

Introduction

The following is the **Introduction** of *Beyond Survival: A Guide to Abundant-Life Homeschooling*.

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There we were, poised on the brink of the jumping-off place. Much like those long-ago pioneers who prepared to leave civilization and head out in the wilderness to the promised land of Oregon, we felt like twentieth-century pioneers heading out into the wilds of homeschooling. We were bound for a better education, patriotic citizenship, Christian character, loving relationships, and a hunger-to-know environment. And much like our long-ago forefathers and mothers, we had those around us saying we were foolish, crazy, and too adventurous. We wondered whether we had what it took to make it through the Desert of Not-Knowing-How and the Mountain Ranges of Resistance, Failure, and Weariness. We heard of those who, unable to cope with the difficulties, had turned back, but we also heard wondrous tales of abundance and delight from others who had successfully negotiated the plains and the mountains and were even now living out our dreams.

We joined a sort of wagon train, complete with experienced wagon masters, to lead us to this new land. The experts' homeschooling seminars and books explained many of the details and difficulties of our impending journey and gave us some good tips for making our wagon secure, such as the reminder, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15) and the admonishment "Read out loud to your children." We covered our wagon with a canvas of family love, secured it with patient discipline, and greased the wheels with laughter.

We "sold the farm" - we did NOT sign up our oldest child for classes but ordered curriculum instead. We stocked up on provisions for the long trip - phonics puzzles, math manipulatives, crayons, playdough, desks, children's books, a library card - until our wagon was stuffed to the brim! With adventure burning bright in our hearts and a bit of fear and trepidation holding tight to our handle, we joined the other wagons heading out on the journey of a lifetime. We had no intention of returning.

This book is about the lessons we learned on our expedition: lessons in survival, some from the painful schoolmaster of experience, others from veteran travelers and guides along the way; lessons in protection of our children from the influence of today's culture; lessons in perseverance; lessons on living abundantly. It is also about the bountiful harvest we are beginning to reap in this new land as our children mature: articulate, interested, serving others, considerate, exuberant, creative, responsible - traits shared by many of the homeschool young people whom we find along our journey. It is, if you will, a homeschool traveler's journal and guide written to explain, instruct, and encourage you in your expedition.

Bill and I, usually accompanied by our children, Isaac, Michael, and Melody, have traveled across the nation for years, talking with homeschoolers at conventions, book fairs, and seminars. We have found those who are barely surviving by sheer determination and grit; others who are uninspired and bored but continue homeschooling in hopes that it will get better; still others who begin enthusiastically, doing every field trip and "extra credit" in sight, but find themselves wearing down or burning out; and then those who are having an abundant, joy-filled, exhilarating homeschool experience (yes, they really **do** exist!). We have compiled here many of the insights gained on our journey from each of these families as well as our own personal experience. As we've shared our hearts in seminars, conventions, and retreats, many of those attending have told

us that our message encouraged them, helped them, and enriched their homeschool, even changed their lives. We pray that you, whether greenhorn or old hand, would also find that same encouragement, instruction, and inspiration in these pages and that you and your family will have joy in your journey.

*Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that more **abundantly**" (John 10:10)*