

EPISODE 07

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:05.2] Aaress Lawless: Hi there. Welcome to Today's Homeschool Teen, a podcast for homeschooling parents who want to help their teens meet the challenges of high school and reach their incredible God-given potential. I'm your host, Aaress Lawless. On behalf of our team at Dual Credit at Home, thank you for joining me.

I'm thrilled to introduce to you today's guest Cheri Eiras. Cheri is a writer, speaker, pastor's wife, and a former home school mom. I've asked Cheri to join us today so we can talk about something that many home school parents face, as they're teens get older and busier. That's staying connected as a family and planning meaningful times together. Cheri, thanks so much for being part of the podcast today.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:01:27.5] Cheri Eiras: I'm glad to be here.

[0:01:29.0] Aaress Lawless: Well, this is a conversation that I've been looking forward to having with you because I've had the chance to sit down and see how you connect with your family. I am looking forward to gleaning words of wisdom from you and hopefully encouraging our parents today. Thank you.

Now, my first question is, I would love it if you can tell our listeners a little bit more about your family story, introduce yourself, tell us about your kids, all that good stuff.

[0:01:54.1] Cheri Eiras: Well, I am married to my husband Mike, who is a pastor, and we have two boys, Brad and Jordan. They are three years apart, and we started homeschooling a little accidentally, we had moved to a new area when it was time for kindergarten, and I knew nothing about the schools, and we couldn't afford Christian school, and so we started with kindergarten, and I figured, I could handle kindergarten.

That's where we began, but we did it for a total of eight years between the boys, they went to either – they homeschooled or did Christian school. My boys are grown now. My oldest is married, he's 28, and our youngest is 25. They did not have avenues to play sports and participate in sports. Today, it's wonderful how there are home school teams, and the schools even are more encouraged to allow teens to play.

We ended up using the Christian school as an avenue for them to play sports.

[0:02:58.8] Aaress Lawless: Yeah. You mentioned that Mike was in ministry, and you and Mike have been in all the ministry for many years. How did you juggle ministry and parenting and homeschooling at the same time?

[0:03:11.9] Cheri Eiras: I felt like homeschooling gave us an opportunity. Mike was pretty committed to Monday being his day off, and that is a time for family. We would do school in the morning, which gave him time to have a breather, but we tried to wrap it up pretty early, and he was pretty committed to creating family time then in the afternoon.

I feel like Monday's, a matter of fact when one of my oldest went to school for the first year. He was jealous of the younger one still being at home and having that family time on Monday. That was very important. His commitment to that really helped. I did not work outside of the home besides ministry. I was church custodian sometimes, but it was stuff that I could do that was very flexible, that I could do even evenings, while he was home, I could go back, so I didn't have to juggle that as well.

[0:04:06.3] Aaress Lawless: Yeah, I think several of our audience members will relate to that because I know that several of them are involved in full-time ministry or are pastors. How did that impact your kids? How did the boys handle being preacher's kids? What types of challenges did they face as they were growing up with that?

[0:04:23.9] Cheri Eiras: I don't feel like it was a huge challenge for them, and I'll say for two reasons. One, I feel like the churches we worked with allowed our family to be just a real family. Really, my husband set the tone for that as well. He was disciplined in a church that the pastor was very real with his people.

So he knew no other way, he didn't become a Christian till he was 17, so that was the only thing he knew. He was very real with the people in saying that our family was no different. Don't expect our kids to be different because he is the pastor; they're kids. I felt like we've always served with groups of people that understood that and gave grace to our kids, you know when they messed up. I feel like that pressure was not there.

I will say, I was pretty ready just to volunteer my kids for everything. That became a burden to them sometimes. But, the balance of that is they learned how to serve. Even though they felt sometimes taken advantage of, I think they developed a servant's heart.

Yeah, I would say, just knowing and communicating with your people that you're just another person with a different gift.

[0:05:48.2]

Aaress Lawless: Right.

[0:05:51.0] Cheri Eiras: There's not less of a struggle with the sin nature or you know, losing patience or those type of things. I just feel like people understood that.

[0:06:00.5] Aaress Lawless: Wow, that's huge that you were that open and honest with the church to put your weaknesses out there and just say, you know, we're real. I have teens just like you. Now, when the boys got older and went off the college. How did you and Mike manage to stay connected with them when they were so far away?

Did the boys go to school locally? I know, some of your kids, I think, went to Liberty, is that correct?

[0:06:25.4] Cheri Eiras: Right, our youngest went to Liberty, our oldest went to Cedarville for a year which was only an hour from us at the time. We would see him a little more frequently, and then he ended up coming home and going to UC. UC is the University of Cincinnati, which was a state school. He lived in a Christian ministry house but one year was on campus for one year, and he lived at home the other two just for financial and –

I am known for asking a lot of questions of my boys. I did not have girls that just volunteered conversation. They have even said, mom, why do you ask so many questions? I'm just like, I won't know anything if I don't ask. As they grew older, I think they were just used to it. Staying in touch and using questions to try and stay intact with their life but having a relationship with them before made it easier through college. I would say both my boys had prodigal moments in those college years.

Then it was a lot of prayer. The one son, his was briefer but more unexpected. When he was communicating, he was further away. He was the one at Liberty, but he was communicating as usual, and he was going through a struggle that we didn't realize. We realized that the summer that he came home.

Then, from that point on, my conversations with him were again more probing, you know? I would ask tougher questions sometimes, and I've always been pretty straightforward with my boys as far as asking the tough questions sometimes. I mean, not all the time, we talk about normal things too because I feel like I earned the right to ask the hard things by just conversing about the normal things as well.

[0:08:19.7] Aaress Lawless: Right. I think that's so interesting that you mentioned that because that's one thing that I've seen, I've heard so many times that you can't ask the hard questions of your teens if you haven't taken the time to ask the everyday questions. Building relationships with them every day, the normal stuff before they went to college. I'm sure that is what prepared you to be able to have that door to their souls.

[0:08:44.7] Cheri Eiras: It did, it opened up. I feel like my husband set a tone in this with him being the male leader in our family. He was very willing to say to the boys, "You know what? I blew it there." All of their life. If he lost his cool with them before the evening was out. He was willing to say, you know, what we talked about that might have been an issue still, with the tone I used when I talked to you.

His willingness to do that allowed them to be pretty transparent with us, as well. We could talk about the hard things they think because their dad was pretty transparent about the hard things

as well. Probably even more than me. His personality in that, his vulnerability, made it easier for them to be open with us.

[0:09:34.2] Aaress Lawless: Now, for the parents who are listening and going, that's amazing, but I don't know where to start. How would you start having those everyday communications around the dinner table and then eventually working your way towards that door into their hearts?

[0:09:50.6] Cheri Eiras: You know, I think it starts possibly with knowing what they're interested in and learning enough about it to ask questions. Discovering things that you think they might be interested in that you know that you could guide them toward. We have a lot of laughter in our home. I think humor creates an openness that allows you to go into places.

Being willing to laugh together, to have some silliness somewhat opens up doors for communication. I would say, the high school years are difficult, my one son was playing football, and I would pick him up, and I would pepper him with questions, you know, how the day was and how practice was and whatever.

His father picked him up one night and he was growing weary of the fact that whenever he would pick them up, the only thing my son would say to him is, "I am tired, and I'm hungry," and then conversation would just shut down and so he decided he wasn't going to speak. He was going to say hello, but he wasn't going to put any effort into it himself. They drove home, and they got almost to the house, and our son said, "Dad, thank you so much. You get it. Mom just asks questions," it and backfired, you know.

It's at that moment, and I think the timing is also a thing. When they are just getting done with any activity, or they just finished their homework, they may need a break mentally. Those aren't the times for the best conversation. I love car rides, and when you are doing a task together are probably my favorite times for conversations.

[0:11:30.9] Aaress Lawless: I think you hit the nail on the head also when you talked about the timing because I think it is so easy to want to talk when we want to talk versus when others want to talk. So that is a great point.

[0:11:43.1] Cheri Eiras: We've learned, we'll test the waters but we back off quickly if we can tell this isn't the time because one, it usually turns to frustration for both of us and we have found that at the right time there's a richness there that we didn't even expect you know?

[0:12:00.2] Aaress Lawless: Right, God's gone before you. Soften the heart, prepare them.

[0:12:04.2] Cheri Eiras: Prayer is a part of that, you know? "Lord, help me to sense the right time or give me the open door for this conversation."

[0:12:12.1] Aaress Lawless: One of the ways that your family has prepared hearts, and I've had a chance to sit down and play games with you and absolutely loved it. Well, let's talk about game nights. That is a big part of the Eiras household. Talk us through how you started playing games as a family and some of your favorite tips for planning your own family's game night.

[0:12:34.3] Cheri Eiras: Well, it started when the boys were young. It may have been part of that Monday routine. I actually can't remember back quite well how it started. We have our younger son who loves games, and I do too, but we started it with the oldest. One of our early Christmas presents was a preschool game. Something that introduced colors but had some fun to it. We're always asking people even to this day, "Oh, that's a new game. I haven't heard of that."

Seeing if that would be something our family would gravitate to. We did have different opinions, the youngest he's just naturally strategic. He just wins like all the time. So one of our games was Dutch Blitz, which is a fast-paced card game, and we were playing it with our youngest. It was at least one night a week had to be games, but he would fit it in more often if we could, you know? So it didn't just happen one night a week always, but we pretty much played games at least once a week.

Well, the Dutch Blitz card disappeared. When we moved from that house, I found them hidden in a jar up in my decorative shelf, and it was our oldest who put them there because he was tired of losing.

[0:13:54.8] Aaress Lawless: That is great.

[0:13:56.3] Cheri Eiras: Yeah, so you know there will be different kids that enjoy or don't enjoy but by switching games we were able to still pull the whole family together to play games, and there is such a variety out there of types of games that you can find something that kind of fits the family from the very more strategic type to sort of mindless games as well. Again laughter was usually a part of our game, and we were pretty competitive, and we allow it, you know? We have fun when we play games.

[0:14:33.6] Aaress Lawless: So I'll put you on the spot. I have had the chance to play games with you at home, at Chick-fil-A, which is a fabulous place to play games. I've never had thought about that solace with your family, but what are the favorite games right now in the last year in the Eiras household, what were the games that you guys have planned most likely?

[0:14:54.1] Cheri Eiras: Well, our favorite and the one that we – the whole playing at Chick-fil-A at any restaurant was introduced to us by our youngest son. He started that habit at college, but when we were introduced to it, I so wish we have known of that earlier because Wednesdays were always busy for our family because of our church and being in ministry. So dinner Wednesday was always after church on Wednesday night, and it was always at a restaurant just a quick fast food night place.

We didn't always have Chick-fil-A nearby, but I would have loved for that time to have been what it is now with our family. We love Monopoly Deal, which is a card game. A form of Monopoly. It is hard to find. You can find it online. We find it at Wal-Mart usually, not all the stores carry it, but if you've ever played Monopoly, it can last forever, which discouraged us from playing it too much because I mean you could have a two-day game.

So when we found Monopoly Deal, it's got all the elements of Monopoly. You are collecting properties. You can steal properties in all of these, but it takes 20 minutes or so, but by our family playing in restaurants and we have done it with groups of college kids that join us for dinner or whatever, we also engaged the workers at the restaurant. We tend to carry packs of Monopoly Deal with us so that as we are engaging them in conversation, we can leave it as a gift for them.

But that is one of our favorites. There is a game called Quarto, which is a two-person game. Our son made a wooden set of Quarto for his father, and it's a more strategic, kind of tic-tac-toe meets chess because there is a lot of strategy to it, but Quarto is a fun game and Catan.

[0:16:55.9] Aaress Lawless: That one gets me too.

[0:16:57.0] Cheri Eiras: We love that one and Stop the Bus that you introduced us to. I play that one as well.

[0:17:02.5] Aaress Lawless: That is awesome. So Cheri one last question, as a former home school mom, a mom of teens that are all grown and left the nest, as a woman that I know loves to encourage other women, what would you say to the mom that is listening today that is just now starting to realize that her teens are getting older, they're getting busier and they're losing connection, how would you encourage her as we end today?

[0:17:31.2] Cheri Eiras: I say start with prayer that connection has waxed and waned through seasons of life, through busyness, prayer was a big, big part of tuning into what would be that connects to each child because each child is different. I know my oldest was three years old before his brother was born, and I thought that "Oh, this will be easy," and I felt like I was starting all over, and they were very different through how they faced hard times or how they handle life.

So asking God to help you to be in tune to them and to the opportunities, those open doors. That you have the wisdom to go ahead and walk through it when that opportunity arises, so I would say prayer is the biggest thing and not shutting down. If you are feeling like it's not going well, know that it is a season. For instance, one of our boys, we had said there was not a ministry for his age group at our church that my husband was pastoring.

We had said, "Find a church. Go, you are old enough now to be looking for a church yourself," so he did, but then we started noticing when we'd come home from church, and he was just getting out of bed. So you know it was like he was living in our house. So there were some hard and fast things like that was not an option and I've heard of people who say, "Oh well they are

over 18. It's got to be their choice then," but as long as they are living under my roof, it just wasn't an option.

Well he grew past that and as a single adult when he moved into a new city, he went and pursued the church first like he wanted to arrive so that he can go Sunday morning the very first day he was in town and looked for his church and he found it on his second Sunday and has been there ever since and you know I say perseverance and prayer are two key ingredients to keep that line of communication open.

END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:19:58.7] Aaress Lawless: Cheri, thanks for taking the time and joining us on the podcast today. This has been an awesome discussion. Now for those of you listening, be sure to check out this episode's show notes. You will find not only all of the list of the games that Cheri mentioned, but you will also find some of the blog posts that she's written for us at Dual Credit Home. You can find those at www.dualcreditathome/podcast. I think you will find those resources to be an encouragement, and if so, please pass them along to some of your friends.

Also, don't forget to hit subscribe, so you don't miss the next episode of Today's Homeschool Teen. Thanks again for joining us, and we're praying that God blesses you and your family as you homeschool high school.

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