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Everything we do has a reason. But what we use to legitimize our reasons can make the difference between a good or bad decision.



Secret Weapon

Home schoolers may become to conservative Republicans what labor unions are to Democrats.

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the October 18, 2003, issue of *WORLD* magazine.

You've heard a lot recently about the tightening presidential race for 2004. The huge lead George W. Bush had just three or four months ago, according to some usually reliable polls, has vanished. With almost 13 months still separating us from the next election, of course, all such speculation is pretty squishy; but nobody likes to see a big advantage melt away.

What you may not have heard much about is a potent weapon increasingly available to

conservative political candidates. That weapon, to be sure, is by no means fully developed. It's nowhere nearly as potent now as it's likely to be in 20 years. But if you were a liberal running for office sometime soon, you'd take no comfort from the fact that this is still a new and unpolished tool.

I'm referring to the homeschool movement. But I'm not talking in terms of the broad, generic, educational, and philosophical influence the movement is likely to exert on society. That too is real, and almost certainly beneficial.

But I focus here instead on the fact that homeschooling families

tend to be politically active by margins that should scare the daylight out of anyone whom those homeschoolers might want to take on.

For example, just 29 percent of all 18- to 24-year-olds voted in national and state elections over the last five years. But among former homeschoolers who are now in that age bracket, a whopping 74 percent went to the polls. In the next age bracket up (25- to 29-year-olds) the margin is even bigger: In the population at large, 40 percent voted,

First, former homeschoolers are at least two or three times as likely as others to be financial contributors to political candidates, parties, and causes.

Much more important, however, is that homeschoolers are two to 10 times as likely as the population at large to be on-the-ground workers for political candidates, parties, and causes.

“Those are astonishing numbers,” says Michael Farris, founder of the Home School

“Anyone with any political savvy can see that something is happening with homeschooled children to turn them into the greatest single source for political activism our nation has seen in a long time.”

but among folks with homeschooling backgrounds, 93 percent went to the polls. While those are impressive—even staggering—differences, a tough-minded critic might still come back with a scornful “So what?” After all, best estimates are that there are only 2 million homeschoolers in the United States right now—or maybe as many as 2.5 million or at most 3 million. What are they among the 80 million to 100 million who go to the polls in a typical national election? Besides, homeschooling is still a relatively young phenomenon, which means that only a relative few of its products are out there in the political milieu.

But anyone who argues that way is setting himself up for a fall. For it’s not just on the voting front that homeschoolers will affect the political process for years to come. They carry two other potent weapons.

Legal Defense Association. “Anyone with any political savvy can see that something is happening with homeschooled children to turn them into the greatest single source for political activism our nation has seen in a long time.”

Mr. Farris points out that this is not just about some future potential, but already-organized reality. In Missouri last year, he says, a team of 90 students helped secure the narrow victory of Republican Jim Talent for the U.S. Senate. The top party official in Missouri commented: “The Student Project in southwest Missouri allowed us to win. . . . Our voter turnout increased by at least 15 percent in the area where the students were working.”

Similarly, in New Mexico, a team of 60 students helped conservative Steve Pearce



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rack up a 12 percent victory margin in a House district where Democrats outnumber Republicans by 50,000 voters and where the race had been called a dead heat just 10 days earlier.

All that means, of course, that homeschoolers' extraordinary activism eclipses their relatively small numbers. And activism is almost always what makes a difference in political contests.

Might homeschoolers come to be for conservative Republicans what the labor movement has traditionally been for Democrats? That is the goal of HSLDA and its new federal political action committee called Generation Joshua. Mr.

Farris hopes the strategy will help "train tomorrow's political leaders by enabling them to participate in electing today's leaders." The growing group (anchored by homeschoolers, but by no means limited to those with homeschooling backgrounds) is especially targeting U.S. Senate races next year in Florida, South Dakota, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

Heading the new group is Ned Ryun, graduate of the University of Kansas and son of Kansas Congressman (and former track star) Jim Ryun. He doesn't remind you much of a union boss. But the tools quietly at his disposal may prove him every bit as politically potent. 

By Joel Belz. Reprinted from *WORLD* Magazine with permission.



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LEARNING

Mr. Dick Seeley: BJ HomeSat's Grand Old Man

To BJ HomeSat families, Dick Seeley is a well-known and beloved figure. He began working for BJU's Center for Educational Technology at its inception in 1995, and for the past eight years he's taught Physics on BJ HomeSat. Recently *Home School Helper* took the opportunity to ask a few questions of this venerable veteran of Christian education.

What was your background before working for BJ HomeSat?

I was saved in the summer after graduation from high school. Probably the most unusual thing that goes back to my high school years is that I failed high school physics! I "knew" that I would never need it because I was going to be a truck driver. After I met a girl who said she would never marry a truck driver, I decided to join the Marine Corps. My associations with communications personnel there and an encouragement from a friend to enroll in a correspondence course in electronics eventually completely changed my outlook on my academic life.

After that I came to BJU and majored in Secondary Education and then spent ten years in Raleigh, North Carolina, as a teacher and finally as a high school principal of a large Christian school. I then went to Oxford, Michigan, as administrator of a small school there for eight years.

I came to work for BJU in 1986. Since then I have taught various subjects and grade levels—math and science at Bob Jones Junior High and ninth-grade science and physics at Bob Jones Academy. I have also worked at BJU Press during the summers, assisting in authoring Earth Science and Physics materials.



How have things changed at BJ HomeSat since you started?

Things change every few weeks! Our first year of broadcasting was a nightmare, since none of the four teachers involved at that time had experience with the use of the technology. It was a steep learning curve.

Technology becomes more and more sophisticated each year. Changes are made to the software regularly. We use more and more visual materials and animations.

The growth has been phenomenal. We started with about a dozen employees. Currently, there are over a hundred employed here including BJ LINC* and BJ HomeSat. We started with just seven

classes being broadcast; we now have fourteen. We started with three studios and now have six. The square footage of the BJ LINC/HomeSat facilities is at least four times what it was the first year.


OK, well then, how have things stayed

the same? The goal from the beginning has been to present a high quality academic program. Teachers are prepared to teach, they have the time to prepare well, and the quality textual materials produced by BJU Press remain the same. While there have been changes in all of these as far as “a more polished product,” the basic quality and philosophical/spiritual content remains stable.

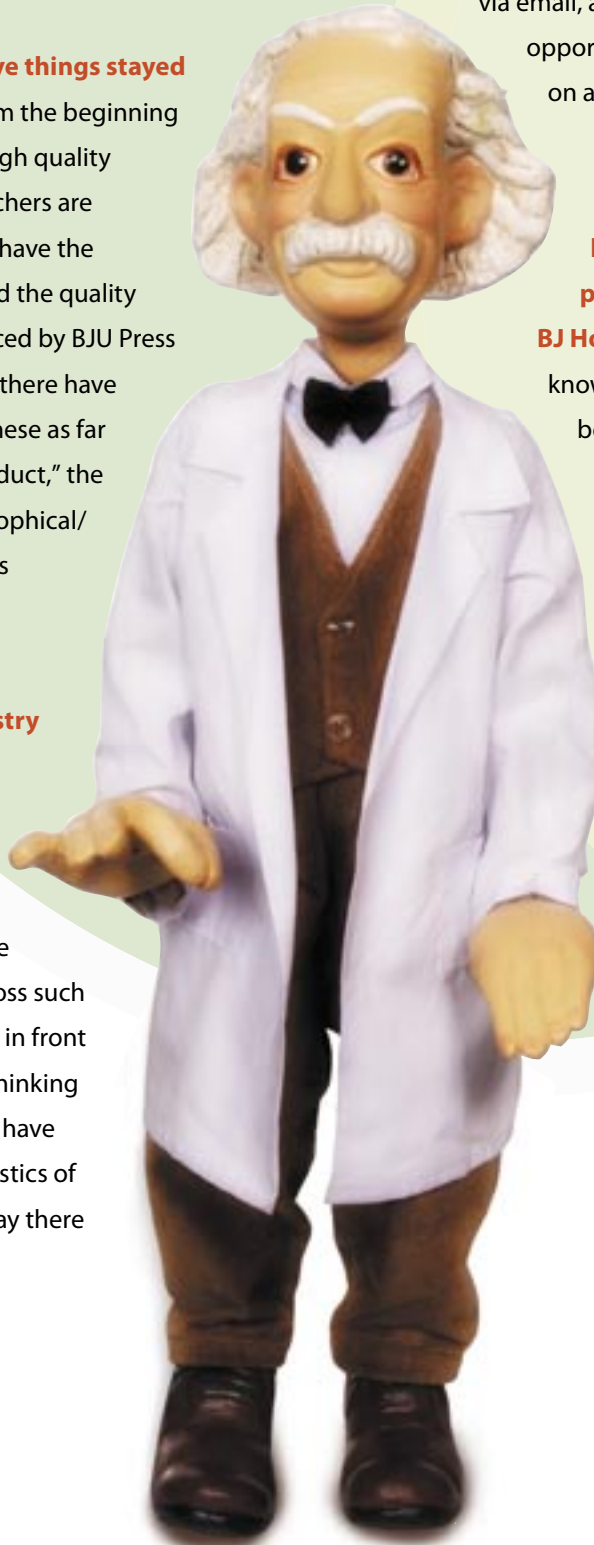
What about your ministry most excites you?

The awesome responsibility that is associated with dealing with such a large number of students across such a wide area. I never step in front of the camera without thinking about the opportunity I have to display the characteristics of my Lord. Nearly every day there

is opportunity to present a small portion of the gospel and to weave bits of spiritual truth into my lesson. I also have had many opportunities to discuss spiritual matters with students via email. Some of them find it easy to talk to someone via email, and this has given me opportunities to deal with students on a one-on-one basis.

Is there a Bible verse that has special meaning as it pertains to your ministry at BJ HomeSat? Revelation 3:8: “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” 

*BJ LINC: Live Interactive Network Classroom, BJU's satellite broadcast for Christian schools



Why Do We Do What We Do?

You have reasons for everything you do. But where do they come from? And who decides whether they are legitimate?

“Do you remember Robbie James*?” my mom recently wrote me. “He is now a State Trooper in Wayne County. He made a stop Friday night on Rt. 21 and the guy wouldn’t roll his window down more than an inch. He showed Robbie his license but wouldn’t give it to him. He kept talking about his constitutional rights.

“To make a long story short, he drove away and Robbie chased him. He stopped again and revealed a gun in the front seat. Robbie backed off, and the guy drove away again. By this time they were nearing Massillon, and Robbie had Massillon police back up. The guy stopped, rolled out of his car, and started shooting. He killed a Massillon police officer. The other officers, including Robbie, opened fire and killed the perpetrator. The police officer who was killed had a wife and small children.

“The perpetrator was around 60 years old with no record of arrests or anything on his record. However, he belongs to a strange organization (they say they aren’t militia, but rather a church that believes they should live by the Bible’s rules, not man’s).

They don’t believe State Troopers have any right or authority and don’t believe they should have to hand over their driver’s license.”

I won’t go into the many Scripture passages such a “church” violates with that kind of lawless doctrine. The issue at hand is, do you think that misguided murderer had a reason for what he did? Of course he did! It was a good enough reason to die for, in his mind. So just because I disagree with someone else’s actions—or even when I know he is completely wrong—it doesn’t mean the person acted without thinking about it first. He had a reason.

A few years ago, I was struck with what I thought was a profound personal truth: I can give you a reason for anything I do, from scratching my elbow (“It itches.”), to reading a book (“I’m interested in this topic.”), to buying a certain



car (“It’s cheap and the whole family fits in it.”). This is the same as saying that I can justify what I’m doing. Conversely, I never do anything unless I have a good reason.

Recently the foolishness of my thinking on this topic has become clear to me. Why does that which seemed so profound a few years ago seem clearly foolish now? I think there are two legitimate answers to that question:

Having a reason for what I do isn’t enough. I need to have a Bible reason for what I do (or don’t do).

1. Everybody has reasons for everything he does.

I used to look at people who did something foolish or crazy and wonder what in the world their reason for doing it could have been. Then I concluded that they must not have had a reason. “Hmph! *I* always have a reason for everything *I* do!”

2. Just because I can think of a reason for it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s a good idea.

I can justify something in my own mind, but does that make it right? The man who shot the State Trooper felt justified in his actions because of his church’s teachings.

The human mind is very capable of being deceived by others—and of tremendous self-deception too. Jeremiah 17:9 states, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” That doesn’t apply just to other people; it applies to me too!

Having a reason for what I do isn’t enough. I need to have a Bible reason for what I do (or don’t do). *If I don’t have a clear Bible reason, then I need to be aware that I could be wrong.*

I used to look forward to getting older in the faith and conquering my penchant for sin. You know what? It doesn’t work that way. I’m more aware of my heart’s sinfulness and its desire for its own ways—self-confidence, self-assertion, self-sufficiency—than ever

before. That’s why I look forward to heaven more and more. I realize I’m never going to get rid of my sinfulness in this life, and that’s the way God designed it. Every day I need to ask the Lord’s help to have wisdom when I clash with another person. We both have a reason for our point of view. But what is the scriptural principle involved?

Could it be, possibly, that I’m wrong? 🤔

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes; but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.
Proverbs 12:15

Steve Skaggs is Director of Product Development for BJU Press. He has been involved in Christian education for nearly twenty years.

*Not his real name.



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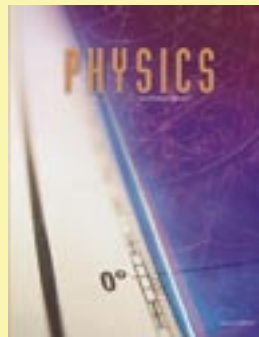


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