

Just Too Busy!

By Cindy Rushton

Excerpted from *Time for Tea Magazine*



“Through skillful and godly wisdom is a house (a life, a home, a family) built, and by understanding it is established [on a sound and good foundation], and by knowledge shall its chambers [of every area] be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.” Proverbs 24: 3-4

Isn't this our heart? We want to BUILD a godly home...but, oh, uh, we are just SO busy! How do we slow down in a very busy world? How do we save more time so we can truly build into our family? Here are some ideas that I pray will help you in this VERY busy season!

Too Much In A Day...

Yep! This is one of my greatest struggles. I am one of those people who hopelessly plan too much into a life! I want to DO IT ALL! And, the sad thing is that I try to! J This past summer one of my personal studies has been (don't laugh!), “How to Manage My Time.” Why? Well, because I want to eliminate any possible hindrance so I can do MORE!! Hehe! I know motives may not necessarily be great here. Actually, they may signal a blaring warning that tells you that this is one area that I *personally* struggle in NOW. True, but I have to share some of what I am finding (and applying) in my study. Who knows? It may help you to tame your schedule so you can busy doing the things that God has called you to do too!

For one thing, it really helps to sit down and really look at your day. What DOES get done in a typical day? I have found that I do get a lot done in a day. I will never be accused of being idle. In fact, I am writing this article while my husband runs errands (see the next section of this article about that!). I really do seize every moment I can. But, at the end of most days, I still have the same complaint, “I need MORE hours in my day!”

We are only allotted 24 hours a day. One prayer request that we can be sure WON'T be answered is the request for 85 hours in a day! Why? Because it would still not be enough for people like me! So, how do we make more hours in our day?

Make that list of what IS being done in a day. Make another list of what you would REALLY like to see included that you are not getting around to. See if what you are doing and if what you would like to do fits into what God has placed on your heart as your priorities. Make sure that they help you to reach toward

the “mark.” For me, when we began homeschooling I struggled for a while with distractions and hindrances that are so common in a busy home. After, well, a whole year (I am very slow on some things!) the Lord showed me the value in looking over my typical day to see how I could fit in the things that were most important and those little things that are always going to pop up. I found that there were categories that most everything could fit into: Quiet Times, Chores, Table Time, Family Time, Productive Free Time, Ministry/Business, and Family Read Alouds. Actually this is the basic order for every day. It is possible at home. It is possible on the road. It is possible when we have company. It is possible when things go a bit hay-wire! These are the priorities for the day, but there are still things even with ME that never seem to get done unless they are part of the schedule for the day.

For example, this past summer, my doctor prescribed that I go to the Wellness Center for exercise daily. I had wanted more time to actually get around to exercising. But, it just seemed that if I had another 55 hours in my day that then I could have time to devote to exercise!

Making a List, Checking it Twice (or FIFTEENTIMES!!)...

I made my list. Then, it was easier to see the holes in my life that were not being filled. Sure, I was accomplishing a lot with my children, our ministry, and even my marriage relationship. But, there were still glaring holes beaming out at me and plaguing me with guilt and condemnation! Yes, I wanted to exercise. I have stacks of wonderful audio tapes that I would love to hear. I want more time to sit back and relax, even if it is occasionally! I wanted more time to make memories with the children. Of course, I also wanted to be more productive. Those are the things that seem to give me the “feeling” that I am not accomplishing as much in my day as I really wanted. Of course, I was accomplishing the “work” in each day. On many days that was ALL that was accomplished. No wonder there was a feeling of frustration! We are geared to do more than just work day-in-day-out. So, what to do?

Look At Your Typical Day...

First, I had to take an honest look at all those things that were included in a typical day. Many were right down the line with the vision God has placed in my heart. Yet, there were still things that God had placed on my heart that were not ever making it into my days. Plus, there were other things that were very questionable. I had to look at every single thing in my day to see if there were things that could be combined so I could accomplish more tasks at one time, that delegated to others so I could have more time for things that only I could do, or eliminated because they were really not that essential to what we were about. This has helped tremendously!

Combine Tasks...

It may help you too. See if there can be things that can be combined. For me, exercise and listening to those teaching tapes gets two things done. Neither fit into my schedule before because I felt that exercise was just frivolous (looking at this body OBVIOUSLY shows I was not right!). Listening to my teaching tapes seemed to always not fit in—I had to concentrate when I write or answer email, my family did not really

appreciate hearing my tapes, and there was really no time other than that! However, fitting them together is the perfect answer! That 30 minutes a day is life-giving. It makes the other 23 hours and 30 minutes a whole lot better! Another thing that I decided to continue doing, but expand was my morning breakfast with my husband. For the last two years, Harold and I have been getting up earlier than the children to go to breakfast, have a devotion, and pow-wow. We kept this time in our day, but also added planning for our ministry and business (We are making a transition to bring him home from working for the State, but it takes much planning and fore-thought to be sure we are completely ready for the change.) this helps to actually work in yet another thing that seemed to never have a special time in the schedule. There were many other adjustments and changes. Not too easy, but definitely helpful! Things like cooking in the crockpot overnight so we are at home while it is cooking, but not having to stand over a stove during the day...going through the mail as we walk back from the mailbox and dumping the junk-mail into the trash before we walk in the house (our can is right outside the door!) rather than do a big clean-out during the year... Doing more things at one time really helps to use the time to the fullest!

Delegate! OUCH!

Delegate! Yep! That is another toughie for me! The first time I ever delegated stands out in my mind as a turning point for me. My children were 7 and 4 at the time. We were living in our camper in Selma, AL while Harold was in the State Trooper Academy there. Living in the camper was probably one of my most life-changing experiences because I learned how much of my life at that time was “fluff” and wasted. Living in the camper forced me to only have my most essential belongings with me. (still have not unpacked many of the boxes we had stored away—now 10 years ago!!!) We made more memories than ever. Each day we had plenty of time for me to just mother, keep my home, homeschool, and even play games at the end of the day! Life was simple. Homemaking was easy. I made easy meals. Cleanup of the whole camper was usually 5-10 minutes or at most 25 minutes (big change from my 10-12 hour cleaning days before!!) The hardest part was the small space and taking laundry OUT to the laundrymat every few days. The good part was that in Selma the laundrymat was AT THE POOL! The children could play and I could enjoy watching over them while I read, did laundry AND tanned! (had the best tan and read more than 6 months than ever in my life!) However, in the midst of this EASIER life there were STILL struggles!

How could it be? Well, I could clean up, but while I was cleaning my children were idle—arguing (yep, these PERFECT children were acting like other children!), messing up the other side of the room (EEK!), and dirtying up their clothes (EVERYDAY!).

One day in particular, a Monday (Could I find a better word to give you a “picture” of this scene?) to be completely accurate, I had so much pressing in that day. I was standing at my 1 ft X 1ft X 4inch deep sink (it still felt like Mt. Everest!) full of dishes. The children were behind me just finishing their breakfast. And, they had the audacity to begin fussing over WHO could watch their movie (and WE homeschool!). The quarreling was getting ON MY NERVES—the really touchy ones! There I was...washing

dishes...the laundry was there needing for me to fold it...the toilets needed cleaning...we needed to begin our lessons for the day...my husband was gone for another week at the academy, leaving me with my PERFECT little morons, I mean children, lambs, beloved little ones...and here they were ARGUING! I snapped. I admit it! I simply snapped. I told them, actually screamed at them, to stop arguing and just fold those clothes if they had that much energy. Still washing my dishes...silence permeated the room for several minutes until giggly-giggles took over. I turned around to find that almost ALL of the laundry was folded and they were LIKING IT! Tears filled my eyes. The Lord spoke to my heart. I did not have to do it all myself! MY children COULD help me!

Oh yea! And so can your children! What CAN be delegated? Anything! Everything, well, there are a few things that only YOU can do. Find them and delegate the rest! Oh, it may not immediately be the same standard that you do things yourself, but who looks in the dresser anyway? (only sick people, if you ask me!) Plus, think of how valuable it is for children to learn from an early age to pitch in and be a "part" of the family. So, take a look at your list of things that YOU are doing each day. Look at what can be delegated. Then, delegate to your little ones!

Eliminate!!

Finally, go back to your trusty list. What can be eliminated? This is where you may experience anxiety. But, really look at all you do in a day. Are those things really important? Can they be done in another way that can give you more time? Let me take you home with me again. I love to have healthy, homemade meals. But, reality says that if I want to save time, this was one of those areas that really could be simplified down so much that much of the time spent in the kitchen on a daily basis could actually be eliminated. Gasping? Well, so did I...at first!

I took an honest look at our meals. We could eliminate so much that I could gain HOURS each week. How? Well, I decided to do more bulk cooking, buy more "ready-made" meals, like Lasagna from Sam's, Baked Chicken (heat and serve) from Sam's, Pizza (yep, and my children LOVE it!), and even Heavenly Ham! Yep, Heavenly Ham (should be getting a percentage here, huh?). What may seem like an extravagance is really a great way to save precious TIME and have great meals whether using the Ham as the meat for a meal or as sandwich meat. One big ham lasts our family for several weeks. In addition to tasting great and saving me time cooking and preparing the ham, we also cut at least an hour of cooking each day for lunch for those two weeks. All I have to do is add vegetables (we have a freezer full of vegetables from the garden that just have to be de-frosted and warmed!) and bread! A typical meal can come together in 15-30 minutes! We can also use food like the Heavenly Ham for lunch. We just make sandwiches and either eat just the sandwich or have a sandwich and homemade soup, that also can be made in a big pot! Easy. Saves time for other more important things in my schedule—like enjoying the family I am feeding!!

Now, you may not feel that cooking can be eliminated in your daily schedule. Each of our families are so

very different. This is where only God can help you to decide what can be combined, delegated, eliminated OR done by you each day! Hear HIM and He is guaranteed not to fail you!

Too Much Going...

Humm...well, here we get a little personal, huh? This is an area that God RESTRICTED for me. It was just not as clear-cut as DO, COMBINE, DELEGATE, OR ELIMINATE. Instead, my "going" has to be a daily time with God. Each instance must be thrown up on that altar for God to classify for us! What about you? What are we to do? Beloved, first slow down! Watch out for too much going! Oh, it may not even be for "bad" stuff! It just keeps us from having what we really want! Think about it...Is this a hindrance for you? Let's get a little more personal. Do you go so much (even for good things) that you sometimes find that you cannot truly enjoy your home? When was the last time you had TIME to leisurely relax and enjoy your home? For me, this is a constant struggle. A daily struggle! There are so many "to-do's" that press in that I get too busy, going too many directions before I even know it!

Testing..

I have had a test for years that I periodically do to evaluate my lifestyle and schedule. I ask myself, "Can I spend *one entire week* at home without feeling as though I am not getting to do all I *need* to do?" (Yep, I am wiggling a bit here too!) "Is my home supplied well enough that I can stay home without having to "run" to get more things that I "need" to cook, teach my children, manage my home?" (Gasp! EEEK!) "Is a quiet, peaceful homelife impossible because I am too busy going to activities?" (OUCH!) "Are all those activities truly God's will?" (Sniff, sniff!) "Would all those same activities go on just as well without ME?" (Well, uh, how would I know if I am not there?) "What CAN I eliminate to give us more time at home as a family?" (Ok...Ok!) "Does my husband feel that all I am doing is essential? God's will?" (Well, uh...)

It is amazing how much CAN GO! Just last week, Harold and I got a great big laugh when we both shared what had been on our hearts, at the same time! I had noticed that we were losing time with errands on almost a daily basis. Oh, and almost the SAME errands every single day! My reasons were simple, I wanted for to be a good steward of the money, not buying anything that could go to waste. But, as a result, our time was being wasted...gas going and coming was being wasted...I was not as prepared for each day as I could have been...and the atmosphere of our home was interrupted every day with "to-do's."

This is not the only area that gets out of control easy at our home. Our schedule is just as wild! I must manage our outside activities or very quickly we become THEIR servants!

Oh! But This is GOOD!

We travel on a weekly basis throughout the whole year. Because of this, as we decided to travel this much, we had to eliminate many GOOD things from our schedule. Naturally, I am just as much of a "clutter-bug" with our TIME as I am with books, papers, etc.! Loosening my grip on those good things is

so, SO hard! Yet, there is no way to truly do exactly what God has called us to do, except to prune! Oh, yea! That hard word!

Cutting back. Slowing down. Getting back to the core. Keeping only what is bearing fruit, so all of the nutrients (energy) can go into bearing MORE fruit! Truly, the person was “right on” who said that if satan can’t get us to do WRONG things, then he will keep us busy doing a lot of GOOD things which ultimately hinder us from doing God’s VERY BEST. That person must have been JUST like me! What about you?

Too busy “going” to BUILD your home? Slow down. Slow down to enjoy your home. Slow down to make your home special, a fortress.

But! How *DO* Ya SLOW DOWN???

Have no idea how to begin slowing down? Have no idea what you could let go? Is it just too confusing? Afraid you or your family will miss something? Go to God with your schedule. Place all activities on the altar. Wait on Him. Share your heart with your husband. Let your husband set your schedule. Look over activities very carefully, evaluating them honestly. Do they work toward the call that God has for your family? Are they necessary? Do they compete for “down-time” that your family really needs to fellowship, rest, and develop a lifestyle of learning? Commit to finding God’s plan for your day! Listen to your sweet husband. Look objectively at those tempting activities! Reach for the very, very best use of your day! Then, you will find God pulling you back into a pace that you can continue the journey till the end!

Just Busy...

I know that I am writing this (and you should read this now) during the holiday season, the busiest season of the entire year. But, I write this knowing that we are not just busy at this time of the year alone! We are busy all of the time! How do we guard against “BUSYness” all throughout the year? Well, let’s take a look at Proverbs 29:18... **“Where there is no vision the people perish.”** You know, I have one problem with this verse. My problem is that this is not something you get ONCE and for all! We must constantly guard our home. We must constantly evaluate whether our homes are in conformity with the vision God has given us for our family. We must constantly check our “gardens” and uproot any weeds or overgrown plants that hinder the growth of our most precious “plants,” our children! We have to constantly make sure to have time with God, time with our husbands, time with our children, time within our homes, time to minister to those within our sphere of influence, and time left so we can take care of ourselves!

The Bible says that there are works set from the foundation of the world. Be faithful in YOUR works! Seek God’s wisdom for EVEN your lifestyle and schedule! Don’t let the enemy distract you by what is “out there” somewhere! Don’t feel guilty about letting great things go! Do ALL you can to preserve that home atmosphere from ALL distractions that are out there! Don’t get too busy to *build your home* for truly you have much to look forward to—just look again at Proverbs 24: 3-4:

Homeschooling The Easy Way Manual

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Have a great year!



Need a bit of help with getting it all together??? This article was excerpted from our *Time for Tea Magazine*. Back issues of this magazine are still available. PLUS! We devoted a WHOLE issue of *Homeschooling The Easy Way* to the theme of “*Getting It All Together!*” Check our listing for that issue. It is fabulous! Need nuts and bolts? Well, we have that too! Cindy has a new workshop tapes: *Organization 101: Help for the Messy Mom* and *Restoring Balance to Overloaded Lives*, in addition to our FULL (and ever-growing!) line of *Make Your Own Brain-in-a-Binder Series!* See our resources for more details! Oh! And don’t forget to check out the reproducibles in this manual! Have fun!

Getting Ready Now(!!) For Those Retreats and Conventions!

By Cindy Rushton



Getting excited about the upcoming Retreat and Convention Season? I LOVE this time of year! Great shopping (BOOKS!), wonderful workshops, and incredible people! It does not get any better than this!

But! What can you do to get ready so you are able to have the very best experience ever? The few tips are just for YOU!

- ♥ **First, register early!** Retreats and conventions have really taken off! You will need to get your registration in as soon as you know you want to go. Plus, be sure to book your hotel room early too. Hotels fill up for miles around the convention site. Check with the sponsors to find out if certain hotels are offering a group rate for attendees. Book your room as soon as possible!
- ♥ **Next, when you get your packet, be sure to look over the workshops and convention schedule.** Plan time for learning AND for shopping. You may want to plan to go through the exhibit hall BY YOURSELF and all the way through before buying anything. Take a notebook with a list of what you need (make your list ahead of time). Compare prices, attitude, and ministry of the companies as you go around (Don't buy from someone just because materials are "discounted." If you appreciate the ministry of a certain mom in a booth, support that ministry! Don't get her ideas and take your business to her competitor. Support what she sows into your homeschool!) Make notes of where you find your items and where you would like to go back for more browsing. Buy anything that is on your list that you KNOW you need. Items sell out quick. Usually vendors only have a small number of each title on hand. If your item is a MUST, go ahead and pick it up early into the convention. Of course, if you are unsure, HOLD OFF until after workshops and more in-depth shopping. Don't buy "just because." Take your time at the convention to really research and check out the materials that you may want to use. If you are unsure, spend time in any workshops featuring help on that product and take time to really listen to any representatives or authors that may be at the convention. You will find much help at your fingertips at a convention. The workshops are always wonderful! I always feel that my most profitable time at any convention is that spent in the workshops. Be sure to take workshops on topics that are taught on areas that you need special help with. Also, be sure to tap into all of the new ideas, you never know which one may be just the right touch for your next year!

- ♥ **Carry a lightweight tote or a rolling cart with you.** Most conventions provide tote bags for all attendees. This bag serves several purposes. It comes filled with great catalogs and magazines. Do note that those catalogs often represent companies or writers who are unable to attend your local event. Be sure to also check with companies and writers in your exhibit hall for their catalogs, handouts, and magazines. Many provide them for free at the conventions. I always spend the first day of a convention going through the exhibit hall, making my notes and seeing which vendors have materials that I know already that we need. I pick up their information to carry back to my hotel room. Over my late night coffee or coke, I glance through the catalog marking interesting products or information with stick-it notes. Then, I can effectively go back through the schedule to be sure that I attend any workshops that will give me more information on that product or approach AND I make sure that I have plenty of time to look close at the products of interest. Back to the bag, empty out anything that may not be of interest. Use your bag or your rolling cart to hold all of your purchases, snacks, notes, Bible, pens, make-and-take projects, and samples, etc. Be sure not to overload yourself, however, because even the lightest bag at 8 a.m. seems to weigh a ton at 5 p.m. (or NOON!).
- ♥ **Be sure to carry bottled water and light snacks...** Time flies when you are having fun and you will need to protect yourself from feeling woozy due to lack of water or sugar. I cannot tell you the number of times that I FORGET to eat all day long at a retreat or convention (hummm...not the same as at home!)! Once I am there, I don't want to leave. It helps tremendously to have water and fruit or muffins to snack on! Also this will tide you over until the lunch rush has passed and lines for food are shorter. Bringing me to my next point...
- ♥ **Eat slightly earlier or later than the noon rush.** Lines are huge at conventions or local restaurants featuring lunch meals. Either bring a sack lunch or try to eat before the regular lunch hour or after the rush. The other perk is that you can shop or talk with the speakers one-on-one while others eat!
- ♥ **Wear comfortable shoes.** You will be spending a lot of time walking around carrying that "light bag" with all your goodies in it and will appreciate the extra comfort of a good pair of walking shoes. I have found over the years that it really helps me if I have separate shoes for each day of the event. Different shoes "wear" different. It is amazing how much better a change of shoes feels to weary, exhausted feet!
- ♥ **If you see a great deal on an item you want, buy it.** As I wrote above, things sell out fast, therefore if you wait to think about it, you might not have the opportunity to get it later.
- ♥ **Bring a few pages of address labels with you.** There are so many wonderful "freebies" out there. All you have to do at a convention or retreat is sign up for them. HOWEVER, signing up for 150-200 different mailing lists is WAY TOO EXHAUSTING! So, be sure to bring a sheet of address labels that are ready to stick on any mailing lists or drawings of your interest.
- ♥ **And finally, if you can't get a group together, go alone.** Now, as a very, very, very, very sociable person, please know that I think that one of the most AWESOME experiences in life is stuffing a hotel room

full of 10 giggly women (mothers especially!), bags of chocolate, and Strawberry-White Mocha Latte's! The bigger the group, the better! But, another wonderful option for a yearly retreat is to slip away -all by yourself—with your Bible, bubble bath, and bag of catalogs! Yep! Go girl! Not to mention, conventions are places that you are never alone! You are guaranteed to meet great people who will inspire you for life! I went to a conference a while back—JUST FOR ME!—and found that it was simply priceless to shop, think, eat, and listen to the teachings on MY very own schedule! Everyone was so friendly, I felt very comfortable chatting with whomever I happened to be sitting with at the time. Oh, and we swapped email addresses and new book ideas too! So, go for it whether you have a group OR a weekend all by yourself!

So, ready to go? Have fun! And look for me!

Happy Homeschooling!

Your Fellow Retreat Junkie!



EASY Homemaking Ideas For The Busy Homeschool Mom!

By Cindy Rushton



Homemaking...The word Homemaking brings back many fond memories of my childhood home. I can almost smell the homemade goodies that mom labored daily to make. I can almost feel the crisp, clean sheets from those Monday washings. Thinking back brings me sweet memories of my home-sweet-home mom!

I began homeschooling much like many of you. I had spent 6 years of marriage modeling after my dear mother. She always had the laundry out on the line, the entire house cleaned, lunch cooking, and dinner laid out all before 7:00 AM!

You can probably imagine my difficulties the first year of homeschooling as I tried to keep up this pace in my home. Oh, beloved! I did it! However, I was wore out... frustrated... and KNEW there must be a change! I prayed about my concerns and as usual the Lord gave His direction...His Plan. It would be to manage my home well but not at the expense of developing relationships with my husband and children or at the expense of homeschooling these treasures. Let me share some tips today that I have learned over the last few years that make homemaking a delight (well, at least a bit EASIER!)

♥ **Semi-Annual Cleanout...**One thing that you can do today to get a handle on homemaking in your homeschool is to stop what you are doing and do a big clean out! Yes, I am saying stop all that you are doing now...as you begin your new year. Stop and spend some time this week cleaning out and organizing. It will make all the difference in the world in the atmosphere of the home. Also, take a break in the Fall to do another real good cleanout. This helps me to keep overall order...even if our home is "lived in." Of course, another plan you might like better is the "Zone Cleaning" from Flylady. For those of you online, you may want to check out her wonderful website at www.flylady.com for all of her wonderful and easy tips for truly cleaning out and getting into a homemaking routine! I bought her new book *Sink Reflections* and it is better than her website—if that can happen! We have been taking her "baby-steps" to get our home and office completely de-cluttered and ready for another big travel season! It is so nice to have those papers in binders...those books organized on the shelf...those closets...well, we are still working! hehe! A semi-annual cleanout (or hitting those Zones!) will help you to get all in order so that your family can only maintain order...this gives you a peace of mind so you can relax and enjoy teaching (and

PLAYING!)

♥ **Morning Chore Time...**After you have your home in order for the new year, all that will be needed is maintenance. We maintain our home by requiring a morning chore time. When the children were all young, I used to set myself a timer of one hour to clean and do chores. I would set the children's timer for 10-15 minutes and call for *a clutter drill*. (When they were real little I would have clutter drills at different times of the day so we kept their things straightened.) They would have to pick up everything they could before the buzzer went off. Usually all of our cleaning was done in about 5 minutes—it was amazing! If the work did not get done, I waited until the next day to do it. This worked well to keep our home from becoming a distraction from the important job of discipling our children. Plus, it trained our entire family in the habit of doing their part in cleaning the house *quickly*. Now that my children are trained, the bulk of the housework is done by them during their morning chore time. Our chore time is first thing after our Quiet times. Everyone just gets busy doing their part...Elisabeth gets the laundry going, cleans the bathroom as needed, puts away any dishes, washes any dirty dishes, helps to feed the chickens and animals, cleans her room, vacuums, and helps with any other chores that need to be done...Matthew takes care of feeding and caring for our bird, helps with the laundry that needs folding or putting away, dusts, straightens the kitchen and helps Elisabeth with the dishes, maintains the vehicles, helps Dad with any repairs or outside chores, and cleans his room. With them pitching in, all gets done efficiently so we can take care of the important things...family life!

♥ **Standard of Excellence not Perfection...**You can imagine from my childhood that I came into homemaking with a pretty high standard. Actually it was called Perfectionism! I struggled so long with comparing my home to my mother's home... my children's assistance with that of older children... in doing so, I was setting myself up for failure! God does not want for us to compare ourselves. If we do, we find ourselves comparing our lives to the lives of our mothers who tucked the children off in school and **COULD** have a clean house because **NO ONE WAS THERE!** Of course, there are other dangers too. If we do, we find ourselves patting ourselves on the back when we have our homes nicer than "so-and-so." Our standards are not to be based on those around us...but on what brings glory and honor to God. We cannot all have a *Better Homes and Gardens* home, but we can have a standard of excellence. What we do can be eternal not for today! We can focus more on the people than what we have. We can offer hospitality. These are truly the Excellent!

♥ **Bulk Cooking...**One thing that I learned after that first year of homeschooling was to cook in bulk. Actually I call my plan, "Serve and Store." The first years of homeschooling I had a home business of sewing for the public. I would sew one day, cook one day. On the sewing days, we would have leftovers from my cooking day. In other words, I would cook and **SERVE** on one day...and sew and eat the food that we had **STORED** on the next day! It was a nice balance

which enabled me to operate a successful sewing business while homeschooling and homemaking! From this, I developed a habit of cooking in bulk that has continued till today. It is easy to just buy double ingredients...usually it is cheaper! I just double my recipes and freeze the extra dish. Yesterday, I had the "fruit" of my labors as we had Lasagna already prepared last week that only needed to be popped in the oven and served with our fresh bread. You can be prepared at all times for those dropping in if you freeze a variety of foods as you cook them! Bulk Cooking redeems the time so you can stay busy with the important things in life...relationships!

♥ **Eliminating the Distractors...** I tend to battle with two primary distracters in my life...*the Telephone and Too Much Going!* These tend to take the joy out of homeschooling and homemaking! I have waged war on these two enemies! For our telephone enemy, I have set a goal to start my day earlier. I turn the phone off...yes, the ringer is off and there is no answering machine to nag at me either! I only turn the phone on when it is a good time to talk. This has helped me a lot because I find that no matter how much I tell others about our best times, they inevitably call right as we are all snuggled up with a great book...or just as I am in the midst of a great quiet-time! The "going" monster is not so easily maintained without much effort! Because of this, I try to utilize my going time wisely by doing drill work along the way...narrating along the way...or praising God in song as a family along the way! I have tried to limit feeding this monster by doing all my errands on the days that I am already in town. If I need something in between times out, I just give my husband a list or page him with my needs. He helps me to keep this monster under control!

♥ **Do Something Every Day...** I read in a book by Emilie Barnes a while back that if we take one little job a day that we can keep up our homes better. I have implemented this into my home. I may just straighten one drawer...or the vanity...or a pile of papers...but, this helps to keep the home manageable without requiring me to be a slave to homemaking to-do's!

♥ **Set Up Learning Areas...** I remember the motto of the mother of one of my best friends, "A place for everything and everything in its place." She was a real Proverbs 31 woman! She maintained her home beautifully and still had time to be a gracious wife of a U.S. Senator. As I began to homeschool, I saw the "stuff" take over! This motto of Mrs. Pickering became my motto. We set up learning areas that could be the "place" for our learning tools. We set up a children's library...game area...computer area...dress up bin...Nature Shelf...video area...so on. This has helped me to maintain a semblance of sanity amidst all the "stuff" stuffed into our little cottage!

♥ **Slow Pace...** The biggest enemy of a relaxed home atmosphere is the fast pace...the hurry! It is key to remember that everything has its season! Plus, remember that you can delegate! You can delegate many of the chores to the children...you can let others take their turns with the church responsibilities...you can do without that extra class or lesson! Genesis 33: 13-14 in the Amplified Bible says, "...*You know, my lord, that the children are tender and delicate and need*

gentle care, and the flocks and herds with your are of concern to me; for it the men should overdrive them for a single day, the whole of the flocks would die. Let my Lord, I pray you, pass over before this servant; and I will lead on slowly, governed by [consideration for] the livestock that set the pace before me and the endurance of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir." In this passage, Jacob (God's Man, God's Way) was met by Esau (the world, the world's way). Esau wanted Jacob to go along with him...in that fast pace! Jacob set an example for us to follow! An example of considering the slow pace...the true needs of our children! I don't know about you, but our children would prefer a calm, easy-going mom to the fast paced mom who provides all the "essential" opportunities! Trade in that pace for a slow, relaxed atmosphere...you won't regret it!

♥ **Don't Forget Ministry...**One of the greatest means that we have for influencing our world for Christ is through our homes! Surprised? Well, think about those who have influenced you the most...How many ministered to you from their home? I treasure the lessons I learned about God's design for me as a wife and mother while sitting at the feet of Mamaw! I saw true submission modeled before me. I saw a love of homemaking. I even learned to sew at her knee! It was sitting in her kitchen that God confirmed His call for me to write! All of the characteristics of the Proverbs 31 woman were modeled perfectly before me from the precious home of Mamaw. Much of who I am has been instilled through her quiet ministry...yes, the ministry within the home does reap fruit! You can minister to the world through cooking... card-making... sewing... crafts... just by using those practical skills faithfully to teach and minister to others. You can fully utilize the spiritual gifts of everyone in your family. These gifts are a wonderful opportunity to minister to one another and to those who come into your home. Using gifts through practical service from your home-base is the perfect training ground for your little disciples!

♥ **Take Time for the Beautiful...**All of these tips are designed for one purpose...to give you ideas which will help you to have time for the Beautiful! It may be more time for reading aloud... time to snuggle up with beautiful poetry...time for a long walk observing God's nature...time to take a long-hot bath and relax to Classical Music... or even time for tea! Homemaking in the Homeschool can be simplified so it is EASY! It can be simplified to give you time for the things God designed to nourish you and your family—treasured relationships and sweet, sweet memories!! Blessings!



Gearing Up for Another Big Year!

OR! What I Am Going to Do On Summer Vacation...

By Cindy Rushton



Summer! At last!

Yes! It is once again Summer Time. I don't know about you, but it seems that this school year has set a record in how fast it has gone by. For me, this year reminds me of my husband's pilot training, which I am devouring. In the plane, we are able to soar higher than I ever dreamed AND at record speeds. I love that we can get where we are going fast, and relatively at a straight course from point-to-point. I want that for Homeschooling. Praise God, that with HIS yoke and HIS way, we do tend to soar higher and get where we are going with fewer distractions. As a result, the blessings are so very abundant. In turn, life is passing by as fast as our read alouds!

Oh, that is not the only thing that reminds me of Harold's flight training... In his training, much of it now involves practicing "touch-n-go-landings," where he comes in for a landing, only to gear back up again for another round. I am currently in the midst of a "touch-n-go" with Homeschooling. Once again, I am gearing down, only to gear back up for yet another big year. What about you? Well if so, this article is just for you!

Remember your "school days?" What about your Summer Vacations? Oh, I am not talking about those horrid essays we all had to write at the beginning of every school year. I am talking about the awesome days of Summer Vacation. The good, old retreat from the daily grind? Remember how you NEEDED the rest from the *daily grind* so you could pull back, kick back, and really have a break, be renewed, refreshed, refueled, and ready for another school year?

We *still* need that break today as we Homeschool. Actually, we need it more today than ever before. We simply cannot expect to go on day-in-day-out for years at a time without gearing down for a good, old Summer Vacation. We need it now just like we did as children.

So...whether you are "on approach" for a "touch-n-go" or you are coming in for a brief "landing" so you can get some rest, this article is just for you! Of course just in case you cannot tell, I could not decide which analogy to pick for the article, so whether you are "gearing up" OR taking a nice, long "summer vacation," my prayer is that after you read this article, you will have the summer of your life! I pray that you will

be able to begin the new school year ready for the awesome year ahead! So, without further “ado” may I ask, “What are YOU going to do for Summer Vacation???” I have a few ideas that may make this summer very, very special!

What About Taking This Time to Retreat...

Yes! Retreat! I remember the day when I first found out that soldiers in the midst of battle retreat. Yes. Good soldiers, smack-dab in the middle of battle, raging battle, retreat. I know that some of you may be thinking exactly what I was thinking when I first heard that. Do WHAT? Yes, beloved, good soldiers do retreat in the MIDST of battle. They retreat for several reasons, but there are a few that tend to get my attention as I think of Homeschooling my children.

Rest!

First, they retreat in order to *rest*. I know, I know...you are thinking of all that YOU have to do today. How can a busy mother retreat just to rest? Well, there is power in rest. We need to see that power. We need to experience that power. In real life battles, commanders KNOW the power in bringing their soldiers apart to rest. As a result, they assure that their soldiers retreat in order to get rest. In turn, they are strengthened and empowered for the battle that they must win.

We are no different. In fact, I would say that the battle we face is much more important than any other battle on earth. We are battling for the family. Our battle will make a difference for all of eternity. We battle for the hearts of those we love so dearly. Not so much for their hearts to merely turn toward US, but for their hearts to be tender to our Lord, Whom they come to know better through our encouragement and ministry to them.

We are going to get tired and weary along the way in that battle. We are hit from outside and inside. When the hits are new and fresh, it is easy to pick up the armor to block those shots. However, as the battle continues long and hard and our impact begins to be noticed by the enemy, the hits get harder to block and to withstand because the enemy knows that the only way to defeat us is to get us to quit. The best thing for us at that time is not continuing where we can be annihilated, but to retreat, to rest. Oh, I am not talking about sleeping. Quite to the contrary, I am talking about getting GOD'S REST! Rest for our weary soul. Rest that enables us to go back into battle as a formidable foe! More on this in a bit! For now, let's look at another reason soldiers retreat in the midst of battle...to strategize!

Strategize!

I am sure that you could have easily guessed this one. It makes perfect sense for the soldier in battle to step back, take a look at any new advances of the enemy, take a look at successful advances made on his own behalf (just in case they hit the enemy hard enough to become a continued tactic in the battle against that enemy), take a look at where they have come from and where they are going, and plan the next attack. Have you ever thought of the total necessity of pulling back to retreat so you may evaluate *your* strategy

in Homeschooling?

If there is one reason that we should all retreat, this is the most important. Without retreating, we will be less prepared than if we are on the “front-lines” all of the time. Why? We need to take time to refresh our minds on God’s plan for our families. We need to pull back to let Him equip us for the battle by showing us options out there for the “attack” and which one is just perfect for us. Yes, He has a plan **JUST FOR US**...one just perfect for me, one just perfect for you. A plan that is promised to work, to be easy, and most of all, to take us to the end of our battle in victory!

Take this time to pull back and find God’s strategy for you. Find His plan. He wants to fully prepare you for battle. Let Him show you His options, His plan of attack. Learn of Him (Matthew 11: 28-30). His ways are as old as time. They work. And, best news yet! They are **EASY**! Dig into God’s Word for HIS how-to’s that are **JUST FOR YOU**! He is a wonderful “taskmaster” as He is gentle, kind, and refreshing. He cares about all of the details, even the preciousness of our children that is so often forgotten by so many vying for our attention. He wants for us to have the very best education for our children, yet make the most of every moment with them. Pull back in the middle of your hot battle and try His way. You will find the retreat you need in order to give you an advantage in your battle that will guarantee victory for you!

Re-Supply for the Battle...

Re-supply for the battle. This one seems so obvious. Battles empty out our reserves very, very quickly. We obviously cannot battle without supplies. A soldier pulls back into a retreat at any time that supplies get low or when they are in need of new weapons for the battle.

We are no different as we carry on in our battle. We cannot go on day-in- and-day-out without a full (and overflowing) storehouse of joy, encouragement, and inspiration. I know that I even find myself in the middle of a busy morning using up all that I have on-hand (by breakfast at times!). My only option at that time is my mid-morning re-supply. Oh, get a picture of this warrior at that moment...prostrate on the floor in the bathroom (I know it is the scummiest place in my house, yet it has a **LOCK** on the door!)...crying out in repentance and complete neediness...not getting back up until the Lord has cleansed, renewed and refilled me. How much more do we need a special “retreat” at the end of the year to re-supply for the battle?

It is at this time of year that we need time sitting at the feet of the Lord to re-supply for the battle. We need to re-fuel on joy, HIS joy. We need to re-fuel on encouragement. Do you find any better encouragement than HIS encouragement? We need re-supply on His Word, allowing Him to speak to our hearts, souls, and minds through His own special Word, just for us!

As we are strengthened to go back on the battlefield, we need to also update our “equipment” so we are prepared for advancement or any hits that the enemy may wage against us to push us back. As

Homeschooling soldiers, we need to “update” for yet another big year. We need to re-supply. Look at the supplies that you have, look at the supplies that you need. Take a look at your schedule, your plans. Find what you need to get where you are going. Get rid of all that hinders (1 Timothy 2). Gear up for yet another big year.

Oh! Take This Time To Rest!

Yep, you read right...rest! It is OK! Take the time that is necessary to pull back, kick back, and hear God! Turn to Matthew 11; 28-30...

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to REST, [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find REST (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. For my yoke is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne.”

Matthew 11: 28-30 (Amplified Bible)

Want some of that rest? Kick back for a bit! Take Christ's yoke! The word *yoke* means *obligation or commitment*. Jesus Christ has an obligation or commitment to you in all of the areas of your life, especially Homeschooling! Isn't that such wonderful news? That means He has a vested interest in every single area of your life! He calls Himself the “Author” and “Finisher” (Completer) of the good work in your life. However, He does not commit or obligate Himself to complete or finish what He does not begin, commit, or obligate Himself to in the first place. We must join with Him for His yoke if we want guaranteed success!

Want to know how to tell what His yoke is? Do a “yoke” check! We need to do a “yoke” check to make sure that the commitment we have before us is truly HIS commitment...HIS obligation. This passage in Matthew 11 has an easy way to check our yoke: Does it make us...**labor, heavy-laden, overburdened**. Or, does it bring...**rest, ease, relief, and refresh your souls**. Do you find it to be...**gentle, meek, humble, lowly, restful, relieving, easy, refreshing, recreational (FUN!), blessed quiet for our souls?** Is our yoke...**wholesome, useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant, light and easy to be borne?**

If we want to really have a truly successful AND happy Homeschool, then we must take the yoke of Jesus Christ. We must become students of HIM, learning of Him. He is the perfect Teacher. He lived His whole life doing the very thing that we are called to do...discipling. We can take this time to kick back a little bit and learn from the Master. We can take this time to learn of His methods, His ways, His approach and we will find rest for our weary souls. We can change our pace, so we can check out our “yoke.” We can take this time to swap out all that is not Christ's yoke while grasping on to all that He wants for us!

Scared? Well, summer is the best time to try a few ideas that you are not “sure” about. Maybe you are not too sure about trying something new like Nature Studies, Literature Based Learning, Notebooking, Unit Studies, Creating Books, or Read Alouds. This is the time to give them a try. Your schedule is different anyway. You may find that the ideas work so well that you want to use these approaches permanently.

Summer also give you the time to take the time to do those “extras” that never seem to get done. You probably have a huge list just like I do. Summer is the time of year to do those extras since the schedule is scaled back. Of course, you may be like me. You may choose to do those extras now AND keep them in the schedule for the new school year too! Just think through those extras. Which ones do you want to do over Summer Vacation? Fine Arts? Nature Study? That Unit Study you are dying to dig into, but never get around to? Those field trips in your own back yard (and along the way to and from your summer trips)? What about having that friend over for tea? Why not take this time to try your hand at those little business ideas that the children never have time to bring to life (bake bread, mow lawns, baby-sit...)? Perhaps, you would like to actually take time to swim, sail, travel, or read. Why not now? What about a book project? Take those studies from the past year and make a finished project that will teach more about Language Arts than your children learned all year AND have fun teaching them! Whatever YOUR preference, take this time to rest. On this summer vacation, take the time to kick back a bit...have a little fun...and learn of Jesus Christ. As you gear back up, you will be ready to soar!

Take Time Today to Renew!

We have now retreated and rested, but that is not all that is necessary in order for us to be ready to soar! We also need to renew our hearts, souls, and minds for yet another big year.

There is constantly a battle waging for our hearts, souls, and minds. I believe that one of the strategies of the enemy is to “lull” us to sleep. He wants for us to trust the “auto-pilot” to keep us going. If our “auto-pilot” is the Lord, we can surely trust that He will keep us going. But, you need to know that His approach to parenting is not “chilling” out during the “flight.” He wants much, much more from us in this journey. God wants for us to join Him in this adventure. He wants for us to see this opportunity to minister alongside of Him. He wants for us to be His “helper” to bring this work to pass. Because of this, we need desperately to take time to renew to the call before us.

What do I mean by renew? I mean a complete heart, soul, and mind renewal to the call of Homeschooling. God wants for us to have a heart for Homeschooling. I am not talking about a heart for “school” in the home. I am talking about a heart for having all that Jesus died to give us. Homeschooling is only one means that God uses to restore the family to His perfect design. Yet, so often, our enemy distracts us into thinking of Homeschooling as another means of education. There is so much more to Homeschooling. It is not all about academics. We are given a precious gift of really ministering to the hearts of our children. We are given time and opportunity to train our children up to use all of their special gifts, talents, and bents.

We are given the opportunity to really impress upon the hearts of our children our passion for God, life, relationships, and learning. Oh, if we could only constantly renew our heart, we would have a contagious passion that would keep us fired up and on track!

We also need to renew our soul and mind. What do I mean by this? This is renewing our will, mind, and emotions. This can only begin one way. Let's see how Romans 12: 1-2 says that this can begin...

"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]."

Romans 12: 1-2 (Amplified Bible)

I love this passage! I absolutely love anything that can give me **THREE EASY STEPS**. This passage is one of those passages. Want to renew your soul and mind? Want to renew your mind, will, and emotions at any time, in any area of your life? Here are the **THREE EASY STEPS**:

1. **Daily come before the Lord sacrificing ALL you are to Him.** Yes, beloved, ALL that you are: your plans (everyone of them)...your ambitions (even that college thing!)... ideas (even the best idea can be your idol, your high place, so ALL of those ideas!)... methods (Yep! ALL of them...even if they are great! Even Charlotte Mason's Approach, the Unit Study Approach, the Classical Approach, the Principal Approach, those Textbooks, the Lifestyle of Learning Approach, the Heart of Wisdom Approach...did I leave any out? That one too! Sacrifice it, if it is of God, He will let you continue in those ideas. If not, well, ugh, God has some great ideas for you!)... techniques (Yep, even your beloved ideas!)...fears (Why fear when God knows every single detail of your life and those of your children?)... concerns (There is not one concern that God does not know and have your provision, so lay it down!!!)... *all* must be presented to God as a living sacrifice each day!
2. **Do NOT conform.** Are we not a nation of people-pleasers? In no area do I see more peer-pressure than the Homeschool movement. We try to please the culture. We try to please the church. We try to please fellow Homeschoolers. When are we going to turn away from people pleasing and conforming to the ways of others? When are we going to repent and turn our hearts intently to our Lord and Saviour? When we do, we will find the freedom to hear Him in each and every area of our lives, even our Homeschool.

Then, we will find the renewal of our souls and minds that we so desire. Then, we will be able to *“prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].”* Then, we will see the glory of the Lord in our homes. Then, we will have the revival that God wants in our land!

3. **Be transformed by renewing your mind!** Oh, beloved, reach for this renewal! It will transform your entire life! Of course, this begins as you sit at the feet of Jesus. As you daily immerse yourself in His Word, you will begin to be transformed. You will soon have different priorities... different beliefs... different ambitions... and soon, you will be able to prove what is good, acceptable, and perfectly in the will of God. If we never experience this transformation, we will always find ourselves burdened under a yoke of bondage. We will always find ourselves looking in all the wrong places for direction, approval, meaning, purpose, and rest! But, this need not happen. We can have all that Christ has planned for us! Sit at His feet!

Yes! Three easy steps to a complete renewal! Then you will KNOW His *“good and acceptable and perfect will”* for you and your children! Isn't that great? Just sitting at His feet this summer, sacrificing yourSELF, not conforming to anyone or anything around you, and hearing Him, you will be able to completely renew your mind. Talk about a retreat! Oh, do record this!

Take the time to write what He shows you. Write down where He wants for you to go. Write down what He shows you as you look back—what HAS been learned, where you HAVE come from, what HAS been accomplished. Write down all that He shows you about where you are today—WHERE are they, WHO are they, WHAT is the ONE THING that they need today (academic, spiritual, character, relational, physical), WHAT would you do today if this were the last day you had in life (do it now while you are listening and planning!). Write down what He shows you about tomorrow—WHERE do they need to be (next week, next month, next year, at the end of this Homeschooling journey), HOW can you get there. Write down your commitment to this high call. Write down your commitment to the lifestyle of learning for a lifetime, for the long haul. Not to Homeschooling, but to a home, to God's design for the home.

Take the time to record your retreat with God. You are going to love looking back later to see His faithfulness. Trust me, after 11 years of seeing God prepare me each and every year AND follow through, I KNOW that He will never leave me in this calling. This helps SO much on those days that I am not real sure that I can press on. All I have to do is look back to see that He will be with me and I know I can go on!

Take This Time to Re-Organize!

Now, I am not a homemaking queen here. Actually, I can reasonably assure you that unless God did have

the absolutely most crazy sense of humor, I can probably boldly write (now I am getting scared!) that I will never write a book called **HOMEMAKING THE EASY WAY**. (If I do now, I will just rename it, or quote this totally unfaithful comment.) Don't get me wrong, I believe that God is a miracle God. He can do **ANYTHING** with **ANYONE**...just look at my life! However, it would take just that for me to ever become a homemaking queen much less write a book on it. So, I will give you my ever-so-humble and easy approach to Homemaking here!

Don't do it! Nooooo, just joking! No, this is the time of year that will make or break our Homeschool. Nothing frustrates me more or distracts me more than a dirty home. (Could be the reason I am frustrated and distracted at times...hummm!) When Homeschooling, my home has utterly sent me into a flood of tears as I felt it pang me on the head for my attention when we would rather learn about volcanoes! With this dilemma, I arrived at the easiest plan I could come up with to balance homemaking with my busy life. Here it is for your consideration. It is definitely as close to **HOMEMAKING THE EASY WAY** as I think I can legitimately get!

First, use this time over the summer to *re-organize your home*. We usually take a couple of weeks off from lessons, life (I look so scummy that I **DEFINITELY** do not want a human to see me!), and the regular routine to clean out everything. We work from one room to the next until the whole house has had a complete overhaul. We pull out everything from every crook-and-cranny (An expression of my mom's...have no idea what that really means...we just **DO** it!). We get rid of the "unnecessaries" by throwing away or giving away. We put away all of those papers and books that have piled up over the last six months (We do a clean out twice a year, spring and fall!). We wash down the walls, windows, pretties around the house (I have a huge collection of tea cups, tea pots, linens, and other beloved pretties that need that tender-loving-care on a regular basis or they go funky!), and put away seasonal clothing. Usually we are so exhausted by the end of this clean up break that no one has the energy to mess up for several months! This tends to only require daily maintenance until the mess builds up again...usually about six months.

Take an honest inventory of your family life. Find a way to manage this homemaking monster so you can enjoy your family and your lessons. Need more help, check out the pros of homemaking like www.Flylady.com, Emilie Barnes, or Mary Carney.

Second, use this time to *re-organize your Homeschool*. Yep, I know that the time goes by way too fast. If we want to have the most efficient Homeschool, we need to plan ahead. Take this time to do your planning. Set up a "Mommy Journal" with a log of what God is teaching you (last section), your plans for the year, your supplies that you will need, your schedule (re-evaluate it in the light of your new year and all that will be going on in your home—extra-curricular activities, lessons, lifestyle changes—babies, traveling, care of your parents, job changes), even your recipes that will make each day a bit easier. Scope out the curriculum that you would like for the New Year. Of course, don't forget to include the fun stuff that we tend to put off. Plan that in. You will have a much better school year. Gather up your supplies. If you are on a

budget, the best way to bless your husband is to buy those supplies bit-by-bit, while they are on sale. Scope out the different things that you will need and buy them when they are on special. For example, we buy truckloads of 3-ring binders when Office Depot puts them on special for "Buy 7, get 5 free." That is one key to encouraging our young writers as we have plenty for them to use AND we have them on hand when they need them. Plus, it helps our family budget tremendously to save that money along the way.

Summer is also the perfect time to clean out and re-organize what you already have. We pull out our notebooks and supplies to re-organize and inevitably this sparks interest as the children finish those studies they forgot about or beg to do a lesson just to use the paints that we have (that are NEW again now that they are found!). It also helps us to take a look back over the things that we have learned over the past year. Oh, seize this time to re-organize. Gearing up will be a lot more fun and a whole lot easier!

Take This Time to Re-fuel!

Oh, the other areas are all fun, but this one is the MOST fun! This one is where YOU re-fuel and re-supply for the call. This article simply would not be complete without the most important aspect--taking care of the good soldier. That means taking care of YOU!

There is just something about a Homeschooling mother that makes everything else somewhat of a priority, yet this aspect seems to be the last thing on our list to do. Yet, if we are to be prepared for this call so we can gear up for the best year yet, we most certainly must re-fuel OUR tanks! However, the tricky part is that we are all so very different that what re-fills my tank would not work for you. So, think over what YOU like?

What do YOU enjoy? What fills YOUR cup? Feel the twisting of your stomach? Getting a knot in the back of your throat? Have you already put this article down 15 times at this part? Been scared of what this might just say? Well, let's think through this TOGETHER!

What fills your cup? Bible Study? If so, why not begin a new Bible Study JUST for you! The benefits are simply unbelievable! What about reading that book, magazine, or catalog that you have piled up? Oh! The joy! Maybe a leisurely afternoon (or BUNCH of afternoons) at the pool, park, or river is just "what the doctor" ordered to help fill your cup? Perhaps, just the thing needed to re-fill your tank is a day or weekend away at a retreat OR even better, buy the tapes and go for a long walk each day as you work through them. This way your "retreat" can happen over and over again! Speaking of a long walk, why not take the time, beginning today, to carve out time for your favorite mode of exercise. Maybe you are like me, walking is the divine appointment with God and His wonderful creation. Or, maybe you will want to ride a bike... skate... play ball... go fishing... play laser tag (we LOVE this one!)... jog... go horseback riding... etc. Take the time today. It will be much, much easier to take that time on a regular basis.

Maybe you prefer a more sedentary life, I am sure you could tell that I do. I devour having a daily teatime

or coffee break. I usually take that time to dig into the Word, or write that article that needs to come to life, or to read a great book *JUST* for me (actually that is an understatement, every book I read is really never *JUST* for me because I have to share them with my family and friends.). I also love to take that “down time” to Scrapbook or pow-wow with my husband, children or a good friend. You probably have your favorite way to re-fill and re-supply. Make a point today to take that time. Then, schedule regular times throughout the school year to pull apart to re-fuel.

Want to see a big difference in your Homeschool? Take time to re-fuel now and continue to refill all throughout the year. You will find that extra bit of energy. You will find that your time really is better balanced. You will stay fired up. It will be easier for you to stay on track. Plus, your children will learn even more than ever. Yes, they will be more inspired to learn as you continue learning and living as a mother.

So, don't put this one off. Take time to let God fill *your* cup. Take time to let your friends fill your cup. In fact, take time to fill your own cup. Then, oh, beloved, then you will be ready to pour forth from an overflowing cup!

Ready???

So, ready? The days are getting longer. The air is a bit (*MUCH*) warmer. You may feel tired and a bit weary right now. But, now is the perfect time to pull back for a bit of a retreat. It is time today to retreat, rest, renew, re-organize, and re-fuel.

I know, I know *ALL*; I mean *ALL* of the excuses. I have made them all myself. In turn, I have had too many times that I have been weary and worn. I have had too many times that we have gotten off track and it took a while, a long while (sad to say), to even realize that we had gotten off. I have had far too many times that my attitude and my spirit did not show my family that they were my true priority, much less how precious they are to my heart. I made the excuses. I did not take the time away to gear back up. Everything in life was completely affected.

On the other hand, there is something wonderful about starting a fresh new beginning. I guess because “new beginnings” are what God is all about. Each day we get a new beginning. Each week, we can confidently begin a whole new week. Even each month, we get a brand new month. Oh, and then we have a New Year every single year.

I need those new beginnings. I need a fresh start. I love those closed chapters to life...and the new chapters. This is the time to tidy up from the last year, and get ready for a brand new year. You are now cleared to land. Whether you are coming in for a temporary “landing” or you are just coming in for a little “touch-n-go,” this is the perfect time to get ready so you can soar again.

So, are you ready for another big year? How about the summer of your life? Hey, take this summer to re-

Homeschooling The Easy Way Manual

treat...rest...renew...re-organize...and re-fuel. Oh, and in August, I have a little assignment for you. Why not write me an email (Better than an essay, huh?) just to let me know one thing? Write me a little note to let me know "What YOU did on YOUR Summer Vacation..."



Excerpted from *Homeschooling The Easy Way Magazine*.

Companion tape and retreat tape set are ALSO available!

PLUS! See our *Make Your Own Mommy Journal* for a companion for those planning moments!