

EPISODE 03**[INTRODUCTION]**

[0:00:05.2] AARESS LAWLESS: Hi there. Welcome to Today's Homeschool Teen, a podcast for homeschooling parents who want to help their teens meet the challenges of high school and reach their incredible, God-given potential. I'm your host, Aaress Lawless and on behalf of our team at Dual Credit at Home, thank you for joining me.

Today we're talking about teen rebellion. This is something that every parent thinks about and many families will experience. Kay Orr, a home school mom, small business owner, blogger and a friend to Dual Credit at Home is joining us and sharing her family's journey with rebellious teen.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:47.3] AARESS LAWLESS: So Kay, several of our families have gotten to know you a little bit through your blog articles with us and we're so grateful to have you as a contributor on the blog. Would you take a minute and kind of introduce us again to your family, tell us a little bit about how you started homeschooling and what life is like at the Orr house?

[0:01:06.6] KAY ORR: Absolutely, I'll tell you, we're a wild bunch over here. We started home schooling when our kids were little bitties so we've always home schooled. Chris and I have three boys, that are ours. When Cole began kindergarten, we decided — actually that's not true. I decided I was not ready to be away from him during the day. I said, "Hey Chris, what do you think about us homeschooling?"

My dad reminded me that when Cole was a baby, he was 18 months old or something. He said, "Do you remember Kay, I told you back then, we're going to home school?" I thought he was crazy, I said, "There's no way in the world. I could never do that, never could I do that." Anyway, fast forward to kindergarten and we're home schooling. Chris was traveling at the time and we thought, it would be a great way for us to just pack up, and the boys and I to go with him on the road and we could just take our books and fell in love with it and we just have not ever looked back.

It's been a blessing for our family. When Cole was 12, our nieces came to live with us, they had been living in Oklahoma and we decided to homeschool them as well, and that also turned out to be a great blessing for our family. We've got two left at home that are graduating. Cameron will graduate May 17th.

[0:02:29.8] AARESS LAWLESS: Congratulations.

[0:02:31.3] KAY ORR: Yup, then we'll just have one. I've gone from five kiddos homeschooling down to one and it's been a great journey for our family.

[0:02:40.6] AARESS LAWLESS: That's awesome. Now, the idea for today's conversation actually came from one of your blog articles. You've written for us on teen rebellion and why do you think that this topic is so common yet not talked about so often?

[0:02:57.4] KAY ORR: Well, if you think about where our families – all families come from different walks. We have home schooling families from different religious backgrounds, different parts of the nation, they come from all over – they home school for different reasons but one of the things that is near and dear to all of our hearts is the success of our children through the education process.

We want them to be successful as adults, we want them to be successful on an educational level. I think when you start comparing your family or looking to families to model after. One of the things you don't look for is a family whose children don't listen to their parents, right?

[0:03:44.4] AARESS LAWLESS: Right.

[0:03:45.2] KAY ORR: You don't want to go and say, "Hey, those kids are out of control, I think I want to be like them."

[0:03:50.5] AARESS LAWLESS: Exactly.

[0:03:52.2] KAY ORR: We have a tendency not to necessarily hide it but it isn't something that we just broadcast to everyone. We also live in a time when social media plays a big part in what we share with everyone. We call them at our house, we call them Facebook families. I would say, when one of the kids

was having an issue with something, I'd say, "Well, is that your Facebook family or is that your real family?"

Because our real family, you're not going to post all the pictures of the dirty dishes in the sink which I have actually done. But you have a tendency to put forth your best foot. I think when you're dealing with something that is emotionally draining and it's raw and it's real, you don't have a tendency to just share that with everyone. You find some people who have been willing to share their story and you ask them how they survived.

I think that's why we don't see a whole lot of it. There's a lot of resource materials but not a lot of people that are just willing to say, "Hey, this was our path."

[0:04:54.9] AARESS LAWLESS: Right. Now, in your family, when you dealt with this, what were the warning signs that you saw it coming? What are the things that you noticed in your boys developing and what are some of the signs that parents need to be on the lookout for as their teens get older?

[0:05:11.6] KAY ORR: Right, as I mentioned, you know, families come from all different places. Rebellion in a home will look differently to different families. Rebellion basically is a blatant disobedience, it's a heart issue and so for our family, I can't speak for everyone but for our family, when I began to see signs early on, it was little pieces of disobedience that were self-centered. They weren't easily corrected.

The times in our home when we seem to really have to kind of deal with that rebellion was right after our nieces came to live with us, we had a lot of changes taking place in our home. I think sometimes, when there's a lot going on, maybe you have a family member that's ill, or you're moving, you know, changing jobs or moving from one state to another, the kids tend to feel lost.

I think sometimes they don't feel heard. When a child doesn't feel heard, no matter how old they are, when they don't feel heard, they have a tendency to act out. If that isn't caught and corrected early, it's more difficult later, it grows into a rebellion that's really difficult to work through.

I kind of started to begin seeing some of those signs when we brought the girls in and we're trying to readjust our family to make room for everyone and we wanted to make sure that the girls dealt well. It

just – it was a time change for all of us. I think we begin to see primarily with our oldest son, he was just turning 13. Already bridging from being a child, a young man and I had never had a teenager before.

The girls, but they came as teenagers. You hadn't really walked that journey before. I think a lot of things began to take place and we really had to step back and look at the root of the problem, really, we had to sit back and take a breath and say okay, we've got to figure out what's causing this, address it, be very honest and find some people, ask some questions of people who have been through something like this before and then glean from that.

And Of course, always through prayer, we prayed till the world looked level. You know, we prayed a lot for these kiddos. And you do that because you love them.

[0:07:45.9] AARESS LAWLESS: Right. What were some of the questions that you asked when you found those people that were the safe people that you could go to and get feedback from? What are some of the questions that you thought through or tried to somehow articulate with them?

[0:08:00.4] KAY ORR: I think one of the questions I asked was, is this my fault?

[0:08:05.8] AARESS LAWLESS: That is such a great question.

[0:08:07.2] KAY ORR: I felt very responsible, not for his actions and I think sometimes as parents, we have a tendency to own our children's mistakes and we really can't do that.

[0:08:17.1] AARESS LAWLESS: Right.

[0:08:18.5] KAY ORR: Those mistakes that they make and the choices that they make, that's their decision. They are choosing to disobey the rules or choosing to break the law or whatever the challenge is. They're making a choice to do that. It's our responsibility as parents to make sure that we catch it and correct it and then try to guide their heart.

You know, I'm not a parenting expert by any means but I did ask a lot of questions and specifically that first one is my fault. The next thing we did was we asked, you know, how do we as parents, how did they

go about correcting the issues while still allowing the child freedom because they still have to keep learning how to do things on their own.

You can ground a 16 year old until they're 18 and you haven't really taught them anything in that two years, that they don't have a car, they haven't figured out how to live in the world that got them in trouble in the first place, does that make sense?

[0:09:24.8] AARESS LAWLESS: It does make sense. It's almost like it's a band aid it's not the solution to the problem.

[0:09:30.3] KAY ORR: Yeah, as parents, you know, we want them to grow while they're at home and we hope to launch them into adulthood well but we can't keep them at home and protect them and isolate them from challenges. The goal is to help them walk through issues that they have or challenges that they come up against or problems that they have, we want to be able to walk with them through those and guide them using God's word.

So that when they're on their own, they will continue to make good choices. They'll know where to go to find the answers if they have questions. The world is a yucky place sometimes, you know?

[0:10:08.4] AARESS LAWLESS: Right.

[0:10:09.4] KAY ORR: Hard for kids to be teenagers today.

[0:10:11.7] AARESS LAWLESS: It is such a different world that we live in. Now, once you got your questions answered, I know obviously, the first step you took was lots of prayer, you've already mentioned that again. But what were those beginner first steps? Once you started discovering that yes, this was not your fault and yes, that you needed to go to the Lord for wisdom and yes, you needed to bridge the door to their heart.

What are those little practical first steps that got you on the road to dealing with that?

[0:10:38.1] KAY ORR: Well first, we pulled in the reins. Part of the challenges that we had were because too much freedom was given too early. He wasn't mature enough to be able to handle the freedom that he had. We took some of that back and we talked with him about earning back little bits of freedom so we would increase that. Let's do really well, let me think of an example. Let's do really well, go into the movies in a group, we're going to drop you off and then later, let's build up too, allowing you to go in your own vehicle or whatever.

We would remove a lot of the freedom and give it back as he earned it. It wasn't just, we're going to try this but one of the problems with rebellion is that honesty is key in any kind of a good relationship. When you have rebellion, that trust is broken. You have to earn that trust again. Just like as a parent, you know, if I get on to my children or I don't explain myself well, it's harder for them to obey me if I haven't clearly laid out my expectations.

That communication was something we worked on early on as we were rebuilding that trust. Communication is very important.

[0:11:57.9] AARESS LAWLESS: Now you are also homeschooling all throughout this whole process I assume. So how did this impact your homeschooling and you have a teen that doesn't want to listen let alone a teen that might not want to listen about doing school? How did you have to adjust your homeschooling style or expectations during this time?

[0:12:15.6] KAY ORR: Right, well we were homeschooling in Texas, which has some pretty – well, we're pretty free here. So I was able to adjust our lessons. So one of the challenges we had is with cigarettes and so I asked him to write a paper for me and I wanted information. I wanted medical background, any kind of medical reports he could find, any kind of pro-nicotine. I just gave him the gamut and I said, "Instead of doing a regular writing assignment, let's just give into this topic together."

"So let's do some research, you can practice your writing skills, your research skills, we are going to keep plugging forward." We don't get to just stop everything, you still have responsibilities but let's at least make it useful and so tried to do some things where we paired learning along with our education. So we were developing good conversation. We were communicating about things that he found important. Now the hardest part for me was realizing that I may not have all the answers.

We may actually be right on some things obviously not with the cigarettes but he might be right on some things and so we really found a good way to debate each other where he felt like he was being heard and I say to him, "I hear what you are saying. I disagree and here's why." So we had to create some language that was pretty safe and he wasn't super excited about it at the beginning. You know, he had gotten in trouble and lost in restrictions or he had some restrictions returned to him and so it did take a little while and I think we just had to be patient and consistent.

[0:14:00.4] AARESS LAWLESS: That consistency is the key. Teens know how to push you, deceive you, really mean what you say. You mean now with your other kids, what was going on with them during this time period? How did you keep rebellion from spreading through the ranks because I mean that is the worst thing where a parent can anticipate is, "Oh my, we've got one kid going through this, we don't want the other four or five to deal with this too."

[0:14:25.3] KAY ORR: Exactly, especially if that the child that is being rebellious, if it comes out a left field like if you had no idea and then all of a sudden this child that you were just certain was behaving a certain way when they weren't with you and you find out you were totally wrong, then you begin to doubt. You doubt, "All right, so are the rest of the kids also doing this?" Or "How do I get control of this situation because it is definitely that child is out of control."

And so we were real honest with the other kids. We didn't do big family meetings because we wanted to be sure and protect Cole's integrity. We wanted to make sure that we were honest with the younger kids and we ask their opinion. So here is a challenge that we are facing because it is really hard when you have a child that is behaving in a certain way and is in trouble and you are having to correct him. The other kids they know what is going on.

So it is not a surprise to them so we just ask their opinion, "What do you think about this behavior? We've talked through the rights and the wrongs and we'd love your feedback," we've never asked the kids, "What would you have done differently from a parents' perspective?" Because they're children and so we weren't going to have them correcting our parenting but we did ask them, "What would you do differently in the same situation?"

“You know what did you learn from his mistake,” because that’s the goal, right? We want them to learn and even as parents, we try to teach our kids based on our own life experiences and sometimes that worked and sometimes it doesn’t but that was the easiest way for us was just to be very honest and open and have communication with them.

[0:16:19.7] AARESS LAWLESS: Now your family story, the lord did a huge restoration process. So I know that your story with your son, it’s been a great learning experience. Now you’re able to help other families in that position. Now unfortunately for some families, it doesn’t end with a happy ending story yet. What would you say to that mom that has an older child that has gone through rebellion, move away, ostracize the family and still trying to pick up the pieces and move on, what would you say to her right now?

[0:16:49.9] KAY ORR: I would say keep praying. Absolutely keep praying. You know it used to when our kids are little, I used to pray that they would always have good influences in their life. You know I would pray for good friends, I would pray for good opportunities that church in. I remember we were doing – I can’t remember the name of the study. It was one of Beth Moore’s studies with the group and she said, “The best way to pray for your children is to pray that they will know what to do with a bad influence.”

And it was kind of an eye opening experience for me because I thought, yes we want to pray that they’ll be good influences and be around good people but really, you are teaching them what to do with a bad influence and so I think even after they’ve left home, if they leave home and the relationship is strained, you’d still pray those same things you know? You pray for changes in their heart. You pray for opportunities for the Holy Spirit to move in their life and to open doors.

And you just continue to reach out. If you are spending a text every week or a couple of times a week just letting them know, “You know I just want you to know I was thinking about you,” if they don’t respond it’s okay. They’ve gotten your message and they know that you are continuing to think about them and to pray about them and they will come back.

[0:18:19.1] AARESS LAWLESS: How did you pray specifically for your son during that time?

[0:18:23.1] KAY ORR: I prayed a lot of protection over him. I asked God to basically protect him from himself. So, “Will You please stand in the gap? Will You protect him? Will You help him to ask me questions? Give me opportunities to share?” Because you know really, if you preach at your kids instead of letting it be a conversation, they sometimes have a tendency to shut you out. They don’t hear the rest of what you are saying and so –

[0:18:55.0] AARESS LAWLESS: Nobody wants to be preached at.

[0:18:56.5] KAY ORR: Yeah, so I had to figure out what is the point that I want to make to him or really with any of my kids, what’s the point that I want to get across and then can I keep my mouth shut long enough to let it be a conversation so that I have the opportunity to share that point with listening ears? So I just prayed number one for protection, I prayed that he would find answers that he would go to God for answers and then I hoped that he would come back and we would have good conversation.

And then I could just let him know, always wanted him to know how much I loved him even when I didn’t like his behavior very much, even when he didn’t like me I knew that he loved me and that that would still be there. So yeah, it’s a great thing to have the honor and the privilege to pray for our kids.

[0:19:52.8] AARESS LAWLESS: Such a blessing. Well I want to point all of our listeners back to your blog article because there is so much more in there that we could talk over but I do have one last question. For those of us that aren’t dealing with a rebellious teen of our own but we have friends who are dealing with a rebellious teen, how can we come alongside of other homeschool families that are dealing with this? I know going and preaching at them is certainly not the answer.

Turning our nose up at them and thinking we are better than them but how can we come alongside them and support them and help bear their burden during that time?

[0:20:26.9] KAY ORR: Well I’ll tell you, one of the neatest things through the early stages of the challenges with Cole, I had a very good friend whose son was his age and she said to me, she said, “We’d like to have Cole come and come stay with us, spend the night, come and do movies or whatever,” and to know that they were willing to have them in their home even knowing some of the challenges that were going through was great because a lot of his friends wouldn’t lose them as friends.

But they weren't excited about sending their kids over to come to our house or having Cole over to go to their house. It was challenging so I would say reaching out, you obviously would want to protect your own children but if the opportunity arises, just knowing that you are still there for that family would be so important to them. Offering what can I do to help, I know I haven't been in that situation but is there something that I could be doing? How can I be praying for you?

Could we have your whole family for dinner? Could we go meet at McDonalds or wherever, you know? Just keeping that social relationship going is so important because without that you feel like you're on an island and you feel very alone.

[0:21:50.4] AARESS LAWLESS: So true. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to join us today and let our parents know that they are not alone and to be willing to share so honestly, we really appreciate it. So thank you so much Kay. We look forward to featuring many more of your blog articles in the future.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:22:10.0] AARESS LAWLESS: As I mentioned, you find some of the blog articles that Kay has written for Dual Credit at Home at our website. You can find that at www.dualcreditathome.com/blog and while you're there on the website, be sure to check out our podcast section. There you'll find other episodes as well as the show notes from today's episode. You can find that at www.dualcreditathome.com/podcast.

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