

## **Beginnings and Endings**

*By Maxine McLellan*

**A**t this time of the year many families are just beginning their journey along the exciting and sometimes challenging path of academically educating children at home. When it comes down to it, you really have been “educating” your children since birth! In fact, you started to home educate yourself prior to bringing your first baby home. You no doubt researched various methods and approaches to birthing, prepared yourself as well as possible for understanding what is involved in caring for an infant, set up the necessary equipment and furniture, read some books on parenting, and consulted family and friends for advice. After the arrival of baby, you learned that the best laid plans can sometimes go astray, some advice given was not exactly what you needed, no baby is a “text book” case, and that parenting is often a “learn as you go” situation. You also figured out that yes, it was wise to plan ahead; although some advice was not helpful, it is good to know that folks cared enough to give it; and the books really were worth reading because you picked up a few golden nuggets you can use.

When it came time to start formal teaching of academics such as math and English, you once again researched various methods and approaches, considered what would be required of you in this new role, set up the necessary equipment, read some books on the subject, and possibly consulted family and friends for advice. Then you launched into the “learn as you go” adventure of educating children at home.

It is important to look into the future, be that only a few years or many years, to the day when you will no longer be teaching children at home. Most things do come to an end and you need to be prepared for that day! I realized the importance of this fact this past August when my life took an abrupt turn.

We had been teaching two girls from our church this past six years in our home and prior to that, our own two children who are now adults. I had thought we had five more years of home educating the girls. On August 9, 2005 their mother informed my husband and daughter that she had decided to put the girls into the public school system in grades eight and nine. I was away from home at the time receiving training for teaching dyslexics. At 11 p.m. on the 9th I got the news when I called home to check in on the events of the day. Shocked, devastated, disappointed, and discouraged are inadequate adjectives to my feelings that night and during the tear filled days of grief that followed. Mentally, I understand that their mother has every right to make this decision for her girls – they are really not my girls,

even though I thought of them as like daughters. Now I had a choice to make – accept the decision graciously and move on with my life, or wallow in the grief brought on by the abrupt ending of a 20-year calling as a home educator.

After a few days the shock began to wear off and my husband, daughter, and I looked at my options. Am I prepared to do anything beyond taking care of and educating children? I was pleasantly surprised to discover that I have many options and that truly, I have taken my own advice that I offer people in my seminars – to be a life-long learner. In fact, the course I had the privilege of being involved in on that fateful day was part of that life-long learner pursuit.

It had not been my intention to become a reading tutor. Rather, my plan had been to use the new information in future seminar presentations and articles for publication. Even before I was aware of this abrupt turn in my life, God was aware and had made it miraculously possible for me to attend that two day training course. Now I am taking the next level of correspondence courses and training that will prepare me to teach parents and teachers, if that is the direction God leads. Or, I could also tutor. Over the years I have taken classes and read extensively in a wide range of subject and skill areas, not all of which have been academic, such as with the cake decorating classes and club I belonged to for a few years. With my background of training and experience, the possibilities are exciting! In fact, I have so many options open to me that it will be exciting to see where God will take me.

It never ceases to amaze me that when one door closes – even painfully, another one opens in God's perfect timing. The more prepared you are, the more options might be available when the time comes for change.

It is wonderful to be used of God in teaching the precious child or children God has given to you and I believe it is a high calling. Some day that calling will be fulfilled and completed and you need to be prepared. At this beginning of yet another new year for academic learning for your children, I challenge each parent to be sure to be learning something as well. Set some flexible short-term and long-term goals for yourself as a learner in a variety of areas. Remember, God may change your goals so be flexible and willing to be willing! Take advantage of opportunities that come your way because you never know how it will fit into the final puzzle of life. One book, one seminar, one course at a time, and step-by-step you will eventually arrive at a new beginning – continued meaningful life after home educating.

It is my prayer that each of you will enjoy the journey as much as I enjoyed my 20 year journey that had good times and challenging

times that I would not trade for anything! Now, onward and forward!

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*This article originally appeared in the OCHEC Autumn 2005 newsletter.*

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