



Family Time & Bringing Dads Home

An Interview with Bob & Tina Farewell
by Ashley Ortega

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Ashley Ortega & Bob and Tina Farewell, *Family Time & Bringing Dads Home*

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Ashley:

Hello. I'm so glad you joined us for our Home School Super Heroes Telesummit. My name is Ashley Ortega, and I'm thrilled to have Bob and Tina Farewell join us today.

Bob and Tina were married in 1979 and began home educating with the birth of the first of their five children in 1983. So they planned to do school at home. God intervened by rapidly going into business, Lifetime Books and Gifts, allowing their family to enjoy a lifestyle of learning and to travel, explore, read, think and discover.

Bob and Tina pursue four main goals for their family: the love of Christ, the love of family and others, the love of learning, and creating a multi-generational vision. After 18 years of successful business and ministry, the Farewells sold their business to Gus and Shirley Solis' family to continue the lifetime legacy.

The Farewells continue with their calling and mission as speakers in the home school world and other venues. They founded Bringing Dads Home, a business and ministry designed to help families succeed in their family home schooling and entrepreneurial adventures.

Bob is passionate about not only his wife Tina but also being in the woods; working with his hands; traveling hunting, and fishing with his children; and about public speaking on many subjects. Tina loves experiencing life with her husband, reading aloud to their children, collecting great books for their huge family library, and her morning cup of coffee with Bob. She delights in sharing the trials and joys of being a woman, wife and mother with other women, helping them to realize how simple and enjoyable life with their husbands and children can be.

Bob and Tina have five children, three of whom are still learning at home—Joseph, Rebecca, and James. Eric continues his entrepreneurial journey in California, and Elizabeth is married to Joe and recently bore their first grandchild. When not traveling, the Farewell family lives in a renovated old home at beautiful Chalet Suzanne, their family's historic country inn in Lake [2:00], Florida.

Thank you so much for joining us today, Bob and Tina. I really appreciate it.

Bob:

You're welcome Ashley, thank you for the welcome

Ashley:

No problem. Actually, as I was reading it, it reminded me a lot about our family and the way my parents are. They enjoy very similar things as both of you. That's neat to hear.

Bob: I think I met your dad for the first time out in San Francisco some 8 or 9 years ago.

Ashley: Oh wow. Just to get started, could you all tell our listeners, I know I shared a little bit, but just about you and your family and your approach to home schooling.

Bob: We started home schooling as you just recounted back in 1983 with the birth of our first child. We're now approaching our 26th or 27th year, and we still have two at home, and one that will be graduating in a year, and another that will be graduating in 3 years.

We feel like about 30 years of home schooling will be under our belts. We have the scars to prove it and the adventures as well. It's been an extraordinary adventure, and one we would not trade for anything, and one that we spend a lot of time encouraging others to consider. It's a fabulous family building adventure.

Ashley: That's neat. Could you explain the approach you took and the way it worked for your family?

Bob: Sure. When we first started, there was very little in terms of resources out there. We thought we would bring our experience of what school was for us into the home. And we found out very quickly that was not the right thing to do at least for our family.

We did set up a room where "learning" was to take place, the little school desks and the chalkboard and the kind lines and so on. But eventually we realized this was not working well. It was like mixing oil and water together. It didn't work well for the rhythm of our family life. Eventually my wife scrapped the school desks, and she went and did the most radical thing you could do back then, which was to buy a second sofa.

Our school room became the sofa, the living room. And my wife started to read living books to our children, real books, life-changing books. It started to develop a real love of learning in the hearts of our children. And it was quite simply we started with Laura Ingalls Wilder series and went on from there.

Ashley: Can you tell us what would classify as a living book, what is that?

Tina: I'll be glad to do that. I would consider a living book as written by one author that loves his or her subject and that love of the subject shines through the book. Great books that are meant to be read again and again.

Years back, C. S. Lewis defined living books as those that captured the issues of life in such a way that they challenged the intellect, they inspired the emotions, and they aroused something noble in the heart of the reader. He also went on to note that no book is really worth reading at the age of 10, which is not equally and often far more worth reading at the age of 50 and beyond.

And now that I'm way past 50, I can attest to that. I like to compare living books with resource books, which are reference books such as an atlas or encyclopedia, the dictionary, almanacs and that type of thing. Those would be reference or resource books. And then there's another third category we like to talk back about, and that's what Charlotte Mason referred to as twaddle. Isn't that a great word?

I would say that twaddle is typically written by a committee, and even though each person on that committee might really love the subject that they're writing about, that love is not able to shine through. Instead, it's dumbed down and it becomes uninteresting. Twaddle pretends to teach something meaningful, but it does not deliver truth, purpose, or vitality to the reader's heart. Most of us, children and adults, have no desire to reread their textbooks. I think those three categories are really helpful to plug things into.

Ashley: It also gives us an idea for, I'm not a parent yet, but for parents that are home schooling to categorize the different books they have and the ones they want to use.

Tina: I think all parents need to do that. Another rule of thumb that we often use is that time tested books are often the best. We have in our family tended to avoid new and popular books, because I feel like if we're Christians and if it's widely accepted by the worldly culture, then there's probably something wrong with it. We also avoid the adapted and condensed versions, the paraphrased, the edited, the dumbed down versions of great books.

Ashley: What are some other practical tips and tricks that you could possibly share with being able to use those living books in a family's home school to make it come alive.

Bob: Ashley, one of the things we've figured out after so many years is that if you start from the earliest age of your children, I mean as infants in your arms, and you're reading aloud to them or showing them beautiful picture books and having them appreciate hearing the joy in your voice, they tend to want to snuggle in. They want to stay there with it. They want to be part of the light, beautiful picture books, well illustrated, or hearing the tone of your voice as you delight in reading the books to them.

It sets up a special time that they equate with pleasure. When you're able to bring to them the best books out there, and any one can exhaust the library where there are a number of books we recommend as reference books to find the best books to read. But literally you could go to the library and come back with a grocery cart full of books and start reading aloud at the earliest ages with your children.

Tina: As far as some of those great books that are really about books and reading, there are several that we highly recommend. I believe everybody should start with Gladys Hunt's books, *Honey for a Child's Heart*, or *Honey for a Teen's Heart*. They are so compelling in the first half about why we should be reading, and for the younger children, especially, reading aloud.

Our children are 18 and 15, and we're still reading aloud. That's the best time of the day for us. I think people should start with *Honey for a Child's Heart*, and then *Books Children Love* by Elizabeth Wilson categorizes things that are great for home schoolers to use as far as their subject categories. And then there are some others like who should we then read. We have a great workshop we do called the 25 books you can't home school without. And we have that recorded on CD if someone would like to order it.

Those are great places to start as far as resources to find truly great books.

Ashley: That's neat. As our kids get older, I know you're saying yours are now 15 and 18, and you still read aloud, but at the same time, does it develop into them reading living books on their own as well as reading aloud?

Bob: Yes. They all have their own books we read separately. We do call together a family time, where they come, they sit down on the sofa, and they look forward to this time. It's several hours a day, every day. Some days we might not get as much, it depends on our children. But our children always ask, when are we going to read?

Can we read? Particularly before bed time. It just draws our family life together, and makes for a great opportunity to minister and to educate through what we're reading. It's been something that we've been doing for 26 years.

Tina: I would add to that too, I know a lot of us, we all go through different times and seasons of stress in our lives. As much as our family love to travel, at least 6 months per year for 18 years, and having time to stress even at home. And people are ill, or someone dies or a new baby is born. Those can be very stressful times.

And the things I learned over those many seasons of stress to always continue to read aloud. Even if we were in someone else's home, we would try to pull our family together at least once a day and read out loud. It's one of those things you just feel like, this saves us with God's grace. It's just an awesome thing of continuity for us and our children.

Ashley: I like the idea, I know we never traveled quite as much as you did, but we did some traveling. And there were definitely stressful moments, but it's neat to see God using those quiet moments to refresh and renew you as a family to keep moving forward.

Tina: When you are out doing what your family and our family was doing, it was truly missionary work. So you were out and sharing your heart and your intellect, and your physical body is working very hard. It's so incredibly important that you keep that family time very special.

Bob: Ashley, I also mentioned that we created a family culture where Tina has her particular book that she'll be reading, and oftentimes I have my book that I'll read, and the children will ask one or the other of us to read our book aloud. And Tina and I are not allowed to swap each other's book. That's a mommy book, and that's a daddy book.

So the children identify that as very special.

Ashley: That's neat. That's a really cool idea. To incorporate both the mom and the dad at the same time. I feel like a lot of times, and my dad was really good about coming in and we would do family time together, whether it was family devotions or some sort of read aloud. But sometimes I think home schoolers can get set in the school mindset where mom does the teaching and dad comes home at times. So I think it's neat to be able to bring both of those together into one, and the children want to both hear the reading from mom and dad at the same time.

Bob: In fact, I found, I believe God has given dads in particular a very special grace. For the first few years of your child's life, and even into the teen years, dads can do no wrong. If dad loves and will take the time to read real books to the children, and take that time, it just develops in their children a love of learning. They just want to do what dad does. If dad loves to watch TV, the kids are going to want to watch TV, because that's what dad's doing.

I understand when dads are having to work all day long, and they come home at night, and they're bushed and they're beat up and they want to just have a few moments of peace and quiet before they turn in, but the sacrifice that dads will make to be with their children and use it as

teaching moments for their kids is enormous dividends for their children's learning and the love of learning.

Ashley: Building off of that, do you have advice particularly for dads that are either having to still work and then come home at night and see their kids at night. There are also ones that are wanting to come home and have their work from home. Advice for how to use that time with their kids to get the most out of it.

Bob: The old adage that we used to hear, your children need quality time, not quantity time, I disagree with. I believe children need as much quantity time as quality time.

Somewhere, something has to give. If the dad is working so many hours that he has so few hours to be with his children, he is missing a particular season of life that God has ordained for his interaction with his children. We have met many families that suffer in this realm, and I'm thinking of one in particular who is a major in the air force, who had what he considered to be a dream job of flying for the military. But he was gone from home for anywhere from 3 to 6 months at a time. He had 4 small children under the age of 10. And one day he realized he was losing touch with his kids. So he made the sacrifice of leaving that career and starting a new one, creating his own business, in order to spend that priceless time with these children.

They grow up so fast. It's overnight, it seems, that they're here and then gone. So a dad needs to acknowledge that. Yes he needs to make a living. Yes he needs to plan for their future. But there is this very unique season of opportunity that most dads are missing the boat on. They're focusing on a career rather than on the eternal consequences of how they can interface with their children and what that will mean for future generations.

I strongly encourage dads to consider finding a way to create a home-based enterprise. It's what we've done and were very successful with. We were able to implement creating an environment where our children could learn all about business and enterprise and develop their entrepreneurial spirit as a result. But it gave us the privilege of being with our children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for 27 years.

This was a decision we made early on when we first were married and we were asking the Lord if we were to be blessed with children, we wanted the privilege of being with those children as much as possible and to influence them as much as possible. And God blessed that request.

Ashley: That's really neat to see. Towards you Tina, is there certain things as a mom that you can do, or as a wife, to help encourage your husband in that aspect. And I'm not saying, tell him this is what we need to do, but help him out as he is if he wants to start a business, just to encourage and bless him in that way.

Tina: I have noticed so often that the women want that dad to come home before the dad wants to come home. And that can be a long wait. There is something within a mother, that nurturing part of her, that realizes, my children aren't seeing their daddy work. He's off at the office or a manufacturing plant, wherever he might be, and is invisible to them. They don't see. So when he comes home, he wants to relax, like Bob mentioned a moment ago. When that happens, the children don't see how hard daddy's worked all day.

And so I think that's one reason I think it's so important to, if God calls you to do a home business or a family business, do it. As I mentioned, the women often desire that first. Out of respect to their husbands, I think it's so important for them to just pray quietly. I love a quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He said the most direct way to others is always through prayer to Christ. I can't tell you how important that quote has been in my life.

It's such a reminder that I can keep my mouth closed most of the time and ask the Holy Spirit to work in my husband's life. That I think lays the foundation for how this can happen. Usually when the dad's ready, when God has worked in his soul and he says, I'm going to do this tomorrow. The wife, if she's not already prepared, she's going to be shocked and not know how to handle it. But because God has been stirring her heart through prayer for several years, when the husband finally says, I want to have my own business, the wife is going, oh honey. Yeah. God answered my prayer. How can I help you?

Rather than have a negative attitude about it. That happens too. I think that's the best way for the wife to lay the foundation, just through prayer to the Holy Spirit to show the father what he is called to do. There are actually a couple of books that I just really love. They touch on this. One is by Mary Farrar. It's called *Choices*. And it's about how a woman can make all of her choices about marriage, mentoring, motherhood, making a home, through Titus 2. Her bottom line in the book is if you're not doing what Titus 2 tells you to do, then you're wrong.

And I also love it because it has a history of family life in it that's very profound. The men's book that is complementary to that is by Mary's husband Steve Farrar and it's called *Point Man*. Those are very good places to start, I believe.

Ashley: That's neat. Thank you. It makes me want to go read it now, being a young married person. Just to be able to get some pointers and some helpful tips.

Tina: I would encourage you to do that. I have a whole long list of great books for young married women to read.

Ashley: I'll have to email you later.

Tina: Oh goodness.

Ashley: Do you have any specific practical ways to bring dad home? I know for a lot of families it could be hard for him to quit his 8 to 5 job and come home, financially and emotionally. Having a whole new look on life. Are there any practical ways to ease that transition? Let's say if a dad decides that he does want to come home and start his own business, is there any practical stuff to get started?

Bob: Let me go right back to the very basic thing. If there's a tugging on his heart, to be closer to the family and be more part of what's going on in the family, my strongest suggestion is that he takes his sweet wife, goes off and finds a Bed and Breakfast for the weekend, get babysitters for the children, and just he and his wife get into a room and dream big dreams.

Just do the weekend and start drawing out a plan. Once that plan comes to fruit, when they talk about all the plusses and minuses and come up with this great idea of what his thoughts are and her thoughts are, and they start meshing together, and they have this plan in hand, they turn to the Lord and say, Lord if this is your will, we're willing to step forth in faith and make this happen. If it is God's will for that to happen, doors will open like never before. And you can't help but move forward.

But you have to start first as a husband and wife in team and in prayer that this is God's will for you. I particularly enjoy reading the book by John Eldredge called *Walking with God*. Some of that is outlined, where you talk to him and you hear from God, and you really can through this book.

Those are the types of things you want to be about doing as a couple. We love reading books together and separately, even if it's the same book. We'll fight over what chapter, who gets to read what. But the goal here is to try to be a team. We found that team work works a whole lot better than any one person carrying the load.

Tina: I would follow that up with, husband and wife, they're to complement one another. What Bob is good at, I probably am not very good at, and vice

versa. There's some overlap there, but I think all the years, we've been married for 31 years now, and most of that time we've had some type of home business. We just found what works best for us, and what part of the load I can best carry and what part he can best carry.

As the children get older, year by year, we're able to let them carry part of the load. I think that brings them to maturity much faster in a good way. Not giving them too much but giving them the ability to have a little taste of it. They might fail. They might not do what's right, but they can start over, just like we would start over. Just to have that as a nurturing place for them to be. It works.

I know with your family's business, and our family's business, and many other home based businesses that we know of, this model works. It's amazing.

Ashley: Even through this interview series, just to see I am out of the house and married now, but at the same time, my parents are still able to include me and my husband in various parts of the business. It's not necessarily a full time basis like I used to work for them, but it's still a way that we can be part of it, and help us out at the same time. It's cool to all be able to work together.

Tina: That's exactly what our married children are able to do too. It's so much fun to watch over the years how that has happened.

Ashley: A question I'm asking all of our speakers is what are you passionate about? What really lights your fire and gets you going?

Tina: Well, my husband's looking at me.

Bob: Yes, that's without a doubt. After 31 years, that's number one.

The other passion I love watching what I call *aha* moments. *Aha* moments of realization in someone's life. You can read it on their face. You watch their eyes get as big as silver dollars, and you realize they've suddenly got it, when they share with you a dream, a hope, and we minister to that dream and hope, and we show them how they can accomplish something that was impossible to comprehend. And we show them there are people and tools available to help them reach their goals, and they have this *aha* moment. That to me is a huge passion. I love watching that happen.

Ashley: That's really cool. I'm very similar in that way. I want to teach right now and teach children specifically, just to watch them once I see them get it, it stirs something up inside of me. It makes me really excited. I definitely know how you feel in that area.

If you could start home schooling all over again, what is one thing you would do differently knowing what you know now?

Bob: Multi-faceted here. The first thing I would do is seek wise counsel about what a father's role is in the home school arena. Back when we first started, I thought my role was to be the principal, and all I had to do was check in and see how they were doing. Over the years, I realized that's a great way to burn your wife out. If I was to start all over again, I would take a stronger leadership role and become more active in the oversight of what was being taught and how. I would give my wife a bigger budget to secure the best materials for our children.

Tina: And to trash those things that we didn't like.

Bob: Give her the freedom to not use what she may have bought by mistake. Just to say that's the wrong thing. That doesn't work for our kids. Get rid of it.

Those are some of the changes I'd make. We did spend an enormous time traveling, and I think that is a critical part of home education. Every family ought to find some way to do some travel, and even if it's just within an hour or two, and explore what you live around, what is around you where you live, and then go beyond. It is such an adventure, and such a joy to share those things with your children and through the eyes of your children. I wouldn't change that, if anything, I would want to do more of it. Not so much of a business, but for pleasure.

Tina: We've only hit one continent, so we're ready for another continent.

Ashley: That's neat. That was one of our favorite things as a family. We've been blessed to still do it, not quite as consistently, but still at some level. Even now that I'm married and my sister's out of the house, we're still able to get together and travel. And I know that's something that's always been and always will be a huge blessing to me, just to see all the different things. And just seeing what the world is like, but also who God is through it all, his creation and what he's created for us.

Tina: Absolutely.

Bob: And Ashley, the other thing I would emphasize. If I were to start over again, I would be far more relaxed and not so uptight. I certainly wouldn't try to make my home into a school. I would try to make whatever education we were giving our children, a more family-centered experience rather than a classroom-centered experience. If we were to do it all over

again, we would be relaxed, more joyful, we would find reasons not to be stressed about a dirty house or that the laundry wasn't done.

We would become more fluid in allowing other people, mentors into our children's lives. I think I would seek more mentors for them sooner, rather than expecting us to have all the answers. There are other people out there that have far more knowledge in particular areas that could bless my children better than I. Those are some of the things I would do differently.

Tina: I think I would also want to trust God more. I think we all just get so uptight and we have to realize that the academic part of home education is such a small piece of the pie. It is such a little bit. That academic part can be done in a very short amount of time, as far as the 24 hours we're given each day.

Most of us go into home educating our children with the whole idea, we have been so indoctrinated with how we were brought up, with what school was when we were young. John Taylor Gatto's new book, *Weapons of Mass Instruction* is tremendous in helping us realize this is the way our government chose to do government education. But we don't have to do that. We can do something differently. We can let the Holy Spirit lead us. In my daily life, I pray constantly, what scripture are we to read this morning?

Right now the five of us sit around every morning for probably an hour or so discussing God's word, talking about events of the day, or a movie we've seen, or the books we're reading. And constantly saying, what is the next book we're supposed to read? Oh my goodness, Lord, there are so many articles on the internet that are really good. Which one do my children need to hear today?

Passing along things in that way and fully trusting the Holy Spirit to put those things in our path that we need and that our children need individually. Look at them more as individuals. And realize that God does not have to reveal his entire plan for each child from the time they're two years old. It's a faith walk. He just shows us typically one little step at a time. And often those steps are so simple that it's hard for us to comprehend, because we want something much more complicated. And it just doesn't have to be that way.

Ashley: That's really true. God has his own timeline for each and every thing, and he's going to show it to us in his time. It can be hard at times. We've talked, and I know you are giving lots of good advice. But with this being back to school season for a lot of people, is there anything as far as the

planning or getting started, any advice you would give to home schoolers for not going insane with trying to get back into the routine of school?

Bob: We're sitting here smiling. We don't use the term back to school. If you're schooling, if your educational format is part of your family life, there's nothing to go back to. It's just a continuation. My children love to tell others, where did you go on summer vacation? And they go, what's that. We feel like we hope that we inculcate into our children a love of learning that makes education a lifelong adventure.

But for those that still grab hold of the old model and want to start back in school the first week of September.

Tina: Get another sofa.

Bob: Get rid of the television set. If you're bringing your children from a public or private school, and you sense that they've been emotionally damaged there, and this is your first year of home educating them, just love on them. Just be with them.

Don't open up textbooks or anything else of that nature for a while, until the healing has taken place. Just take them with you. I love the example that David Quine of *Making Math Meaningful*. He doesn't go anywhere without taking one of them with him, wherever he goes. That's something we as dads ought to be able to do quite easily. Doesn't matter whether we go to Home Depot or the grocery store. Take a child with you. Make this a family affair, not just a set of curriculum guides, and you hope that children can do workbooks and become average. We want our children to become extraordinary, to excel in whatever they do.

Just take that time to love on them. Start off with a sense of relaxation, joy. Know that there have been very few people we've met that it was their life's goal to home school their children. They are home schooling them because they are compelled to. They can't imagine not doing it. After you've done it for a while, there's no way you want to put them back on the yellow bus. You want to keep them with you and grow this family experience and this joy exponentially.

Ashley: I agree. I'm looking forward to one day, when I have my own kids, to be able to do those things with them as well.

Tina: It's great to hear about that Ashley.

Ashley: I know. You already have one. How is that as a grandparent, to throw a curveball out here? As far as home schooling and being involved in that, do you have any advice for people that are getting to that stage and will

either soon have grandkids or already have grandkids and the way they can impact their lives.

Tina: I tell you what, one way that has impacted my grandchildren and some of my other family and friends who are young marrieds with a few children. I have not thrown away my library. And the other day, I had four young mothers over here, and they each took a box of picture books home with them. It was so awesome. And in a couple of weeks, they'll take a different box of picture books home with them.

So many people say we don't have space, but they're a huge and wonderful investment, not only for parents, but for children and their grandchildren, and their great grandchildren. I truly encourage you, keep your books so you can share them with others. Not your textbooks, but your living books like I talked about earlier. The other thing is I'm willing to listen to my older children who, one of them has a child, and two others are married and don't have children yet. But it's really interesting to listen to them talk about their home education experience. I finally started listening and even changing some of the things we do with our two that are still at home.

And the other thing is just be willing to meet with those young moms who are the mothers of your grandchildren. And share great books, encourage them to grow constantly. And to read. I know with my young married mommies around here that have the one or two young children, I just say, I know it feels busy and you're changing diapers all the time, but this is one of the most quiet times of your life. It doesn't seem like it, but believe me it's true.

They look at me like I'm a little crazy, but it really is true. This is a time for young couples, moms and dads both, to truly renew their minds, like we are told in Romans 12. And that's a life process.

As far as my grandson, like every other grandparent would say, he is the most intelligent, most beautiful. It is a whole difference having a grandchild that's not your own. Very interesting.

Bob: It's fun to be more critical too. We can do that now.

Tina: Life is so rich, so awesome, and I just love every season God has blessed us with.

Ashley: That's neat to hear. I know my mom can't wait for that stage of life to happen. She's looking forward to it. We tease her, but at the same time I'm grateful for it. When you talk about not throwing away any books in your library. My mom has held onto things from the time I was very little.

We always tease her about it, but I know one day it will be a great blessing to have those things.

Before we wrap up for today, I'd like to see if there's a way our listeners can get back in touch with you if they want more information about what you talked about.

Tina: Absolutely. They can go to our website which is being updated as we speak. But our website is www.BobandTinaFarewell.com.

And if they'd like to email me, I can send them a list of recommended sources that deal with these subjects. They can email me and in the subject line put Home School Super Heroes, and just request that list.

Ashley: Perfect. Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it. And I know there have been lots of good tips and tricks for our listeners to take away from this and hopefully bless them and their family time as well.

Bob: Thank you Ashley. Thanks for the opportunity.

Ashley: No problem. Have a great day.

Resources

Bob and Tina Farewell:

<http://www.BobandTinaFarewell.com>

Christian Parenting Association

Informal & Conversational Interviews with 16 Top Homeschooling Experts – Not a Formal Presentation, but questions you'd like to ask our experts!

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