

Preserving Great Literature with Private Lending Libraries

Episode 249

Rachel Winchester [00:00:01]:

If you've been around here long, you've probably heard how much we love books. They are truly the key to lifelong learning. However, as our culture shifts and time goes on, it can be really hard to find the great books we most love. Enter our friend, Kathleen Seeger, and others like her who have private lending libraries full of amazing books they generously share with people like you and me.

Today, we're talking about the power of living books and how we can keep them alive for the next generation. You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably. Carole Joy Seid has been helping families homeschool for several decades now through her seminars and consulting services.

In today's episode, Carole talks with Kathleen Seeger about her own vast library of living books and how you can gain access to her library and others like it. Listen in.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:00]:

Welcome, friends. I am sitting across from a long time friend of the ministry and friend of mine, Kathleen Seeger. She is speaking to us from up in Wisconsin, and I'm here in Oklahoma. But the wonders of technology never cease to amaze us, and we get to hang out together. So welcome, Kathleen.

Kathleen Seeger [00:01:23]:

Thank you, Carole.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:25]:

So we go way, way back. There's a lot of things I wanna talk about today, but first, let's just give a brief overview of your family. You're married to a pastor. I am. And you're pastoring in what town?

Kathleen Seeger [00:01:38]:

We live in a little town of Edgerton. It's outside of Madison in Wisconsin.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:43]:

Mhmm. Okay. And, how long have you guys been homeschooling?

Kathleen Seeger [00:01:48]:

Well, we have always my our oldest son is 24, and we have always homeschooled. I think we I actually came to a seminar the 1st year I was homeschooling. So

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:00]:

Wow.

Kathleen Seeger [00:02:01]:

In Minneapolis since that's one of your spots. And so William was 5. So we've been homeschooling ever since he was 5, and I knew no other families that homeschooled except for 1. So I was very glad to come to your seminar because I always say when I saw your seminar, it was everything I always wanted to do that I did not know existed because I had no mentors or people who I knew that had gone before me to give me wisdom. So I cried that day, that very first day. I was like, oh, this is everything I ever wanted. So really put me in a really solid place to begin the blessing of homeschooling as our family.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:46]:

Yeah. And you have how many children?

Kathleen Seeger [00:02:48]:

We have 5. Right now, they're 24, 21, 19, 19, and 15. And 2 of them are adopted from India. And so I have, one son. He has autism. He still lives at home. Nina is in college at Concordia in Wisconsin.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:11]:

Yes.

Kathleen Seeger [00:03:12]:

She is studying in a church ministry, church worker program, and in a social work program. And I have one son in a diesel mechanic program. Wow. Mechanics. He loves and lives machines and engines and motors. One daughter went through a program and she works in a hospital. And then Lillian is still she's in 10th

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:37]:
grade. Okay.

Kathleen Seeger [00:03:38]:
And she you met at Coldwater. So she's the little blondie.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:41]:
I did. Mhmm. Oh, and how many of your kids have been to Coldwater? 4.

Kathleen Seeger [00:03:47]:
4. In 2023, we're signed up, and then, of course, camps were canceled. So we did a family trip with 2 guys. So my husband and I also technically did a Coldwater trip. Wow. It was very amazing. We went, on Gunflint Lake and Little Gunflint Lake, for, I think, 3 or 4 days. So we did a shortened trip, but it was fabulous.

Kathleen Seeger [00:04:10]:
And then the next summer, 4 of them

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:14]:
went as students.

Kathleen Seeger [00:04:15]:
The youngest four all did their own trips at Coldwater.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:19]:
Tell me about the impact. What the first, what is cold water for our listeners?

Kathleen Seeger [00:04:23]:
So, yeah, cold water. I always call it a Christian leadership wilderness camp. That's I describe it to people. And so but I just I as we know, nature is so important, so impactful to us, getting away into the wilderness and just really being to able to connect with God in quiet. And some of my children did overnights, depending on their age, overnights where they actually slept alone in a tent.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:57]:
Yes. So what you're talking about yeah. You mean doing a solo?

Kathleen Seeger [00:05:01]:
Doing a solo. That's what it's called. Yeah. Doing a solo. And they just really loved it. It is hard, hard work. So I always families who ask me about it, I always say it is hard work.

You are we were getting in the canoe the 1st day, and one of the children asked, our leader, well, how far are we gonna go today? And he said, well, probably 8 or 9 miles.

And my husband and I looked at each other like, 8 or 9 miles. Can we canoe? So, you know, we're old people, but we did it. We slept, you know, under bug nets. The kids chose that bug nets and tarps. We slept up the ground under them. It was fabulous. And their trip children's trips are longer, but the guides are so great. They do such good devotions, great exercise.

We had an exercise when we got lost, although we weren't lost, but we were, you know, we were lost, you know, and there was lessons out of that. But, actually, my husband and I, we had our own canoe. We were looking at each other. Are we really lost, or is this an exercise? You know? We're trying to wink at the guides, like, we're lost. Right? Like, but it was it was really fun. So I got a glimpse of what the children experience on their trips. And, obviously, their trips are harder, longer, but also deeper because of that. And they just get so much so much out of it.

Yeah. I don't know if kids maybe kids aren't, like, I want to necessarily go every year because it is hard. But, you know, those life changing things are so important and even just going once.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:43]:
I know.

Kathleen Seeger [00:06:44]:
That bears so much fruit.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:46]:
I know. I agree. Tell me how, the homeschool made simple method has impacted your family and why you chose it. Why was it a good fit for you as a family?

Kathleen Seeger [00:07:00]:
When I started homeschooling, as I said, I didn't have a lot of mentors. I knew I wanted to have a Christian homeschool. And since I was a little girl, I always loved books. Yes. Always, always loved books. And so, I recently, my mother gave me my baby book a few years ago and written in when I was only 18 months old. It says, loves books, but all books must be hers. It says, you know, shares will all my books must be hers.

So, you know, I always wanted them to be mine. But as a child, I taught myself to read when I was 3. Always loved to read voracious reader, but yet I did not have anyone who

was really feeding me great books or good books. Even in my schooling years because I was super quiet.

I was a fly under the radar kid. I actually sat and drew. I never had any reading lessons in school. They would just put me in the courtroom and to draw. So why didn't they hand me, like, a *Little House on the Prairie* or something? I don't know. But that was just the the school and the time period. And so when I grew up and was an avid reader as an adult, I had my first son older as 30. We had infertility, before his birth, and I knew that I wanted my children to have the chance to read all of those amazing books that I did not have a chance to read as a child.

And then also that catches me up. Like, I learned so much as a homeschooling mother. I like, my mind is blown every day. Wow. I never knew these. I never and I was an A student. You know? So but still so much more. We could there's always more to know and to learn.

And so I wanted my children to have that blessing of snuggling on the sofa, reading great books, explore having the freedom to enjoy time with our family, be in nature, and all of that just very much, obviously, is things you advocate and, really encourage parents in the seminars. So I always say, go into your seminars. It's like homeschool mom spa day. Right? Because it's like everything. We give you so much good messages all day. We're our soul is fed. Yeah. We're reminded of all the good things, which are easy to forget when you're in the trenches in the day to day.

So it's, you know, a refresher, it's a reminder, and it's encouragement.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:39]:

So glad. Wow. You're making my day. Well so out of your experience as a homeschool mom, the Lord's given you an extension of this philosophy in ministry. Tell tell our listeners about that.

Kathleen Seeger [00:09:56]:

So, yes, when my son when my son was born, even before I was a homeschooling mom Yes. When he was 2 months old, he loved to be read to. We would lay on the bed, and I'd hold, like, good night moon up in the air, and his little head's next to me on the pillow. And I'm reading him books, and he loved to be read to. So even as a infant, he had a a infant, he had a large library. And part of that surely was fed by my knowledge of what happens if you don't have that. Like, what do you miss if you don't have exposure to these lovely books?

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:29]:
Yeah.

Kathleen Seeger [00:10:29]:
And so by the time that I started homeschooling, obviously, heard you had your lists. I was primed to just have that library keep growing, growing, growing. And soon on also in I learned of some ladies in the Charlotte Mason community that were operating these type of libraries, like Michelle Miller.

Carole Joy Seid [00:10:52]:
What what type of libraries?

Kathleen Seeger [00:10:54]:
A living book library. A private lending library full of all the beautiful truth, beauty, goodness, abounding in all of these books. And, there are so many books that are out of print Yes. As you know Yes. That are lovely and are amazing books, but for a variety of reasons did not stay in print. And it's not that they weren't good books. There just is a lot of business decisions, copyright issues, that come into play, like the Landmark series, which is amazing series of books. So I, of course, have all 185 landmarks in this library and desire my life was somewhat crazy.

Kathleen Seeger [00:11:37]:
Right? Like dragging kids to book sales and thrift stores and buying books online and buying books at your seminars. That takes an enormous amount of time, energy, money, sacrifice. And so I really feel like this library, which houses around, I don't have the exact number, 10,000 or so. Oops. It it's like a gift, right, to homeschool moms.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:02]:
It is.

Kathleen Seeger [00:12:02]:
That you don't have to sacrifice that time and that money. And we're each individually gifted by God with our passions and our things we can do. Right? So not every mom needs to build a every family should have a library as you know well.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:18]:
Yeah.

Kathleen Seeger [00:12:19]:

But not every family can have a crazy library like this. And so if your children wanna study reptiles or Winston Churchill, even in your home library, you may not have great books about those topics. So this is the place to come where there is a whole shelf of books about landmarks, and there is, you know, 10 books about Winston Churchill.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:43]:

Yes.

Kathleen Seeger [00:12:44]:

And you can pick one for each of your children's levels and know that you're not just reading the book in the public library that was written by a textbook author or a snippet of facts, but you're reading a book where the author really was passionate and really loved their subject and loved children.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:06]:

And the difference between literature and a textbook is what you're saying.

Kathleen Seeger [00:13:11]:

Absolutely. Yes. And even beyond, like, some children's books. Like, what I love I have some landmark books here in front of me because I love them so dearly. Yes. The landmark books all have authors. What was so unique about this series is they all have authors that not just are good at writing, but also are experts on their subject. And not just experts to write a kid's book about it, but lifelong experts.

Kathleen Seeger [00:13:40]:

And so the landmark on Adolf Hitler Yeah. The rise and fall of Adolf Hitler, William Shearer wrote this book. And in the, dust jacket, it says, for many years, William Shearer's job as an American correspondent in Berlin gave him the opportunity to meet Hitler, listen to his numerous speeches, and observe him at firsthand at the moment of his greatest triumphs. Wow. What is set down in this book is based almost entirely on what the author himself saw in Germany and on the massive files of secret Nazi documents captured by the allies at the end of World War 2.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:23]:

That's amazing.

Kathleen Seeger [00:14:24]:

And how amazing to have your kids read a book written by about Hitler by a man who saw Hitler. Right? Like, that cannot that can't even be written today. No. And so, this

book, I read it aloud, maybe 2 or 3 years ago to my oldest, 3. Are you trying to look at it, Carol? Carol can see it even though listeners can't. But I read it aloud to my children. We had so much great conversation reading the book because his you know, mister Sheer's passion as a journalist about Adolf Hitler and what he saw, it comes out clearly in the book, the good and the bad. Yeah.

Kathleen Seeger [00:15:11]:

So many funny things. And so it was fascinating. And I had a member of my library, a mom check out this book and read it aloud to her husband and text me at, like, 11 o'clock at night. Be like, have you read this book? You have to. And I was like, no. I haven't. She's like, you have to read this book. This book is amazing.

Kathleen Seeger [00:15:29]:

And so and, you know, that prompted me for years. I was like, okay. I gotta get to this book because this mom says it's

Rachel Winchester [00:15:37]:

amazing.

Kathleen Seeger [00:15:37]:

Yeah. And it is. And so now I have read it a few

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:41]:

times over. So tell me how people can become a member of your library. Tell and and there are other libraries like yours around the country. Is that what you're saying?

Kathleen Seeger [00:15:52]:

Yes. There are you know, the the godmother of all libraries is, you know, Michelle Miller. She started one. She's kind of a homeschool long veteran long term veteran. Yeah. Her boys went to Hillsdale, which I know you're familiar with Hillsdale. She, I think, believe she had 3 sons. Well, she had just God worked in her life that she kind of started a library similar to this maybe 30 years ago, something like that in Michigan.

Kathleen Seeger [00:16:19]:

And since that time, of course, other ladies have kind of thought, that's a great idea. And they've broken off all over the country. And so now they're I don't know how many exist. At one time, there was maybe around 20, maybe I think when I started mine, which is the limited education library, which is what I'm sitting in right now. And all actually a closet. There's bookshelves in front of me too in a closet. But so all of these women are women who most of them were homeschool mothers. They have read

these books, lived these books for many years, have a really vast untapped knowledge of these amazing books, and have collected them and really have a passion and belief that you can't find these books in libraries anymore.

Kathleen Seeger [00:17:03]:

You you know? I know I I'm not trying to be sacrilegious, Carol, and saying, you know, I know the library card and a math book. You know? But, the live public library is just not the same as it used to be. And so instead of the public library card, I really consider it a great blessing that families can come and consider our kind of libraries, their library card. And while that does have a fee, you know, the public libraries are paid for by taxes. You know? Our I don't get tax money, you know, for running this grassroots library. But I really feel it is \$120 a year at my personal library,

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:41]:

which I Unbelievably reasonable.

Kathleen Seeger [00:17:43]:

\$10 a month.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:43]:

Is it?

Kathleen Seeger [00:17:45]:

That is pretty realistic to buy books. Most of the a lot of the books, of course, cost far more than \$10 if you can hunt them down online, and your kids may only read them once. So you don't have to own them all. You don't have to own every book.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:59]:

Do people need to be in your geographic area to be part of your library?

Kathleen Seeger [00:18:03]:

Yes. And so that's what's the the true benefit of hopefully, now that many women have kind of had this idea of of there's ladies bursting out here, there, and everywhere. Actually, the world and everything in it podcast, just today had, interviewed a woman in Tennessee that she just opened her library. Oh. She had had it before, and then they closed it be of various reasons, and then they moved it. And so now and they're homeschool veterans. I don't know her particular story, but she reopened it just recently. And so, you know, there is a lit there are lists online.

Kathleen Seeger [00:18:44]:

I just had 2 emails in the past week of people who emailed me and said, I found about your library on a Charlotte Mason library list and things like that. And so there are, BiblioGuides has a list of libraries, and I think there's over 70. I'm not sure how many are on the list right now, but I don't think it's made it to a 100 yet. But somewhere in between 70 a 100 libraries. Some are small, some are large, some have 20,000 books, some have 10,000 books, some only have 2 or 3. But as people join, that's what equips us to be able to build the library, have more books, serve more families.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:27]:
Right.

Kathleen Seeger [00:19:28]:
One of the hardships of my library is people come and see the books, and then they're like, well, I don't know. A \$120 is a lot of money. And some people are like, you only charge a 100 and 20.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:40]:
That's what I would say. I know what each of those books cost.

Kathleen Seeger [00:19:44]:
Right. Exactly. And so I really like to encourage families to think that this is I mean, this really builds our culture. It doesn't just benefit your own family. You are benefiting your own family and your own children enormously, but you also are benefiting every other family when you invest in a library like this. Right. You are benefiting every family Yes. And all those children that join the library.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:11]:
Right on.

Kathleen Seeger [00:20:12]:
Yeah. And so if you're if you're investing into this, you are investing into building culture and helping a Christian worldview be present in the lives of all of our families.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:25]:
Kathleen, one of my favorite books and movies is Fahrenheit 451. And, I can't help but think of it as you're talking. We're at the end of the book where books are being burned and destroyed and it's illegal to read books. There are group of people that have physically become a book. They have memorized books. And, when the protagonist in the in the movie goes up and meets them at this deserted area where

there are bunch of train cars and things, one will say, well, hello. I'm Pride and Prejudice. Hello.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:00]:

I'm To Kill A Mockingbird. Hello. I'm Crime and Punishment. And he realizes they have become those books. They have memorized them Mhmm. Because that's the only books they can't burn is the books that you've memorized.

Kathleen Seeger [00:21:12]:

They memorized. Mhmm.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:14]:

And so they have, saved those books, the life of those books for the next generations. And that's what you're doing in in this very important ministry, and I would be delighted to write a check for a \$120 if I even come close to coming to that library and taking some of these books home with me. And then they get to take them home. Is that correct?

Kathleen Seeger [00:21:39]:

Absolutely. Yes. They bring their bins. They check out books. We have a system. And Wow. I really am trying to build the library that I wish existed back that 1st year that I started homeschooling.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:51]:

Started homeschooling. Yes.

Kathleen Seeger [00:21:53]:

I have loved loved loved even though I love owning these books, this is a beautiful place. I have people come. They're like, I wish I could be here all day. You know? I am. There's so much good even the kids, they're like, there's too many books here that I wanna read. I'm like, they'll be here next month. So

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:10]:

Oh, that is so beautiful. Well, before we close, I'll tell you a fun little story. When we lived in Huntington Beach down at the beach, there in in Southern California, there was a little and so it's a little tiny library, a little regional, you know, neighborhood library there at the beach. And no one else was ever in that library but one hobo with a really, really long beard, and he would hang his backpack on the back of the chair, and then he would read the newspaper. He'd spread it on the table with a little wooden dowel through the middle of newspaper each day. You know? And he would turn the pages,

and he would read. And we needed a fishing pole sticking out of his backpack. And that was the one other person in the library and myself.

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:52]:

And, so we love that library because, you know, when libraries don't have a lot of money, they keep old books Right. And they don't discard them. Those are the libraries to discover and to find, you know, wherever you live. And so I would check out massive amounts, and we had a a bike trailer. I'd put JJ in the little seat, and then I'd fill the back completely to the rim of our bike trailer with books. And I was when I was a child, they limited how many books we could check out, and it was a trauma to my life. And so I would be checking out books in California, and, and I would just be holding my breath. I would make eye contact with the librarian because I was so embarrassed that we're checking out, like, 35 books, you know, a week or whatever.

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:36]:

And so one day, my conscience just smote me, and I said to him, I am sorry we check out so many books. And he said, don't apologize. You helped my statistics.

Kathleen Seeger [00:23:46]:

Right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:46]:

So we were keeping that library afloat, thankfully, but, the old books tend to be in these kind of remote little libraries. And what you are doing is gathering books that we cannot find in major metropolitan libraries because they're too well funded, and so they have to replace, you know, Marguerite D'Angelique books with Cyndi Lauper's autobiography, which Absolutely. Every child, of course, you wouldn't want them to miss. What's current and popular,

Kathleen Seeger [00:24:17]:

mhmm, is what their focus is. What's current and popular? And in my I have a tiny small town library. And when my kids were little, going there trying to I couldn't even enter library loan a lot of the books I wanted to read first to see if I wanted to buy them. They I couldn't even interlibrary loan them from anywhere in my state. And that was what really led me to be like, I need to collect these beautiful treasures that are being lost.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:46]:

I can't wait. This is a legacy. This is a ministry, and long may your flag wave. It's all I can say. So tell people how to, find their libraries in their areas.

Kathleen Seeger [00:25:05]:

If families I know families have googled. It's mostly we call them private lending libraries or living book libraries. There is a list of them on video guides.com Okay. Under private lending libraries. I also know Simply Charlotte Mason hosts a list of living book libraries on their website.

Carole Joy Seid [00:25:28]:

Alright.

Kathleen Seeger [00:25:29]:

So those are 2 places that I know you can find a list and see by state if there are any living book libraries near where you live. Then right now, there's only one. There's mine, which is the first one, and then a friend of mine, Sarah Mazaric, actually of Plumfield Moms. She started hers last year in Green Bay. So we have opposite sides of the state, Green Bay and Madison area.

Carole Joy Seid [00:25:53]:

I love it.

Kathleen Seeger [00:25:54]:

That's it too. But, you know, hopefully, there will be more in the future.

Carole Joy Seid [00:25:58]:

Yes. Well, Kathleen, you are a gift to all of us, and I know that sometimes it seems thankless, all the work that you've put into this, but the Lord sees it, and he knows. And so I just wanna say thank you, and God bless you.

Kathleen Seeger [00:26:17]:

Thank you for having me, Carol.

Rachel Winchester [00:26:19]:

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