

Round table «INTERDENOMINATIONAL DISCUSSION ON FAMILY»

«PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND THOUGHTS CONCERNING FAMILY EDUCATION»

- Alex van Vuuren (The Netherlands), office manager at Stichting Schreeuw om Leven (Cry for Life Foundation) in Hilversum
- Janneke van Vuuren (The Netherlands), Home-educator since 2000



With our son Daniël and daughter Debora

Alex:

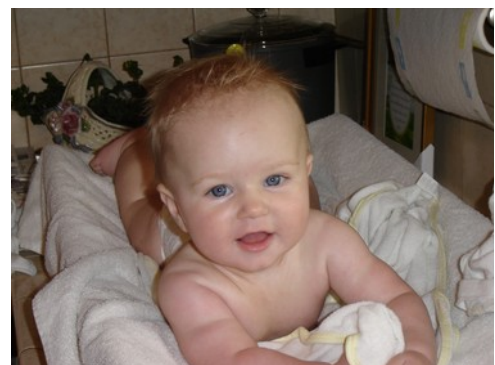
Why will my son will not become an engineer? At the end of this presentation you will know the answer to this question.

Since the very day that I learned the truth about abortion from a book by Francis Schaeffer, I have been pro-life.



It was clear to me that pro-life is more than a political issue. For instance, for me as a young man it gave a new perspective on sexuality. Pro-life is also pro-family, because when we love the child when it is not yet born we should love the same child after it has been born.

To be pro-family is a lifestyle. A lifestyle that in our country goes against the culture which places the individual above the family. I grew up in this individualistic culture and I had to change my thinking.



The pro-life convictions of my wife and I have been an important factor in our decision in 2000 to start homeschooling. For one thing, it did not feel right to put our son at age four in the hands of teachers who were almost strangers to us. It was not a pro-family thing to do.

It is already difficult to get permission for homeschooling in The Netherlands. As homeschooling is becoming more popular, our ministry of education has plans to change the law and make homeschooling illegal.

Now I want to share with you some of the experiences and values of our family in 14 years of homeschooling. Please understand that this is the story of our family, it is not the only way to do homeschooling:

- For us education is not just a transfer of knowledge. It is in the first place a transfer of convictions and morals.



- Many convictions, not only in spiritual matters, we develop together. One conviction is about eating healthy food. As a result we buy grain which we grind and from which we bake our bread.



- We encourage independent thinking. As a result, we are becoming critical of the media. In our study of history we see proof that in the so-called free West the news related to foreign affairs is manipulated. I suppose that

there will be less tension between countries if the citizens become critical of the news headlines.

- Our children respect their parents and are interested in the opinion of their father. This is contrary to what we see around us, even in Christian homes.
- Our children, age 17 and 18, are not involved in romantic relationships. At school it is common place to have a boy friend or girl friend sometimes starting at age 12.



- Most of our time is spent together in the family setting. We eat together. Visits we do together. Books we read together and films we see together. To protect our time and to guard our minds we decided to have no television and internet at home. *(Photo: On a visit in Germany)*

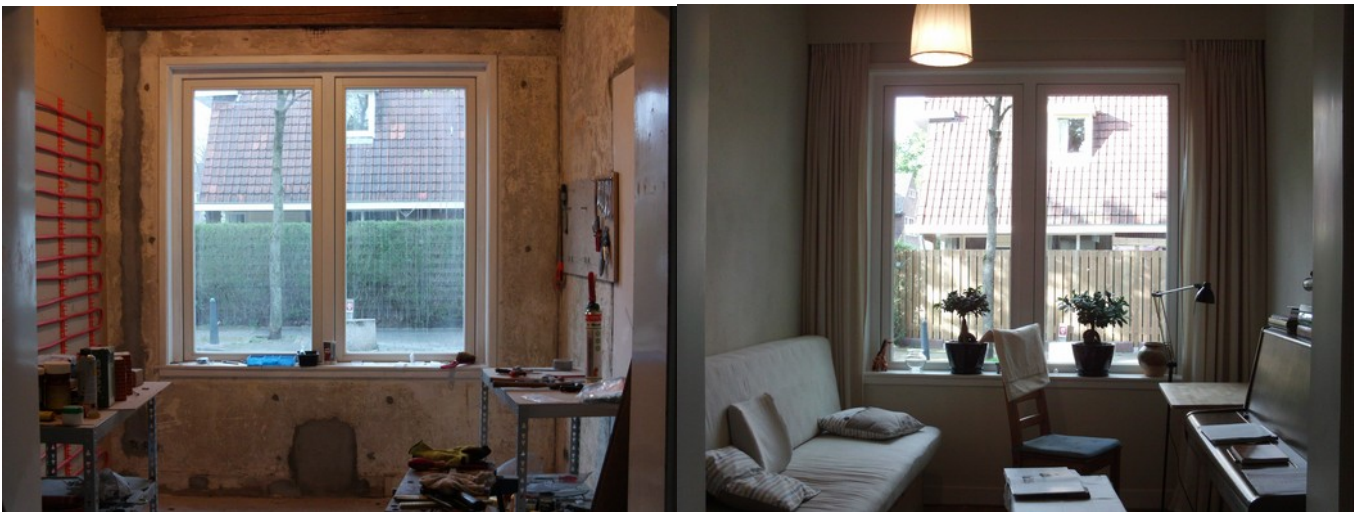
- Our children are both intelligent. At school they would certainly have been trained for university.

That would mean many hours in the class and many hours doing homework. Thus, our time as a family would be limited. This is a reason why we decided that we would not prepare our children for academic studies.

- As a result of this decision our son Daniël has been working with me in the office of the Dutch pro-life organization 'Cry for Life' since he was 16. This gives him responsibility, work experience and income. For me it was eight years later, after university at age 24, that I had this experience of work and income.

$$16 + 8 = 24$$

- Besides work there is time for study and for acquiring skills. We started a major family project when we bought a house in 2012. For sixteen months we have been working on the renovation of our new home. We did the electricity, the plumbing, we plastered the walls, we installed the heating system, we designed the kitchen and did many more things.



- Now I come to the question: *Why my son will not become an engineer.* Daniël has technical insight and he is good at mathematics. A friend of mine, who is a civil engineer, advised Daniël to study engineering at the technical university in our city. I did not agree with this advise, because as his father I want my son to be trained in the work that I do and not in something completely different. As we see it, the family is more important than the career of one of its members.



Janneke:

I have always been interested in Biblical education and wanted to become a teacher. Little did I know that in the end I would educate my own children. When our son Daniël was three years old, we started to think about teaching him at home. We found out that it was legally possible and started with the procedure of asking permission from the government, which we received. Later we asked permission for our daughter Debora. So our children have always been educated together. They were not separated from each other, which happens when you send your children to school. They have played a lot together, did many projects and have developed a good relationship. They have not been left on their own in a group of children with different moral standards. As you may know, children are like a sponge, they learn by imitating and copying. By keeping your children at home, under your leadership, you can decide what they will learn and who influences them. Another aspect is that you are always nearby when they need you, it may be for comfort or for correction and discipline.



For me as a mother it is very fulfilling to teach my children myself. My job as a mother is not limited to waking them up, feeding them, bringing them to school, taking them from school, feeding them again and putting them to bed. Because I am always with them I get to know their minds, how they think and have time to explain things to them. It is very natural for a mother to teach her own

children and it is not difficult. You do not have to copy school at home. Also a mother can teach her children a lot more than a teacher who has to teach twenty or thirty children at the same time. There is time left for other things than knowledge from books. Debora learned many practical things like cooking, baking and sewing. She likes chemistry, doing experiments and making



things herself. As a result we do not buy soap anymore, because she makes it. When Debora will become a mother she is well prepared. She is seventeen at the moment. When you compare her with me at seventeen, I was only busy studying and doing my homework.



I want to close in saying that the most important thing of all is to form the character of your children. Because what is the use for society of a highly educated person who cheats his boss, lies and is not honest in his business?