heavy. They talk about I don't—considering everything I just said about attachment, don't pay attention to the things they say about baby care at the very, very beginning. Carol always says that if she had read that first, she wouldn't have made it past the rest of the book. But there are excellent things in this book that talk about the need for children to be with their parents and how keeping children home in the early years of their education is best.

Rachel Winchester [00:15:49]:

Of course, this was not— this was written before homeschool was even a word in the vernacular, so they were not even thinking about homeschooling, you know, all the way through the child's education. They were more so just pulling from the research that was showing it's better for a child to stay at home, to be with their parents more than their peers. And so then it also goes through each stage So there's a chapter on 1 year to 3 years, 2.5 to 5, and they just talk about different developmental milestones and markers of that time in a child's life. And even like how they can work in the family and things they can do around the home and different things that they're ready to do developmentally. There's ages 4 to 7, and I think it goes to, yeah, 8 or 9. So that's really helpful, especially as your kids get into new stages. This is a great book to have on hand, or you can listen to it as an audiobook if you're not able to find a hard copy of it. But even just to go to those specific chapters and say, okay, my child just turned, you know, 5 or 4, what— I'm gonna listen to that chapter so I can kind of know what's ahead in the next couple years.

Rachel Winchester [00:17:05]:
Then another book that I highly recommend is Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, and this is written by Richard Louv. This is several years old, but, and it is, it is pretty dense as far as it's very research-driven, but he just talks about the importance of nature, you know, saving our children from nature deficit disorder. So he talks about about the new relationship between children and nature, just how natural play is really criminalized. There have been many times when my children are playing and having fun and just exploring and not being right under my thumb, and it makes people really uncomfortable. And he also talks about how HOAs have rules now that really restrict children's freedom to be able to climb trees or do basic things like that, which is really, really sad. And so then he talks about why the young and the rest of us need nature. So all the bits of nature, the genius of childhood, how nature nurtures creativity, and then nature deficit disorder and the restorative environment. And then he addresses what I was just talking about of why Johnny and Jeanie don't play outside anymore.

Rachel Winchester [00:18:35]:
And how, you know, people are so afraid. And that actually the statistic is that people, kids are not any more likely to get kidnapped today than they were

however many years ago that people, you know, talk about. Like when older people now who might say, oh, in our childhood, it's not as safe as it was then. Really, that's not true statistically. And so, he talks about those things like why it's not actually dangerous and how we really need to get our kids outside if they are going to be the ones to take care of the earth in the future. How are children going to care about protecting the world if they do not even have a relationship with it and do not have an affection for it? And then as Christians, he's not writing from a Christian perspective, but as Christians, How much more should we feel that way? Because you think about Psalm 19, the heavens declare the glory of God. Our children's experience with nature and their time in it is a direct connection that they have to the Creator and understanding who God is, and so we don't want to cut off that connection to God's natural revelation in the world. We want to encourage them to go out into the world, to be in nature, to learn about it, which is why we make nature study the science of our curriculum through the elementary and middle school years, but Richard Louv, he deals with so many different topics, and I highly recommend this book, Last Child in the Woods.

Rachel Winchester [00:20:20]:
And last but not least, I will give you The Read-Aloud Handbook by Jim Trelease. This is a great book that was originally published in 1982, but it has been republished. I think now it's in its 8th edition, in its 8th edition as of 2019, I think. So it's been published and republished. Millions of copies have been sold of this book, and It is filled with research, and he kind of does it in a fun style as far as there's questions, and then he speaks to that question and answers the question, so it's really accessible, and you could easily pick it up and just read a little part because each chapter is split up into sections based on the different questions, and so he deals with why we even read aloud in the beginning. One of the most compelling things I think is just the problem of vocabulary that a child— in my copy on page 16, my copy's really old, but he's talking about vocabulary and where is the better vocabulary in conversation or in reading? And so then there's a chart that shows all the words And number of rare words met per 1,000 when listening to conversation and then when reading different materials. And so he says, regular family conversations will take care of the basic vocabulary, but when you read to the child, you leap into the rare words that help most when it's time for school and formal learning. Simultaneously, you're

familiarizing the child with books and print in a manner that brings him or her pleasure.

Rachel Winchester [00:22:10]:
So as you read to your kids— and this book is basically a huge advertisement for reading aloud to children, and Jim Trelease himself said that reading aloud to a child is the best advertisement you can give for them wanting to learn to read, because he said we've spent so much time teaching, trying to teach kids how to read, that we've forgotten to teach them to want to read. And so if you are needing and wanting to cultivate a love of reading and a motivation to read in your children and even in yourself, this is a great book, extremely thorough. It will answer all kinds of questions. And then the back, probably third of it maybe, is all book recommendations. So if you read books on our book list and then you are like, what else can we read? He has some recommendations in here as well. So that will provide lots of fodder for reading aloud, and I hope your family will just grow and grow and have so many connecting moments over reading together as a family. So if you have kids in the preschool years and you are wanting to do some reading and learn about these things, check out these books. We'll have the full list in the show notes so you can see all of those.

Rachel Winchester [00:23:30]:
And even if you maybe are deciding about the book, you can always look up the person and maybe see a lecture or find an interview with them. That can also be really helpful as well. So hope this has been helpful to you, and happy reading! 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 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! Bye!