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Samoutou Family Blog



ABOUT THIS BLOG...



Family of 5
from Gabon, Hong Kong and the UK

Living in Impfondo,
Republic of Congo
Since April 2012

Blog by Joyce the mum,
Homeschooling novice,
Eye Charity founding doctor / director.
Reluctant domestic goddess

Passionate about sashimi,
helping people see
physically and spiritually,
and Jesus

Please do give comments and feedbacks so
that we can improve the way we
communicate with you!

P.S. This is the personal blog of the
Samoutou family
(Views our own)

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ARCHIVES



3 things I want my children to learn: thoughts of a secret tiger mum in Congo

APRIL 9, 2013



Have you ever heard parents who say that they can't wait for the school holidays to finish so that they can have a break? Well, my kids are on their last day of Easter holiday and I – am – ex-hausted! For a moment, I consoled myself that they would soon be back at school. Then I remembered, 'Oops! I *am* the school!' Welcome to our world of homeschooling.

When people hear that we are homeschooling our 3 children, we receive very mixed reactions. They vary from shock horror to rapturous delight, from genuine pity to awe and admiration. Some rave about the virtues of homeschooling, while others give us names of boarding schools that offer missionaries discounts. All of them are well-meaning, but their views on homeschooling cannot be more different. And us? We don't tend to analyse the pros and cons of homeschooling. As far as we are concerned, there is no other option. We have been advertising for a teacher for a year, but until one comes to live in Congo or until our kids are old enough for us to consider boarding school, we are homeschooling by default.

Before we left the UK, we had the great pleasure of meeting the parents of our friends who happened to be homeschooling gurus. They homeschooled their four amazing children and now run a successful company to support homeschoolers. They advised us that until high school, as long as our kids can read and write, do a bit of arithmetic and love to learn, then that is enough. They continued, 'As you go through your daily life, teach them. When you bake, teach them about weight, volume, time, temperature. Talk about where the flour comes from. General knowledge...' I found myself raising my hand, 'Err... I am sorry. I am from Hong Kong. We don't do general knowledge there. We don't even do academic knowledge. We just do exam knowledge. As long as we get an 'A', then goal accomplished!'

That got me thinking about the goals of our homeschool. What do I really want my kids to learn?

Goal 1: Love God

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Musings

More than anything, I want them to know God. I want them to know who they are. I want them to know that who they are is not determined by what they do, don't do; can do, can't do; what they have, don't have; who they are with; or what others think of them. I want them to know that it is ok to mess up, fess up, and start again. I want them to know that God has an amazing plan for their lives and that with God, they can do anything. I want them to know that they are never alone, that there is always anchoring hope, empowering joy, guiding peace, saving grace, and above all, unconditional love.

Goal 2: Love People

I want them to laugh and cry with family and friends. I'd love them to find the love of their lives and discover the joy of building their own families. I want them to accept people who they don't understand, forgive those who hurt them, and not be flustered by those who annoy them. I want them to courageously look at the needs of the world, be moved by kindness and compassion, and dare to make a difference. I want them to walk humbly, choose to see the good in others, and always be gracious.



Goal 3: Love Life:

I want them to find things that make them tick, be it music, sports, art, books or things others find rather strange. I want them to eat, drink, and be merry. I want them to take time to soak in the beauty of nature and discover the diversity of our wonderful world. I pray that they will be better than I at waiting, at facing uncertainties and rejections, and at overcoming adversities, fears and failures. I don't want them to ever stop playing, asking questions or trying new things. And I don't want them to ever lose their sense of wonder, enthusiasm and delight at every day life. I want them to live passionately and have lots of fun, laughter and silliness along the way.


I am often tempted to grieve and even feel guilty about the things that I can no longer give my children. I can't take them to swimming, ballet and violin lessons. There are no libraries, museums and concerts. I have no training in teaching whatsoever. In fact, in order to teach my kids, I have to learn things that I should have learnt when I was in school but didn't! When I follow homeschool curriculums and try ideas from the internet, I sigh that there are no shops for me to buy the things called for. But when I look at this list of the most important things that I want my children to learn, the sense of despair begins to lift. They are things that my kids can learn without a qualified teacher, wherever we are, even in our remote corner of the world. In fact, our foreign environment and challenging situation may even be conducive for many of the goals. For example, while we may be 'deprived' of the delights of the material world, we are free to enjoy the simplicity of life. While we miss family, apples and parks, we treasure them

more. The way of life here creates ample opportunities to practise patience, flexibility and tolerance. The problems we face exercise faith and produce trust. We learn not to take things like electricity and water for granted. We try funny-sounding language, strange-looking food and other crazy new things. We find a hundred things to do with a card box, play restaurant serving real food and give our creativity a daily work-out. After all, necessity is the mother of invention! Our children may not always listen to us, but they always imitate. They see us mess up, fall down, get up and go again. They see us pray and experience its power. When asked what she liked most about Congo, our 7-year-old answered without hesitation, 'That we can help people.'



Am I saying that I prefer this way of educating my kids? Not at all. What I am saying is that while my children miss out on some things, they also gain other things. Like any parent, I want my children to succeed. I want them to have the best opportunities and be prepared for them. Often, I worry that our obedience to God will cost our children more than it costs us, and that is where the sting comes in. Coming here, I *have* to believe that God loves my children more than I ever will, and that He can do a much better job at raising them than I ever can. Living here questions those beliefs, and reveals my secret tiger-mother ambitions. Perhaps that is why I am in school, so that I can learn to surrender my children, and truly trust God with them.

NB. If you or a teacher you know may be interested in coming to help us with homeschool, please click [here](#). Thanks!

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