We commend to you the testimony of Joanna Knowles who graduated from Australian Christian Home Schooling at the end of 2009

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him... Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (Colossians 3:17, 23-24)

I was a home-schooling student for nine years. (At heart, I still feel like one I) From the age of eight, I studied at home under the wonderful and loving guidance of my parents. My brother and I found it to be a vastly different environment to that of a conventional classroom and traditional teaching methods — certainly for me at least, the change was a welcome one. I spent primary school being taught by my mother, who spent a great deal of time and effort on creating her own program. When I entered high school, however, my parents enrolled me in the ACE program. It was a decision which I have never regretted.

Perhaps you wonder why I am writing these words to you today. My wish is a simple one — I want to encourage each and every brave student who is persistently working to achieve their schooling at home, especially with the ACE curriculum. The Accelerated Christian Education program has helped me to grow personally, as a Christian, and to successfully achieve at university in so many ways. I am sure that you all know that is no small feat! If you will allow me the opportunity, I would like to tell you why I still treasure my schooling today, three years past my graduation.

As a young student and a young believer, t found the transition into ACE to be demanding, to say the least. Setting my own goals, studying on my own, and having to complete a test upon the completion of each unit of study was energy-draining at first. Such methodology required a great deal of self-discipline, especially for a thirteen-year-old who would much rather spend half her day with her nose buried in a novel! The most challenging concept was learning that the standard of achievement in testing was no longer just scraping in at 60%, but, working to do my absolute best at the high score of 80%. It took a great deal of time and energy — on both my parents’ part and my own — before I finally adjusted into the PACE system. I didn’t know it then, but God was teaching me a most valuable lesson Self-discipline, the setting of goals, and the development of consistency in all my efforts: these ideas are central to everything I employ myself in today, whether it is study, work, even leisure. The building of self-discipline is the most striking distinction that ACE holds over any other system of schooling I have been a part of, and one that I will praise it for most highly!

I studied hard until 2009, when I finally graduated — at the age of seventeen, one year ahead of my peers. My year 12 Academic Certificate was completed with extra credits and with scores which my employers still take considerable notice of today! It was the beginning of a new chapter. The Lord had opened many doors for my family before, especially when times were difficult, but until then I had never seen Him work so openly in my life. I had prayed for months that He would help me, particularly when deciding on university studies, What for many years appeared like a distant dream suddenly became a reality when I completed my SAT in November 2009, and received a full-time
offer of enrollment with Charles Stuart University (CSU) the following month — into my first preference, Bachelor of Justice Studies (Policing).

My studies at CSU commenced in March 2010. Walking into a huge lecture theatre filled with unfamiliar faces and noise is daunting, especially when it is your first day. I remember feeling strangely out of place at first. I spent a great deal of time in a corner of the library, studying every ounce of my textbooks and listening to music on my headphones. I never realized it, but once again my old ACE habits were coming into their element — self-driven study, a desire for excellence and to do my absolute best in everything I put my hand to. My first assignment proved to be a stern test. University demands an entirely different level of study, and writing style is no exception. I met one lecturer (who I shall refer to as Libby) whom I admired greatly. She spent a great deal of time teaching me the finer details of essay skills. Experience with ACE taught me to ask questions as soon as they arose, and to seek help whenever it was needed. Libby was surprised, and somewhat delighted, at my constant questions and discussion after class and in tutorials. She was my first Psychology lecturer, and the one whom I still (laughingly), ‘blame’ for my love of it today. At the end of my first semester at CSU, I was awarded a Distinction grade for an essay. Libby told me that she had never seen a student with such polished English and grammar skills — “not even students from the exclusive private schools,” she said with a smile. When I told her I had been home schooled, she was amazed.

Indeed, ACE prepped me for many things that I encountered at University. My writing skills only needed assistance in slight ways; for example, teaching how to format an APA style reference list. I was proficient in Australian, British and American spelling and grammar forms. Many of my peers were just learning the difference between simple and compound sentence structures. Others still had no idea of the distinction between a concrete and an abstract noun. I could explain all the noun forms to my tutor and provide detailed examples, with no assistance or memory aid. Most of my peers had never even heard who Chaucer was — I had read the Canterbury Tales! My tutor was astonished by my eagerness to answer questions, to stand and give short speeches on the Nature vs. Nurture argument, or even host PowerPoint presentations on Labelling Theory (in which I would have the class fully involved, both in action and words’). I could type at seventy words a minute, and even started a trend of bringing my rather over-sized and highly decorative laptop computer to class, just so I could record every word my teachers said at the same speed they said it.

A policing student was not exactly what I had expected to be when I had discussed ‘careers’ with my mother at the age of 12. But that was how I found myself at 18, at the end of my first year of university, with a rising record of Distinctions and High Distinctions. I didn’t speak with many of my peers about my schooling. Often they would ask “what school did you attend”, but the response was never quite to their expectations. They would stop short, looking slightly horrified when I said “home-schooled”, and often when I would try and explain to them the difference between the HSC and the Year 12 Certificate, they didn’t understand. Several of the people who I met initially in such a manner treated me very differently to those who just assumed I went to school and never asked: I was shocked at, the level of prejudice that they built against me, simply because I did not attend a classroom. My lecturers, on the other hand, held no such opinions. One of my other policing
lecturers was a retired school teacher. She would often talk to me about how I found my homeschooling experience, and asked about the ACE program on many occasions out of personal interest. She would often encourage me, and loved to hear from me questions and feedback about the classes. In my first year, amazingly, some of my closest friends were my lecturers.

My second year dealt a blow which, though I did not understand at the time, has taught a great deal about God’s love and His plans for me. I sustained a nasty injury, which meant that I could not meet the NSW Police Force’s physical standards for entry. I could no longer continue in my studies, nor finish my original degree. Three months of physiotherapy later, and with a new resolve, I followed a new path and applied for a transfer to Bachelor of Psychology at CSU — a course which is nearly impossible to gain entry to. The course coordinator was skeptical at first, but when I showed her my grades from my first year, she was so impressed that my application was approved in under a week. I am now one of approximately five second-year students studying B. Psychology internally at CSU. My mathematical studies are being employed in the statistical aspect of Psychology; my science knowledge is once more at work (in fields such as biopsychology), and even my counselling course has come into play on more than one occasion. Even in my recent employment, my art skills are being used to teach indigenous inmates at Bathurst Correctional Facility. I owe a great deal of thanks to ACE.

It was never a secret that I am a Believer. I never hid it from my acquaintances, or even my teachers at CSU. I studied Ancient Greek in high school, along with several other Bible College subjects, including Christian Counselling and a history of the Church and its formation. One friend, a woman who is currently studying at Bible College herself, discusses such things with me frequently. In my second year, I became actively involved in the larger Christian group on-campus, Bathurst Christian Students (BCS). We do weekly bible meetings and even walk-up evangelism at CSU. In July this year, I was nominated for the BCS committee, and now hold the title of Secretary in BCS. I thank God for such responsibility and opportunities to reach out to the people around me; it is truly an immense blessing. If it were not for my studies at home, the love of my family, and the teaching of God’s word, I do not think that I would be in such a position today.

If you had told me at the age of eight, when I left traditional schooling and entered home education, that in ten years I would be here, at university studying to become a psychologist, I probably wouldn’t have believed you. It has not been an easy journey but it has been a rewarding one. Accelerated Christian Education provided me with the knowledge, with the opportunity, and with the faith that God always knew I would need to do His will. I value every moment I had at home I do not regret leaving school. If anyone were to ask me today whether I would consider doing home schooling with my own children someday, I would say freely and happily “yes”. Praise the Lord that we have the ability to choose such a wonderful method, and I pray that we will continue to be able to choose.

Thank you, to ACE, for years of instruction in both knowledge and wisdom. Thank you to my family, for years of love. And thank you, friend, for taking the time to read my words. I hope they mean
something to you and your family. May the Lord bless you all in the abundance of His love and mercy, as we continue to grow in Him, today and every day!

“Get wisdom, get understanding;
do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you
Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you;
embrace her, and she will honour you....
Hold on to instruction, do not let it go;
guard it well, for it is your life/”
(Proverbs 4:5-8, 13)

Your Sister in Christ
Joanna Knowles