

So, just what exactly is a whole, living book? I remember the first time I read that phrase...it begged for more thought on my behalf. As I shared, I have always loved great books. I just did not know what separated a book into the category of real, living and whole. There are a few things that I think completely separate books. The first is the author. As you can see, some authors have more passion and love for the topic than others. They are the ones we want to take time to glean from! They are the ones who become our good friends while they teach us the things that they are great at. They teach us who they are. They pass on ideas.

Ideas...hum? What? Well, ideas are passed between people. All habits are the fruit of dominant ideas...even the habits of daily life! That is why it is vital to be careful to have the habit of enthusiasm dominant in studies. I love what Charlotte Mason said in her book *Home Education*...

"A child has not begun his education until he has acquired the habit of reading to himself, with interest and pleasure, books fully on a level with his intelligence. I am speaking now of his lesson books, which are all too apt to be written in a style of insufferable twaddle, probably because they are written by persons who have never chanced to meet a child. ...Therefore, the selection of their first lesson-books is a matter of grave importance, because it rests with these to give children the idea that knowledge is supremely attractive and that reading is delightful. Once the habit of reading his lesson books with delight is set up in a child, his education is—not completed, but ensured; he will go on for himself in spite of the obstructions which school too commonly throws in his way."

I have to admit. There are some books that leave my mind so full that I am inspired to become a greater person! There are others that seem to leave me still hungry. The ones that fill my life to overflow are the ones that I want to pass to my children. They inspire and challenge while they inform us. Those are the ones that leave their mark on our lives! They bring fullness to our entire life. Charlotte Mason spoke about this in her writing. She said...

"Our aim in Education is to give a **Full Life**...We owe it to them to initiate an immense number of interests...Life should be all living, and not merely a tedious passing of time; not all doing or all feeling or all

thinking—the strain would be too great—but, all living; that is to say, we should be in touch wherever we go, whatever we hear, whatever we see, with some manner of vital interest. We cannot give the children these interests; we prefer that they should never say they have learned botany, conchology, geology, or astronomy. The question is not,—how much does the youth *know*? When he has finished his education—but how much does he *care*? And about how many orders of things does he care? In fact, how large is the room in which he finds his feet set? And, therefore, how full is the life he has before him? I know you may bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. What I complain of is that we do *not* bring our horse to the water. We give him miserable little text-books, mere compendiums of facts, which he is to learn off and say and produce at an examination; or we give him various knowledge in the form of warm diluents, prepared by his teacher with perhaps some grains of living thought to the gallon. And all the time we have books, books teeming with ideas from the minds of thinkers upon every subject to which we can wish to introduce children."

We can bring this fullness into the study of Nature through many great books that are available. There are wonderful Biographies available in every library. With a biography, we can get into the lives of great men and women. We can learn from their mistakes and from their accomplishments. We can get a full picture of how God works in the lives of simple people who earnestly seek Him and His wisdom. All of this while we teach "subjects" and lessons to our children!

Great books are not limited to biographies. There are some wonderful Histories of great people, their ideas and their work in the field of Science. You can even find nature diaries that follow along the discoveries of these great people! These are wonderful for teaching deeper thoughts.

My personal favorites for Nature Study are the nature storybooks! Maybe it is my love for "stories" in the first place, but I also love the way that great truths are woven into the story. My favorite nature stories are *Parables from Nature* by Margaret Gatty. These stories are my all time favorite!

I know that many of these great books are really wonderful read alouds, but there are many other books that we have enjoyed as well. My son spent his entire first two years of Homeschooling just reading through our libraries non-fiction books. Those books had the most beautiful pictures and lots of details that helped my children to learn science facts in an easy, non-confrontational way!

How to Use Whole Books for Nature Study???

Great literature is easily used within the home. We just set aside a time each day to read through our books on topics we are studying. We try to keep a great book going. These are chosen based upon the interests that develop within our home. We have plenty of time each day allotted for our children to read on their own, but our read alouds are selected for all ages in our home. We have found that our children were able to understand and enjoy books far beyond their reading level as we read aloud those selections. For this reason, we have not "dumbed-down" our selections or shied away from tough subjects. We dig into great books that our entire family can enjoy together...of course, that is a sign that the books are real and living!

We also use our Literature to jumpstart other *real* writing projects. This means that we do real, practical writing exercises after our read alouds instead of complicating our lives with a bunch of texts and workbooks with artificial writing projects. When we read aloud, we usually find so many things that can be studied or collected more in-depth that we have our days full of writing projects that spring up naturally from our literature! For example, we highlight any great quotes for Copywork lessons the next day. We have found out that it helps to use a large print book. The children prefer a larger font to copy from.

I am a "word study" nut! So, we also jot down words that we would like to use for word studies. We look them up in our concordance if we want to do a Bible Study on those words. We look them up in our dictionary for just a word study. Some of the word studies have resulted in papers, notebooks, and books about some of the things that catch our interest the most. Some have resulted in metaphors and parables about little practical truths that make great symbolism of spiritual truths. Oh, I can't forget...we come across some wonderful jewels from Scripture. We usually look up those Bible Verses that sound interesting as we read through books. Some of them

have become lifelong friends that we have copied into our journals and memorized.

As you can see, there are many opportunities for using writing skills naturally in Nature Studies just by using whole books but that is not all! Every branch of Science can be taught better through the text of a whole, living book than through dry, boring textbooks. All that is needed is to spend a week or two at a time reading one book on each branch of study. Through the year you would read a wide variety of books while keeping the interest of the children. Ideas for topics for books on each area of study are...

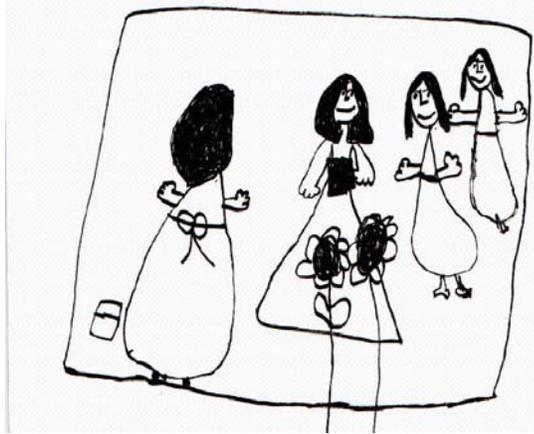
Physics...Inventions, Electricity, Magnets, Batteries,
Experiments, Solid/Liquid/Gas, Sounds, Light
Meteorology...Weather
Botany...Flowers, Plants, Trees
Geology...Gems, Rocks, Minerals
Oceanography...Oceans, Ponds, Rivers
Astronomy...Space, Stars, Planets, Constellations
Ornithology...Birds
Marine Zoology...Mammals, Sea Creatures, Seashells, Fish
Earth Zoology...Animals, Insects, Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians
Biology...Human Body, Senses, Systems, Nutrition

If you prefer to spend more time on each area of study, you could easily use these topics for Unit Studies. Just research and decide which books, field trips, and projects that you would like to do wrapped around that study. All subjects fall easily into any study on any topic because it is hard to divorce subjects from a real study. As the children get older, they may want to do more Unit Studies. Unit Studies are a wonderful way to teach research skills while encouraging the children to dig deeper on their own! What a perfect preparation for college or homeschooling their own children!

What Do You Think?

What do you think? Are you one of those moms who are hopelessly addicted to great books? Maybe this reminds you why. Teaching with whole books is simple, natural and easy because of that mystery of Literature. Not what *we* do with the Literature—but what the child and the literature

do together! Why not pull out that great book...and watch your children devour...yes, EVEN Nature Studies with Whole Books!



Nature Study and Family Day!

One of the things that I simply took for granted was the natural, almost set in stone manner that we happened to do our monthly Nature Study "excursion." You see, I married a *completely country* "country boy." He hunted...fished...built things...kept bees (his dad was a beekeeper by profession)...and even gardened! I read books. *And* in the city! Ha! Marriage has never been dull!

Yes, our marriage has been full of fun and adventure! That has carried over to our Homeschool, but as we began Homeschooling, I found myself frustrated with Harold's ideas of how the children learn best...his "help" in the Homeschool...and most of all his work schedule. I quickly saw that he was right about how the children learn best—by learning from us! I also quickly began to see that his role in the Homeschool was more valuable than merely teaching the tough stuff could ever be...he was able to teach about HIMSELF! It was just that work schedule that was a problem...or was it?

His schedule rotates days off and never guarantees a set time when he goes to work. He works long hours, but those long hours end with nice off days *right in the middle of my scheduled* time for lessons! Because of this, I have had to learn how to be flexible, while seizing every opportunity to learn. The treat has been that we have the blessing of family days in the midst of our busy week. We usually find ourselves doing some of the very things that I listed in the field trip section of this book. Not because I plan to have lessons or great outings—just because this what we find ourselves doing!

I know that this is going to seem weird, but there was a battle in my soul for years over this very thing. I thought of these things as fun and learning, but never equated them with enough value to consider this, our every day life, as *educational*. I knew that books were educational, but what about all of those "things" we found ourselves doing on Harold's off day...our Family Day?? In all of the "books" with field trip ideas, those things were listed, but did this really count as *SCHOOL??* Oh Yes! It did count and really was greater because it instilled a love of learning, which would last during all of our life.

The new has worn off and usual settled in. I now see that all of the life around me is really educational. This is what this chapter is for. Nature Study is all around us. Nature Study is probably as close as your typical family day. The natural things that are done with the family each day can become the vital, life-giving "curriculum" that breathes life into your studies. The study of Nature Study can become easy...as we make a priority to have a set time for a "Nature Study Excursion" each month! Well...let's get rid of that weird word and call it "Family Day!"

Easy, Natural Lessons...

Anna Comstock wrote in her book *Handbook of Nature Study*,

"Many teachers look upon the field excursion as a precarious voyage...It is a mistake to think that a half day is necessary for a field lesson, since a very efficient field trip may be made during the ten or fifteen minutes at recess."

This reminds me of this past week. My husband was off for his usual off day. Since his off days rotate every week, so we have to remain flexible in our plans. All I wanted for his off day was to be off from my work too. We packed up the children...our books and baskets (well, I am the one with all the baskets!)...the new laptops (my husband recently began a computer business...does this sound like a *happy* mama??). We headed to a spring-fed creek with water as clear as glass. There was a delightful shade right over Harold and me. We sat together drinking in the beauty and enjoying the sweet child play of our little ones!

As I watched my children, I realized just how *EASY* Nature Study really is. I did not have to prepare a lesson...God had already prepared the lessons of the day. I did not have to *know* any questions or any answers to the questions that were bubbling up from deep within my children. As they played, the lessons developed and were learned first-hand. I just sat back and enjoyed the fresh air...the cool breeze...and the excitement of learning from curiosity!

Lessons Right Where We Go!

Just in this one excursion, the children learned about currents, pond life (scum is what I call it!), skipping rocks, edible plants, making boats, racing boats, finding rocks, catching minnows, hunting for frog eggs...just to name a few things! This did not take any planning by my husband or me. These lessons developed from a mixture of the bounty before us and the curiosity God places inside each of us!

Seizing the Lessons

I know. This sounds like an obvious "place" for a Nature Study, but I have been surprised at the opportunities available all around us for one-on-one observation and contact with God's creation. It seems that all of our Family Days have opportunities for lessons to be taught to our children. It reminds me of the passage from Deuteronomy 6.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

As parents, we do not have to have the "knowledge" about everything as we go along the way. We just need to seize all the natural, easy lessons before us. We need the ability to observe and enjoy! We can ask questions, which encourage the family to take a second look. We can take time to notice the details. We can share the stories from our childhoods that were taught as we went along the way. And we can teach the most important lesson of all-to look it up!

Go Home and Look It Up!

If there is one thing that weds Nature Study to our lessons that we teach our children in research and study, it is that we could never *know* all about Nature. That is one of the most vital lessons to teach our children. It helps to encourage them to learn because Nature is so vast that it can be

discouraging to know so little unless we understand how much there is to learn. This was one of my first lessons as an adult trying to teach my children. I was so scared that I would not have "expertise" in an area that my children needed to know about. In fact, so scared that I created a hole that could only be filled by humility and an earnest search for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. I was thankful for the day that God gently taught me that the key to all wisdom in every area of life is *to seek!*

Nature Study is just another area of life that God teaches us once we seek. We learn that He is The Source of all true wisdom. We also learn that we can take *all* of our questions to His Word and find real answers. He also teaches us that there is a wealth of information in others that He puts into our lives through personal relationships or through relationships in print. He amazes me as we have questions in our minds, which seem to be answered almost immediately as we begin to look it up or ask questions! These are the lessons that stick in our minds forever!

Memories Too!

Of all the things that I consider as I think back over those simple lessons from our time together as a family, learning together--the greatest lesson is that our family memories are more important than sticking a bunch of dry, useless facts into the minds of our children. Those relationships are our priority. These days shared together are our treasures! This cannot get lost in the pursuit of knowledge because it is the *Main Thing!*

This reminds me of our adventures in camping! Yes, you read right...No, *please* do not send any superwoman capes my way! Just due prayers! Ha!

My husband being the "true" country boy/SWAT team member felt compelled to "culture" me to the joys of camping. My thoughts were buzzing away as I thought of this as an experience to teach great truths to my children, while learning myself. Our first campout was *just exactly* like I would have imagined it to be!

We took MORE things than we could use in a three year stay all jammed into our van...from food to books to toys to MAKEUP to the blankets from our beds to HAIRSPRAY to food, yes the fat kind and I KNOW I stressed food more than once! Yes, we had it all even double portion of food!

We rode up the Natchez Trace, thinking this to be an easy endeavor. ☺ Seventy-five miles or more, but who is counting, we came to "our spot." Of course, I thought it could not be that bad because we set up camp only 200 yards away from the bathroom! I could do that!

Most the evening was uneventful—the usual 35 times of Elisabeth going to the potty...dinner cooked out in the great outdoors, well I did consider 15 wieners burned and thrown to the woods not bad considering that we *finally* figured out how to cook (an investment in the future!! Cooking class??)...minimal mosquito bites...and a cozy clean tent *separate from the children (woohoo!!)*

As we made our beds for the night, I decided that I would sleep under the covers, whereas my darling Harold decided to sleep on top of the covers. All worked beautifully until in the middle of the night he reached over and threw the covers off of me and onto him! *Then*, he rolled on up in them...leaving me freezing *and* on the hard ground to boot! HUM...a new arrangement is now a given.

I probably would have never noticed the problem of freezing on the bed of *rocks* had my daughter not decided to attract a new pet! A tiny abandoned kitten...WOE, this does not sound as dramatic as it should due to the lack of sleep *I had to endure...it is definitely a mommy thing* (Harold did not miss a wink of sleep...all of this was some tale in the morning to him!)/ SO, CUT! A ferocious roar was heard in the woods as a feline critter...no, feline monster...came into the camp to scavenge for food...good thing we left all those wieners for him! For all I knew, it could have been one of my poor children that he had on the menu...well, there WAS one I was ready to feed to a lion!

Elisabeth, being the true humanitarian--who would have been too busy playing with all the animals in the garden to eat an apple if she had been Eve--meowed gently and *consistently* to the kitten *ALL night long!* The kitten was so taken by her attention that it tried to dig into her tent to get to her! I threatened...I mean encouraged her gently to s-h-u-t-the-meowing-u-p-or-I-would-kill-her-and-tell-God-she-was-dead!!!!!! She continued faithfully to nurture the kitten—completely assured that I would never open my tent because I hate dirt and mosquitoes more than noise!

The next morning was a morning of simple camping pleasures. Waking up to smoke from the fire that the children built just outside of *our* tent (to surprise us that they KNEW how—haven't I taught them two zillion times to NEVER play with fire!!!), mixed with the whispers of big brother warning little sister that that kitten *would* bite and probably had AIDS or some fatal disease, as the Lord called me to my quiet time...or was that my husband begging me to *please* take my time?

The day was filled with simple camping pleasures like going for a *real* breakfast at Hardee's in town and heading back home for a nice nap in my bed! Camping really can teach a lot! I am sure! But, it is much more than that...it is memories!

This is (*of course*) my humorous side here (or I would HAVE to kill them! ☺), but let's get serious about the importance of what went on in our camping adventure! We were learning minute-by-minute the whole time we were there. Sure there were wonderful lessons in nature. We even collected some nature goodies. But the most important aspect of this time together was not the lessons, but the unspoken lesson that time together is fun. We can giggle and enjoy the memories now and forever. This is something that can never be taken away! Prayerfully one day, our children will take their children camping and tell the "stories" of our memories we built—even if they are completely hilarious!

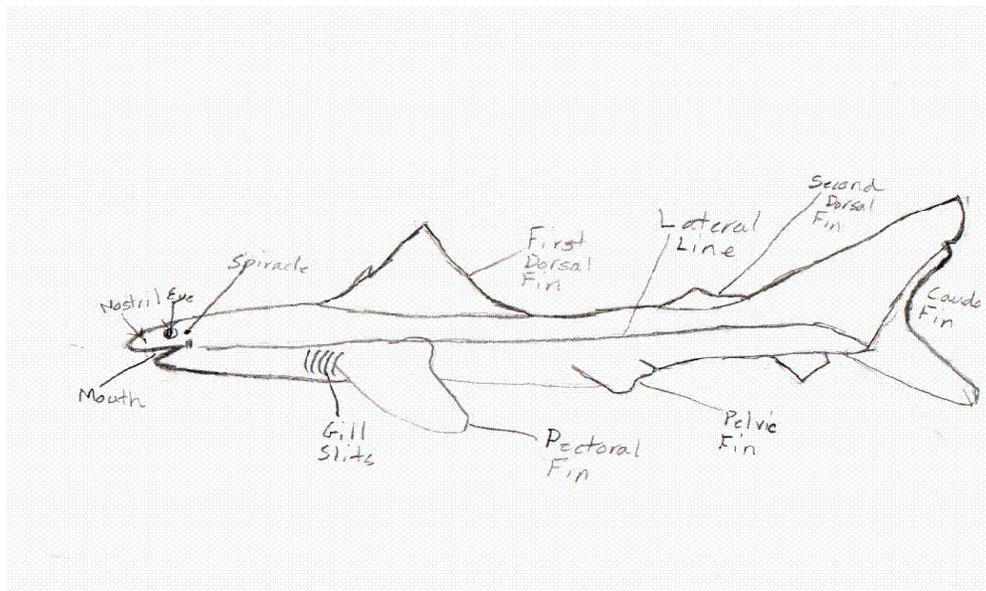
A Time To Teach Who You Are...

You know looking back over our family times, the neatest thing about our family times has to be that Harold and I do not have to *plan* lessons or objectives for our "teaching" times. We simply teach the most important lessons of all...*who we are!*

We want to teach our children to love God...to see the preciousness of others...to stay in awe of the little things to be learned...to seize each moment for all the joy and fun in it...and that a happy Christ-centered family life is the most precious gift we possess. These lessons are easily taught during that time set aside for family. They are a precious commodity!

So, why not tap in to what you and your family "happen" to do naturally? Maybe you are like I have been...frustrated with the inconvenience of the

constant interruptions, which can really afford the greatest lessons? Why not look at these interruptions from a new perspective and grasp those family days for all the fun and learning that they can bring forth? Who knows you might write the next humor column!



Binderized! How-to's for EASY Nature Notebooks...

There is one word that is *alllll* mine in the English Language! Binderized! Yes, that is the word that one day will have *MY* picture by it in the dictionary! As matter of fact, I am lovingly called "The Binder Queen" by my dear friends on the *Charlotte Mason Discussion List Online*. Anyone familiar with the Rushton Family is definitely familiar with our wide and varied use of binders (notebooks) in our home and Homeschool. Nature studies are no different!

For a long time, I was frustrated when I would read about the neat ideas for nature journals/notebooks. I would read about families going on outings with sketchbooks and watercolors for every member of their family. They would record these beautiful stories about how their children not only sketched from nature, but they used watercolors in "recordings" that would make Edith Holden green with envy *and* even adorned their notebooks with gorgeous poetry and *just* the right data about their finds. When I "compared" this to *MY* family, well...uh...we averaged about a page a year in our nature journals and I am not too eager to show them to you!

I think that the sole reason for this was because I did not take the ideas that were shared and apply those ideas of others into how we already were doing our other notebooks with our children. I was just paralyzed by intimidation! It just seemed forbidding for me to even think of keeping nature sketchbooks.

Well, one day everything just clicked! I decided to take the ideas from how we usually kept our copybooks... mix those ideas with those tips on nature journaling from the past...and then top it off with scrapbooking techniques from today...and wala! We have our own simple and easy way of keeping our nature notebooks!

Here are some ideas for making one of your own... OH! Do keep in mind that you will need to make adjustments for *your style AND your ideas* if it is truly to be Nature Notebooks...the Easy Way!

Let Notebooking Become a Natural Part of Life.

The hardest part of introducing something new is developing the habit of just doing it! Notebooking will take time to for you and your children to get in the groove and work out *your way* of doing it best but it is worth it! At the beginning, encourage your children to draw pictures of little jewels found in nature. If your child is not too keen on sketching and drawing at first, then encourage them to record what they see or to press or dry the little treasures that they find outside. Your child might like to record simple lists with the date, place, and what they find. Or, let them copy a favorite verse from their quiet time. Or, they may want to keep a collection of their memorabilia from field trips or vacation or family days. However the notebook develops, relax and let it become their personal journal and scrapbook. They may work in it every day or just a few times a month depending upon their interest. As time goes by, you may have a budding naturalist come out of your very own home!

One of the things that helped to encourage my children to begin and to continue keeping up their notebooks is my personal example. I want to state *for the record* that I do not naturally lean toward dirt, bugs, heat, climbing...well, this is not *usually* considered by those around me as my area of expertise. To be *real* honest, my husband *knows* that even camping is considered a "character" building experience for me! But really nature study is more than that. However, I realize that if I want for my children to develop a passion for something, it first begins with me. Our children will only develop a passion for those things that we develop a passion for. They come to enjoy the things that we come to enjoy. Nature study is one of those things. I had to begin exactly where I was. That has been just the right place to begin!

I remember a quote from John Charles Ryle's book *Duties of Parents*,

"Instruction, and advice, and commands will profit little, unless they are backed up by the pattern of your own life. Fathers and mothers, do not forget that children learn more by the eye than they do by the ear... Imitation is a far stronger principle with children than memory. What they see has a much stronger effect on their minds than what they are told. Take care, then, what you do before a child. It is a true proverb, "Who sins before a child, sins double." Strive rather to be a living epistle of Christ, such as your families can read, and that

plainly too. Be an example of reverence for the Word of God, reverence in prayer, reverence for means of grace, reverence for the Lord's day.--Be an example in words, in temper, in diligence, in temperance, in faith, in charity, in kindness, in humility. Think not your children will practise what they do not see you do. You are their model picture, and they will copy what you are. Your reasoning and your lecturing, your wise commands and your good advice; all this they may not understand, but they can understand your life. Remember the word that the conqueror Caesar always used to his soldiers in a battle. He did not say 'go forward,' but 'Come.' So it must be with you in training your children. They will seldom learn habits, which they see you despise, or walk in paths in which you do not walk yourself. He that preaches to his children what he does not practise, is working a work that never goes forward...the parent who tries to train without setting a good example is building with one hand, and pulling down with the other."

Yes, it is important to study nature, to develop nature notebooks, to understand the marvels of God's creation, and to come to know our Lord through His revelation in nature. This important area of study will never become a priority or a habit unless it is backed up by *my practice—my habits*. For this reason, I began my own nature notebook. This has helped me to place nature study as a priority in our family life. It has also given me sympathy for the struggles of my children as they are learning so many things for the very first time. Now since I am giving it a try too, I *know* that it is difficult to sketch or paint what is tucked away in your mind as a memory. I also know that it is very difficult to find the names of some of our new friends. These are struggles that I can only see as I learn alongside of the children. Now, you must know that as I am working alongside of them, it is not just struggles that I see—I see much more! I have fallen in love with God's creation as I have settled in to learn as a little child! What a treat! I am not only setting an example of how to learn for my little ones—I am learning myself! What joy...true joy! Why not give it a try today!

Decide on the Type of Notebook That You Would Like To Use

This is where "one-size" does not fit all! Each family has its own bend. This is where you follow your own interests and ideas for making *your* notebooks/sketchbooks all yours!

Many families keep sketchbooks, which enable them to use watercolors or write on each page. You can find these reasonably priced at any hobby or art store or the hobby section of your local department store. These sketchbooks come in differing sizes so you can find a smaller size for your little artists. These can even be made at home as you take loose sketch paper...make your own cover...and take your books to be comb-bound or spiral bound at a local print shop. By doing this, your children can design their own cover and make the sketchbooks the size and style that they prefer.

We tried to use "store-bought" sketchbooks, but they were just too difficult to add our special touches of copywork, poetry, hymns, and pressed specimens that we wanted to be a part of our study. I was perplexed and frustrated until I finally decided to create our own notebooks with our very own special touch.

We decided to use the pages from our sketchbooks for pictures and just mount them onto acid-free paper in our 3-ring binder. *(You can see some samples in this book from our nature notebooks.)* By doing this, we could buy binders with the see-through plastic covers. *(We bought ours from Sam's Warehouse for a very good price.)* We were able to let the children design their own cover for their notebook by using this type of binder. The children loved it! We also gave them plenty of page protectors to slide their work inside to protect it from smudges and wrinkles or tears from too much handling. They added pages from their original copybooks that had quotes, Scripture verses, songs/hymns, definitions, and poems with a nature subject. We are now really having fun as we use our ideas to add our own special touch to our own style of nature notebooks!

Let Your Children Set Up Their Notebooks Like Their Very Own Scrapbook of Nature

Chances are you already have many things that could be included in a notebook around your home. Look for those things that do not have their own special place. I remember a dear friend's mother who always instilled in her children (and me!) that there must be a place for everything and everything in its place. This is the perfect opportunity to develop "a place" for those nature goodies while developing a nice product for displaying all the growing knowledge of nature all while your children are keeping special memorabilia. One of the things that I like about using supplies intended for

scrapbooking is that there are so many products that enable us to keep bulky materials safely inside of our notebooks. You may want to include the following in your notebooks...

- ⇒ **Sketches**...Don't forget to include date, time, place, Latin name, and common name. Oh! Don't forget to document where you found it!
- ⇒ **Snapshots**...Don't forget to journal about your snapshot!
- ⇒ **Pressed flowers, leaves, feathers, butterflies, etc.**
- ⇒ **Glossary of terms studied**
- ⇒ **Artwork**
- ⇒ **Poetry**
- ⇒ **Information about discoveries**
- ⇒ **Lists of new findings**
- ⇒ **Handouts from trips**
- ⇒ **Narrations from trips, outings, hikes, nature walks, books read about nature or scientists/naturalists**
- ⇒ **Timeline**...Mark your excursions, inventions, famous men and women, so on.
- ⇒ **Instruction sheets** on "How to Care for..." or "How to Collect..." etc.
- ⇒ (Kathryn Howshall has an entire set of her *Instruction Sheets* called **Nature Projects** which is great for the novice like me, but also a great idea for communicating all the children know about a topic in nature.
- ⇒ **Booklets**
- ⇒ **Project data**
- ⇒ **Bible verses**
- ⇒ **Hymns**
- ⇒ **Current events**
- ⇒ **Stories**...Nature, pets, metaphors, about outings!
- ⇒ **Journal entries**
- ⇒ **Details from outings**
- ⇒ **Favorite quotes about nature**
- ⇒ **Reading list**
- ⇒ **Research**
- ⇒ **Reports**
- ⇒ **Science experiments**

Get Your Supplies...

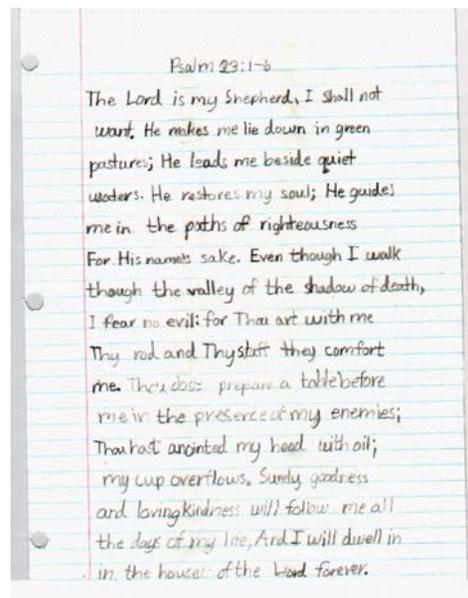
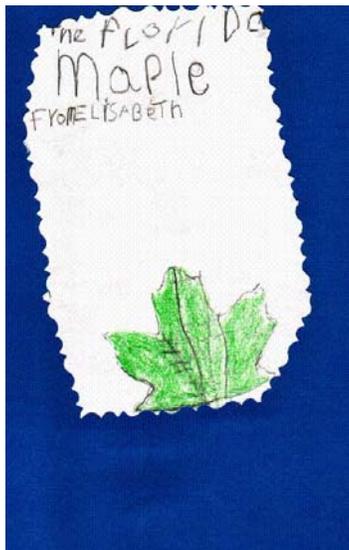
Making a nature notebook is easy! All you need to start your own is a notebook, plastic sleeve protectors, paper (Use cardstock for mounting specimens or lined paper for journaling, copywork, quotes, notes, or lists. You may want to consider acid-free/lignin-free paper if you are mounting pictures of your walks and findings!), sketch paper for watercolor pictures or sketches from nature, top quality sketch pencils, top quality watercolors and brushes, index cards for data entries, and scissors.

We are taking our science/nature notebooks one step further now. Elisabeth and I went to a scrapbooking workshop (*which was fantastic!*) and got so many ideas for notebooking! We decided that since MONEY is a hindrance for us, we would use our scrapbooking skills and supplies to add to our notebooks until we had the money for full memory albums of our family! We bought some pens, templates, scissors (*we love the paper-edgers as you can tell!*), stickers, and acid-free paper. We found the absolute essentials and got started! Maybe wild was the word!

You can add a lot of life to your notebook with special supplies! It really adds a sparkle to notebooks. My children are hooked!

You can use die-cuts, frames, stencils, shapes, and edgings galore to make your notebooks fun and beautiful! My children now beg each weekend to work on our binders/scrapbooks! We have taken these simple skills into other projects for nature studies such as creating books or booklets...making cards with pressed flowers, sketches, poetry and Scripture Verses...and displaying our nature collections. Just have fun and enjoy making your notebooks all yours!

I hope this gives you plenty of ideas so that you can give nature notebooks a try in your home! There is no certain way to do the "right" notebook/sketchbook except *your own way* for your family! I hope this gives you a jump-start so you can have fun and make a notebook that is just right for your family! Catch Ya Outside!



What About Teaching the Older Child???

Something happens...we begin our years of parenting with little ones who know absolutely nothing about life. They are dependent upon us to teach them how to talk...how to walk...how to respond to others...how the world works...and most importantly, the purpose of life! By and large, parents do a great job. They find themselves living a life of true fullness...learning many things that they had never learned before and teaching these little sponges gathered around them just who they are. Then comes kindergarten...

One of the beauties of Homeschooling is that parents do not have to trade in this fulfillment for the "trappings" of the public or private school "schooling" that looms over their heads. They **CAN** continue this process of teaching their children at home...and continue successfully too! Well, that is until their children get to High School...NOT! ☺

There is something within even the most dedicated home educator that questions what to do with high school in every area of study (not just nature/science studies) you know as the children get "older" and need preparation for "real life?" Well, upper level studies need not stump a parent. Instead, they can become the bridges that prepare the children fully for their calling in life.

If this is so, why do parents swap the easy, natural, simple methods of teaching children for the artificial, boring, and difficult techniques common in our day? I think it is because of several very common misconceptions.

Gap-i-tis???

First of all, parents struggle with a big fear called "Gap-i-tis." You are probably giggling as you read this. Trust me, I know that we have all dealt with this one! I have. This is a biggie! There is a temptation to assume that a certain list of suggested studies assures us of a "gap-less" education. The truth is that just sticking to a list of studies designed by someone else

actually *causes* many gaps and holes in the individualized program that God has planned for every single child.

There is never enough time for children to learn *everything* that is to be learned about every single thing we could learn about during our lives. Now, this may lead us to another danger, thinking that children should at least have a nodding acquaintance with *everything*. If this were truly possible, (which it is not) there would still be no depth, which is necessary for true understanding to occur. Charlotte Mason had a different plan for children. She said,

"Our aim in Education is to give a **Full Life**...We owe it to them to initiate an immense number of interests...Life should be all living, and not merely a tedious passing of time; not all doing or all feeling or all thinking—the strain would be too great—but, all living; that is to say, we should be in touch wherever we go, whatever we hear, whatever we see, with some manner of vital interest. We cannot give the children these interests; we prefer that they should never say they have learned botany, conchology, geology, or astronomy. The question *is* not,—how much does the youth *know*? When he has finished his education—but how much does he *care*? And about how many orders of things does he care? In fact, how large is the room, in which he finds his feet set? And, therefore, how full is the life he has before him? I know you may bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. What I complain of is that we do *not* bring our horse to the water. We give him miserable little textbooks, mere compendiums of facts, which he is to learn off and say and produce at an examination; or we give him various knowledge in the form of warm diluents, prepared by his teacher with perhaps some grains of living thought to the gallon. And all the time we have books, books teeming with ideas from the minds of thinkers upon every subject to which we can wish to introduce children."

Our role is to give our children *a full life*. A life that is brought in contact with an immense number of interests, but also full of relationships with what they are studying. This life will safe-guard the child from any chance of "Gap-i-tis." It will instill *a love of learning* while teaching the children *how to learn* for themselves. They can go on to learn all during

their life regardless of any hindrances or obstacles that might come their way. They will be prepared for their calling!

Ignorance???

A second hindrance to pursuing real education for the older child is ignorance. It is so easy to just do what we have seen modeled before us. Often there is no questioning to the "way" that things are done. God wants for us to live our lives *trusting in Him and His Way* of preparing our children for His call on their lives. He does not have a "one-size-fits-all" method of preparation, nor does He expect us to trust on the methods of "people" for training up His children. In Jeremiah 17: 5-8 God says,

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

We have to take time to let God teach us each step of the way. His voice is often unheard as we move toward the older years of teaching our children because there are so many "experts" clattering loudly for our attention, giving their ideas and instilling fear and bondage in our hearts! In Matthew 11: 28-30 Jesus says,

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Yes, we can come to Jesus for help—for His yoke. We can come to Him right when we are feeling that labor, weariness and burden the most. Now notice...not after we get "OK" and all right or when we think we have it all figured out! He will take that ignorance and give us true wisdom and true

direction in our teaching efforts! But, this is only *if* we will come to Him and take on His Yoke!

Easy???

A third reason that parents are likely to swap real education for artificial education when their children get older is because they think that it is easier! What a counterfeit assurance! God says that the EASY way is His way—His Yoke. Let's look again at 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."

If you are confused, unsure, torn, or scared, you can come to Jesus for a new yoke and true rest, refreshment and renewal while you carry His burden! What an exchange!

Preparation for Real Life...

So, what is important as we teach older children?

We have Homeschooled our children since the very beginning. There were many things that drew us into this lifestyle. One of the greatest benefits was the preparation for *real life*. Let me share what we mean by preparation for real life.

How to Learn...

In real life, children need to know how to learn. One of the most vital aspects of a real, living education is that children are taught how to learn for themselves. They are not mere vessels to be filled with facts, information, and data. They are living beings in need of ideas that can shape

their lives while feeding their minds. But, they need more. They need to know how to find and access and utilize those ideas for themselves, independent of the constant supervision and initiation of others. Yes, they need to grow to independence, self-initiative, and self-education.

There is no easier way to teach them how to learn on their own than through home education. They can have access to great books. They can learn how to research areas of interest. They can learn to write with a purpose. They can learn practical skills that will serve them all of their lives. They can have access to others who can show them the need for learning all that they can learn in these short years.

Things do not change once a child is a certain age. Real learning is timeless...ageless...and never-ending! They still need to acquire the skills necessary to learn. The skills prayerfully become more advanced as they grow older, but that does not mean that someone else could teach the older child better than a parent. Instead it means that the parents must continue learning themselves. The things that work for the parent will also work for the child. If the parent enjoys reading a great book on a topic, the child will enjoy reading a great book. If the parent learns more from going to spend the day with a farmer working on his farm, the older children will learn more from the same experience than from four years in textbooks. If the parent would prefer to write an article about a topic of their interest, how much more would the child prefer to write an article about a subject of deep interest??

The education of our older children is no different than the education of little children or of ourselves. It is still an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life! They do not have to "get serious" about studies or learn to do "what they HAVE to do" any more in the older years than the parent needs to! If the parent is learning constantly as they go outside for a nature walk or as they come home to look up neat facts about that new "find," then just when does the older child become too advanced for this simple, easy study? Just how does one get any more serious? Why DOES learning have to be drudgery? These simple, easy methods have been used by the greatest minds of all times, aren't they good enough for our children as well? Yes, their education really can be as easy, natural and simple as the education of the rest of the family!

What About Nature Studies for the Older Child?

What about Nature Studies for the older child? It is just as easy, natural and simple as in the early years. The goal is still the same. We want intimacy, appreciation, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and a deep love for nature! Our role is still the same. We give them access to the wonders of God's creation. We give them plenty of time to observe, think, and enjoy the marvels around us. We give them plenty of the materials that help them develop their studies—books, tools, and resources. We put them in touch with the resources that will teach them—nature, people from the past and people of today who specialize and have a true passion in this field. We then, model before them a lifestyle of learning at all times. We show them that learning is everywhere and continues throughout all of our lives!

Now, you are thinking, "what is different about teaching older children?" Well, not much! The relationships change a bit as the children become more our fellow pilgrims—learning with us, sharing thoughts and ideas with us, and sometimes teaching us more than we could teach them. Their abilities take off. They come to a point of deeper understanding and prayerfully wisdom in this area.

This age is a wonderful age for the study of nature and science. There are ways to challenge your older children. Here are some quick ideas...

Help Them Get to KNOW God...

The whole reason for studying *any* subject is to get to know God and to learn ways to bring Him more glory and honor. Nature Study is the same. It is through the study of nature and science that children can see the qualities of God at work. They can come to learn their value in His eyes. They can come to see their purpose in life.

Use all of your opportunities to help your children develop their knowledge of God. Teach them about His attributes that are seen in His creation. Help them to dig in His Word to see the truths that are often hidden in the mumbo-jumbo of words about science today. Encourage them to search for the answers to those tough questions that are such a stumbling block to others. Then, teach them to share their wisdom with others. This is the main thing!

Give Great Books...

It seems as though the years really begin to "fly by" as children get older! For this reason, we need to use each and every moment to give our children the best that the world has to offer. We need to give them those resources that build their character AND help them to find answers to the questions that baffle all of us. Don't shy away from tough issues. Hit those issues head on! Too many Christians today are content to put science in a little box of "don't ask, don't tell" "unanswerable questions" when God has *all* of the answers in His creation and His Word! All we have to do is dig, to search with all of our hearts, and not be led astray by all the fancy words and complex ideas of the false teachers of our day.

This is where great books come in. We find through biographies that God has given many great truths to those who earnestly seek Him. There are many of His people who sincerely prayed for answers to their tough questions, only to find that He was faithful to answer those questions! ☺ This is what we want for our children to see in their studies! This will challenge them to search out those deep questions they have hidden away in their mind.

Great books also do that work that "schools" try to do in all of those critical thinking classes. They use all the powers of the mind while they feed the mind, nourish the soul, and restore the spirit! This is why we have great books as a mainstay even into the older years of homeschooling!

Give a Purpose for Using Their Skills...

In *Language Arts...The Easy Way* I shared the many keys to helping to encourage young writers to write for God's glory. One of my deepest convictions is that children desperately need to have a purpose for writing before we will see depth and delight in their writing. This is the most significant key to writing well.

Nature Studies are a perfect way to give a child purpose for writing. It is an endless subject full of topics that can be developed! Topics could be anything—issues surrounding the study of science... in-depth Bible studies... how-to's... information about a field of study... so on! Children can write anything from basic copywork to develop their notebooks (personalized