

HOME EDUCATION WORKS!

Dr Brian Ray, considered one of the world's leading experts on home-school research, was the main speaker at 'The Way Forward', Home Ed 2002, held in September at Cliff College, Derbyshire, for Christians interested in home education. He presented quantities of well-documented research to show that children taught at home were successful educationally and socially, quite apart from the evident spiritual benefits. In fact the research in the USA showed that on average those taught at home (an estimated 2 million) achieved better results and integrated better into society than those from schools. Anecdotal evidence in the UK would seem to confirm this.

In further sessions Dr Ray also addressed the issue of the responsibility for education, showing that the Bible lays it upon the parents, and not upon the state, and tackled some of the practical difficulties, and the importance of teaching by example – a very searching talk that left many of us wondering how much we really knew of living for Christ.

Dr Ray and his wife Betsy also took some of the seminars, including an entertaining session on scientific literacy, with Dr Ray (an MSc in Zoology) performing a number of practical experiments. Other seminars continued the practical theme and included the ever-necessary subjects of Getting Started, GCSEs, together with a practical approach to languages, special needs, and home educating with toddlers around! A further valuable seminar was entitled 'Digging for Gold', on the lessons we can learn from history – God's story.

An international conference

This conference was the biggest Christian home education conference ever in the UK, stretching the accommodation to its limit, and by general consensus probably the best. It was also marked by attendees hailing from Canada, USA, Australia, Switzerland, Nigeria, and South Africa, as well as Ireland, the Isle of Man, and Jersey – possibly making it the first truly international conference!

A special feature of Home Ed conferences is that children are welcome, and this year that meant half the total number present. The children's workers and crèche facilities were therefore greatly appreciated. As always, however, the greatest benefit from the weekend was contact with other home educators and their children – sharing experiences and advice, and mutual encouragement.

Further information

The results of Dr Ray's research can be found in his recently published book 'Worldwide Guide to Homeschooling' (available from Home Service). Dr. Ray is president of the National Home Education Research Institute in the USA, being instrumental in changing the law in many states, and speaking in Congress, on TV and radio. He has educated his own 8 children, as well as teaching zoology and biology at both secular and Christian universities. Tapes of all the conference sessions can also be obtained from Home Service.

Home Service is a support organization for Christian home educators, and can be contacted on 0161 432 3782 or write to 48, Heaton Moor Road, Stockport, SK4 4NX.

<http://www.home-service.org>