

# Our Homeschool Journey

by *Chris and Juanita Rogers*

Since before our children were born, we knew we wanted to teach them at home and therefore, we began attending AHEA conventions while our children were very young. The weekend in Red Deer always left us feeling very encouraged and inspired.

Back in Calgary, our main mentors were a homeschooling family who had also been teachers. They (and our facilitator) encouraged us to get as much funding as possible because we were exceeding all the government requirements and this was (so they thought) an honest way to get tax dollars back and provide money for music, sports, etc.

This was how our journey began, and in the early years, it “worked” for us, but as we continued, we began to feel more and more pressured by ever-increasing checklists and requirements from our school board. We felt this sometimes robbed us of the freedom and joy we could have experienced, but we thought this was just part of having our children progress to higher grades.

As we spoke with other homeschoolers, we began to wonder if the funding money was worth the stress of satisfying our school board, but we were afraid of giving it up and being short of money.

It was then that we read an article in the AHEA magazine and realized what we were doing. We found out that the government did not consider us to be homeschoolers! Our children were actually participating in “extended public education” and, by law, our facilitator should have been teaching our children for 50% - 75% of the time because we were 50% - 75% aligned.

But even after this “wake-up call,” we still had such a struggle with trusting God to provide if we gave up that funding money because we live on a low single income. The Lord used Tom and Priscilla Lipp’s financial workshop to speak to us about trusting Him completely to provide. God’s economy is NOT our economy! The more we put our faith and trust in Him, the more we are able to experience the abundance of His provisions.

Finally, it was so exciting to take that step of faith! Have our five children been deprived since then? Not at all! I can honestly say that God has been very faithful and has blessed us abundantly (not just with material blessings!). Our family of seven received a beautiful, all-expenses-paid holiday to Eastern Canada last summer (this was God’s timing, as we had just studied early Canadian history!). There have been numerous occasions during the last year where He has used complete strangers who were not “believers” to bestow gifts upon us! By the way, I am not suggesting that we should give (or give up things) in order to receive more; I am only saying that God is so FAITHFUL! God is GOOD!

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Knowing that our school board had not been fulfilling the requirements of the law in their blended programming, we decided to switch to a board which offered traditional programming only. We feel strongly that this type of dishonesty within blended boards is putting home education at risk in Alberta.

We have always talked about the Lord and His ways, “while we sit and while we walk along the road,” but now we do it with even more conviction than ever. Kevin Swanson mentioned a true story of a girl who had been educated by her father in the woods with a box of World Book Encyclopedia and a Bible since she was 8-years-old. At 12 years of age, she was tested and came out at a grade 12 graduate level! Somehow we think that the more curriculums we buy, the more our children will succeed, but this is not true! The Bible is not only the greatest piece of literature on earth, but it is the inspired Word of God (our 9-year-old son says it is also the inspiring Word of God!). The Bible should be the most fundamental part of our teaching curriculum. Knowing and fearing God is the beginning of all wisdom. The more we trust in God, whether it be for our finances or our curriculum, the more we see that God’s ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts!

We feel so encouraged to take the time to pursue character training, as it is the foundation upon which we need to build. Kevin Swanson stated it well: Trying to teach academics without developing character in our children is like trying to hang pictures where there are no walls! From talking with others, we have sometimes gotten the impression that people think we completely drop academics in order to teach character, but this is not at all true. Often, we can use the academics to teach our children character. Sometimes, our daily household and cleaning chores are the best tools for character development. If I (Juanita) need to use math time to teach diligence in chores, I no longer feel guilty or pressured as I once did.

We cannot express how freeing this year has been! Our standards for our children have not changed, but more and more, we feel a freedom to think outside the box and to truly educate our children. This will be a process because we, as parents, are both products of public education. I am so thankful for AHEA and for the great speakers that come to our conventions. We need to be reminded to walk with courage and follow the convictions God puts upon our hearts.

*The Rogers live in Calgary where Chris works for the railroad. Their five children have always been taught at home. They love learning languages (German is their first language), camping, cycling, nature walks, gardening and eating whole, organic foods.*