

# Lessons from a Paper Route

by *Dave and Margaret Smid*

When David first started the paper route a year ago, we had no idea all the benefits there would be waiting for our family. It all began with a desire to take a road trip to the States to visit some close friends and see some sights along the way. So we prayed and God provided a large paper route close to our home. Shortly after David started delivering papers, he started losing weight. That was one of the first benefits that came and it was something he needed to do for his medical condition. It wasn't long before we started to see the extra income accumulate each month and we were well on our way to saving for our trip. I decided to join him a few months later to help allow for an extra hour of sleep; it also gave us the ability to help out with some extra routes. Our children, Ryan (11) and Katie (9), were old enough by then to be left on their own for a couple of hours in the morning (they were sleeping anyway). I began to realize that not only was it good for fresh air and exercise in the morning, but it was very good for our marriage. We were now both on the same schedule - both getting up early and going to bed early, because we were both tired at the same time. We look forward to having that time each morning to spend together. We start the day in prayer, talk about life and we sometimes even have time afterward to have devotions together. We also try to focus on Scripture memory so that we can meditate on God's Word throughout the day (Psalm 1:2).

A few months after I started, we decided to get Ryan and Katie involved with some of the extra routes. We sometimes call them while we're still on our regular route (around 6:00 am) and they need to be ready in about 15 minutes at which time we pick them up to start on the extra route. It's not every morning this happens, but it's enough for them to earn a good income each month, especially for a nine- and eleven-year-old. Then we realized that, in doing so, they were learning the value of money and we could now teach them money management. They get to practice their math skills and learn record management, as they have to calculate and keep track of their amounts earned from each route they do. They set aside money for tithing and think twice about purchasing items they desire, as they know how hard they had to work to earn that money. They also have set goals for things that require larger amounts of money. For example, Katie really wants to attend a horse camp this

summer, so she is carefully setting aside the money she will need for that.

We found as we went to deliver papers as a family that it required teamwork and cooperation with minimal complaining (for which there is a deduction). There are always aspects of everything we do that we don't particularly like, whether it's at home or at work, but we have to learn to accept that and do it cheerfully (Phil. 2:14). We want to emphasize that in all we do, it should come from our heart to want to please our God and to be more like Christ (Phil. 2:5). That would include the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23), some of which includes joy, peace, patience, and self-control; and in those early hours in the morning (especially in the dark, cold winter months), those things are not easy to demonstrate, but there is joy in learning and growing in Christ and becoming who He wants us to be.

So, from all of this we have more of an appreciation of how good our God is and how He always knows what's best for us. This paper route has been a blessing in more ways than one, and what started out to be an answer to prayer for extra income turned out to be so much more. Not only has it been good for our marriage, but it has also helped our children learn math, money management, geography, listening to instructions, teamwork, obedience, patience, diligence, cooperation, responsibility, perseverance, good work ethics, conflict resolution - not to mention that we get to experience some of God's most amazing sunrises. It has been a tremendous opportunity to teach our children many of these values and character traits while having them realize what they learn is relevant to life. And yes, we were able to save enough to go on our big trip to the States last year and had the best vacation ever. It was one of the most memorable times that we've had as a family and we look forward to having many more!

*David and Margaret live in Edmonton, Alberta and are home educating their two children, Ryan (11) and Katie (9). They are also involved as coordinators for their home education support group in their church.*