



Grace in Homeschool 007
10 Reasons You Can Homeschool
Reason 7: Avoiding Comparison
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Amy: So, at our core, we do compare ourselves. It's what do we do as a result of that happening? Where does our mind go? And we have to help our children by comparing themselves with others.

(Opening Intro Music)

Amy: Hi, friends, and welcome. I'm your host AmyElizSmith. I'm a homeschool mom of three and have homeschooled each from the start. While I have a Master's in Elementary Ed, I want to teach other mamas that you don't need a fancy degree to have the passion and knowledge to educate your children from home successfully.

I hope to encourage you to jump in and start your homeschool journey and provide my absolute best recommendations to help you begin your homeschool journey. Thanks for joining us for this crazy, messy, grace-filled homeschool ride.

Amy: Hi, friends, and welcome back to our "Top 10 Reasons Why You Can Homeschool." So today, we will talk about avoiding the comparison trap in school and online. Now it is a natural tendency for children to compare themselves to others, but by homeschooling them and getting them out of situations that can happen at school or on the bus, we can save them from the detriment that these things can cause.

So Mitch Princeton, a psychologist from the University of North Carolina, said, "When we're reliant on others, for our sense of, only feeling good if we get positive feedback or markers of success, we are at risk for depression." Rebecca Weber wrote in Psychology Today that "social comparison theory was first put



forth in 1954 by psychologist Leon Festinger who hypothesized that we make comparisons as a way of evaluating ourselves. At its root, the impulse is connected to the instant judgments we make of other people. A key element of the brain's social cognition network that can be traced to the need to protect oneself and assess threats."

So, at our core, we do compare ourselves. It's what do we do as a result of that happening? Where does our mind go? And we have to help our children from comparing themselves with others, both on receiving comparisons or if they are thinking them or giving them out. We want our children to be safe from these things. We want them to learn at their own pace, and homeschooling is connected to these ideas.

Subjects in homeschooling do not have to be perfectly aligned with the student's grade level. I'm going to give you a couple of examples here. For example, my son was not reading right away at the kindergarten level, and I taught kindergarten, full-day kindergarten before, which is part of why I decided to homeschool.

Because I saw these children being forced to learn curriculum all day long, it was too soon, and many weren't developmentally ready. So for my son, I knew that I wasn't going to push reading too soon before he was ready, and he was reading okay, but he didn't love reading longer fiction books.

I brought some graphic novels to him. He absolutely loved them and then began to love reading. And two of these graphic novels were Hamlet and even McBath, and he started loving Shakespeare. And now that's lent itself, and he will appear in a Shakespeare play. He will be in the Merchant of Venice, which is very exciting.

And so I allowed him to learn at his own pace. I didn't force him to do exactly what his peers might have done in school, and he didn't know; this is the key; he



didn't know that he was technically “behind” in reading from his peers or what the grade level expectations would've been because I was able to protect him from knowing that.

I shared in earlier episodes that all three of my children have not attached to reading. I think they would have sooner because I know how to teach reading and reading instruction. It's a huge passion of mine. But I've had to take my pride out of the equation and see where they are developmentally. And, for all three of them, they don't have to know that their development in their reading journey has not had any pressure attached to it.

They're not being pushed before they are developmentally able. Now, I have a friend whose son was reading at age three, and I don't think there was anything she did that was particularly special with him. She wasn't doing reading instruction with him, but he picked up reading. He's quite brilliant.

But again, every child can learn at their own pace, and she found age-appropriate reading for him. And that's always been something that they've been able to do. But children in homeschool won't experience the same pressures and exposure to comparison that children in those public schools or government schools will experience. So there are no peer pressures as well.

Let's jump into the schools where they have differentiated instruction through guided reading or math groups; they separate kids. Now, Princeton says that many people believe it is possible to use ability grouping in that differentiated instruction to maximize achievement effort, but it doesn't work in practice.

But if your child is gifted and at a higher level than others, they shouldn't be held back either. So just like my friend's son, who's three, he didn't need to be in any of these reading groups. If he were put into school, he would need to be in a group alone. And so what's great about homeschooling is that you're not put into a



group with either the same level as you or kids who are lower or higher than you, so you're not comparing yourself to others.

The William T. Grant Foundation discussed this further with those guided reading groups where every child knows where they are on the scale, which can be detrimental to their learning. But they talk about when teachers have low expectations for weaker readers. As a result, they slow down the pace even more than they need to.

So lower achieving students, as a result, will fall further and further behind. I believe that's true. Further, they say, "evidence suggests that practice of group instruction based on skill level is less beneficial than teachers think. It can exasperate achievement gaps and even slow reading growth for some of those children."

And so much research has been centered around this that those guiding reading groups cause more harm than good. And this is why I believe, and this is why we talk about this, is that homeschooling can work the best, and you're at your child's own pace and their level—names on boards, knowing where to stand, behavior traps, things like stop lights.

All of those things are really negative and can imprint on a child's soul negatively. So can the state testing and those national tests that the child has to sit through. And now I understand many of them are on computers where a child has to log in. That's a big time waster, but it also can be high pressure for some children.

And I know parents can put pressure on their children too, but I don't see a benefit. I don't see a benefit to putting your child in that situ. Another point of not comparing yourself to others can do with peer pressure. So, we don't want our children to be exposed to things sooner than they're able, and when they're home, you can monitor what they are exposed to more in their screen use in



particular. So much of the comparison trap today is due to social media and online use.

We know that children are so impressionable. And they are taught so many things, and to include the devices that surround them, they need to know that everyone has unique and awesome strengths. This relates to, I wish it were just teenagers, but middle schoolers and even elementary kids are on social media where they're having the comparison traps happen.

And they're being exposed to various things and not even realizing the dopamine addictions happening on those screens where advertising advertisers pay insidious companies. They want you to stay on their devices. So extreme monitoring is needed, and we'll talk about this in future episodes because it's a huge passion of mine to monitor our children with their screens.

Not only screen time but particularly what they are being exposed to. We have to be hypervigilant as parents to monitor and be able to turn away from explicit content. Children aren't born with this strength naturally to turn away from things that might negatively affect them or to be able, as we talked about earlier, to understand what the positive feedback or the markers of success could mean in comparison with others. We have to help them grow those cognitive skills, help them learn the habits, and learn self-control and the way of the will and how it is loving guidance for us. Most of us, myself included, were able to grow up without social media and the peer pressures that children and teenagers experience.

It's part of a natural process where we cultivate a sense of who we are from how others view us. But again, going back to Princeton, he states that hypervigilance about how others see you is supposed to go away in adulthood. But social media has created a lifelong adolescence due to those comparison traps. So adults are struggling with these things too. There's a [Ted Talk by Bea Arthur](#) about these impulses to compare ourselves: the fear of missing out, the FOMO,



and the mindset that you're not enough or you're not doing enough. This is a difficult place for adults, but we have to remember kids are experiencing these things at unprecedented levels.

And how do we help them avoid those things? And I truly believe it is to take them out of the equation and out of that situation. And I know that that's easier said than done, but when there's a will, there is a way so we can align ourselves with the good things that we want, with those beautiful and noble and true ways that we want to cultivate in our children and influence them with, but also with our own goals. So we can fight that desire to compare ourselves with others and focus on that growth mindset rather than fixing ourselves on that. And we can teach that to children, and children can, if we continue daily to help emphasize that growth mindset.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "Comparison is the thief of joy." This statement is used a lot, but it rings especially true. When we compare ourselves to others, we rarely will experience joy, and we will instead experience inadequacy, despair, or even self-resentment. Instead, we want our children to look to Christ for our identity humbly, and that's my prayer for my own children and my prayer for yours.

We can help them not to compare themselves and see themselves as Christ sees them so that they can thrive and serve others.