

hours. You can add water if it evaporates too much.
Smells and taste fantastic!

A Cup of Coffee...Rushton Style!

Fresh Ground Coffee, Freshly Made

1/8 cup any syrup flavoring that you desire (my cup
right now is flavored
with Irish Cream)
1/8 cup milk (or Half/Half)
Whipped Topping

Pour syrup and milk into cup. Warm in the microwave
or with espresso machine. Pour in coffee to fill mug.
Spray with Whipped Topping. Devour!
(Disclaimer...this has to be VERY fattening!)

Bavarian Mint Coffee Creamer

3/4 cup non-dairy coffee creamer

1/2 cup Dutch process cocoa (we used Droste brand)
3/4-cup confectioners sugar
1/2 tsp. peppermint extract

Combine all ingredients in a container with a tight
fitting lid. Shake well to blend. Store in an airtight
container and give creamer with the recipe for Bavarian
Mint Coffee. Yields 15 servings.

To make Bavarian Mint Coffee: In a mug, combine 2
tbs. of creamer with 6 ounces of coffee.

Almond Amaretto Coffee Creamer...

1/4 cup non-dairy coffee creamer
1 teaspoon almond extract
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3/4-cup confectioners sugar

Combine all ingredients in a container with a tight-
fitting lid. Shake well to blend. Store in airtight
container and give creamer with the recipe for Almond
Amaretto Coffee. Yield: 12 servings To make Almond
Amaretto Coffee: In a mug, combine 2 tablespoons of
creamer
with 6 ounces of coffee.

Cafe Bavarian Mint

1/4 C. Powdered Creamer
1/3 C. Sugar
1/4 C. Instant Coffee

2 T. Powdered Baking Cocoa
2 hard candy Peppermints

Process in a blender on liquify until well blended. Store
in an airtight container.

Cafe Cappuccino

1/4 C. Powdered Creamer
1/3 C. Sugar
1/4 C. Instant Coffee

1 Orange flavored piece of hard candy

Process in a blender on liquefy until blended. Store in
an airtight container.

Cafe Swiss Mocha

1/4 C. Powdered Creamer
1/3 C. Sugar
1/4 C. Instant Coffee

2 T. Powdered Baking Cocoa

Process in a blender on liquefy until well blended.
Store in an airtight container.

Cafe Viennese

1/4 C. Powdered Creamer
1/3 C. Sugar
1/4 C. Instant Coffee
1/2 tsp. Cinnamon

Process in blender on liquefy until well blended. Store
in an airtight container.

Swiss Miss Cocoa Mix

1 16-oz. box of non-fat dry milk
1 C. Sugar
3/4 C. cocoa

Sift all ingredients together three times. Store this
mixture in a tightly sealed container in a cool place.
When ready to use, you can add a couple of heaping
tablespoons to hot water

Cookies...

Cookies are another one of those fun and easy preparations for your daily tea time with your children. We also give cookies as gifts at the holidays. You may want to make some for gifts and stick some extra ones back for your tea time/Bible Study time! We package ours in gift boxes with each kind in a muffin paper...or in baggies in our gift baskets. These recipes are our favorites ALL year long, not just at holidays! Have fun and enjoy!

Cake Mix Cookies...

1 cake mix (can be any flavor...depending on your favorite kind of cookie!)

2 eggs

2/3 cup oil

Mix well until smooth. Spoon 1/2 inch balls onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 425 degrees for 8-10 minutes. (For a chewy cookie, only 8 minutes)

Options...

Lemon Cake mix...sprinkle with confectioner's sugar after cooled

Butter Cake mix...mix in M&M's or Chocolate Chips before baking

Chocolate Cake mix...mix in M&M's, Chocolate Chips, or Reese's Pieces before baking

Chocolate Cake mix...after baking, place a Small Reese's cup in the center

Butter Cake mix...mix in White Chocolate and Macadamia Nuts before baking

Good Ole Chocolate Chip Cookies

1/2 cup Butter-flavored Crisco Shortening

6 tbs. brown sugar

6 tbs. granulated sugar

1/2 tsp. vanilla

1/4 tsp. water

1 egg

1 cup unsifted all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp. baking soda

1/2 tsp. salt

1/2 cup chopped nuts (optional)

1-cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cream shortening, sugars, vanilla, and egg, until light and fluffy. Mix flour with soda and salt; blend into creamed mixture. Stir in nuts and chips. Using tsp., drop 2 inches apart onto greased cookie sheet. Bake about 10 minutes or until golden brown. Remove

from pan immediately. Yields: about 50 cookies. Note: if using butter or margarine, add 2 tbs. more flour.

Trail Bars...

1 cup light corn syrup

1/2 cup packed brown sugar

1/4 tsp. salt (optional)

1 1/2 cup peanut butter (smooth or chunky)

1 tsp. vanilla (optional) 1 cup dry milk

1 cup granola cereal (crush large lumps)

1 cup whole bran cereal 1 cup raisins

1 package (6 ounce) semi-sweet chocolate pieces

In a heavy saucepan, combine syrup, sugar, and salt; bring to a boil. Remove from heat; stir in peanut butter and vanilla. Stir in remaining ingredients except chocolate; cool slightly. Add chocolate; press into 9 X 13-inch pan lined with waxed paper (can just spray with Pam). A larger pan works well- the thinner it is the easier it is to eat! Refrigerate 30 minutes; cut into bars. Store in the refrigerator in an airtight container. You can substitute Quick Oats for some of the cereal or raisins, if substituting for raisins, add more peanut butter. AWESOME! VERY RICH!

No Bake Cookies!

1 stick margarine, melted

1/2 cup cocoa

3 cups Quick oats

1/2 cup peanut butter

2 cups sugar

1 tsp. vanilla

1/2 cup milk

nuts, if desired

Cook margarine, cocoa, sugar and milk until bubbles from around the side. Remove from heat and add oats, peanut butter and vanilla. Drop on waxed paper and cool.

Oatmeal/Chocolate Chip Cookies...

1 cup Butter-flavored Crisco Shortening
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup white sugar (I use Sucanet!)
2 beaten eggs
1 tsp. Vanilla
1 ½ cup plain flour
1 tsp. Soda
½ tsp. Salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
2 cups rolled oats, uncooked

For options, you can add...½ cups nuts or 1 cup chocolate chips (or Carob Chips) Cream shortening and sugars. Add vanilla and beaten eggs. Sift dry ingredients all together, then add to sugar and shortening. Add oats and nuts and mix together with other ingredients. Bake at 350 degrees until lightly browned or approximately 12-15 minutes.

Sharon Connell's Peanut Blossom Cookies

1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
¾ cup creamy peanut butter
1 tsp. Vanilla extract
2 cups Pioneer Buttermilk Biscuit and Baking Mix
1/3 cup sugar
1 (9 ounce) package milk chocolate kisses
Stir together sweetened condensed milk, peanut butter, and vanilla. Stir until smooth. Add Biscuit Mix, stirring well. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Roll in sugar. Place on ungreased baking sheet. Make an indentation in the center of each ball with thumb or spoon handle. Bake at 375 degrees for 8-10 minutes. After the cookies cool a little, place unwrapped chocolate kisses in the center of each cookie. For fantastic peanut butter cookies, just leave off the chocolate kisses! BEWARE YOU WILL FIND THESE ADDICTIVE!

Creative Packaging for Your Gifts...

Give a mug or tea cup with a drink mix.

Use holiday colored Saran Wrap or use colored tissue paper for wrapping paper!

Purchase (or bum) old newsprint rolls from newspaper office and make homemade wrapping paper with paints, crayons, markers, stamps, etc!

Use old flour, sugar, cornmeal bags as gift bags. Tie with twine or yarn! I love to use these to place homemade cookies or baked goodies in! Try tying a metal cookie cutter at the bow...too cute!

For Glitter Wrapping Paper, just use tissue paper, adhesive spray, and gold, silver or green glitter. Unfold the tissue paper and smooth it out, spray with adhesive, and then sprinkle with the glitter. Let dry before using.

Give Gift baskets with themes...Tea Mix, Tea Pot, Tea Cup, Serviette, and a Book on Tea...Cookie Mix, Rolling Pin, Cookie Cutters, and a Potholder, Apron, and Sprinkles!
Have fun and be Creative!

Package in Different Things: Cookies in a Cookie Jar, Soup in a Mason Jar, Etc.

Quick and Easy Gifts...

Spicy Cinnamon Sticks... Gather a bunch of extra long cinnamon sticks and tie with a holiday ribbon and a sprig of holly or baby's breath. Cute to hang on the tree, sit around, and place on gifts instead of a bow!

Painted Wooden Ornaments... Purchase pre-cut wooden Christmas cutouts that are pre-painted. Tie with gold, green, or red thread and use on the tree or as necklaces. Hot glue a pin on the back to wear as a holiday pin!

Cookie Cutter Ornaments... Purchase metal cookie cutters and tie bright holiday ribbon through the top!
Easy, Inexpensive, and Precious Gift!

Recipe Book... It could be just holiday ideas like this one or it could be a collection of all the treasured family recipes. It could be a collection from all the relatives submissions. Be imaginative! Be sure to keep a copy for your daughters!

Pictures... Frame a special drawing from the children! This is sure to be a hit!

Books... Try your hand at creating books complete with your own original story and illustrations...This is an EXCELLENT school activity!

Handprint Wallhanging or Sweatshirt... Place bright paint in pie pans (acrylic for burlap wallhanging or fabric paints for sweatshirt). Have each child put his handprint on material. The following verse can be painted or attached:

Although we are sorta small
And leave our fingerprints on the wall,
This will help you remember the way
Our fingerprints looked on Christmas Day!

For wallhanging, put a thin dowel rod across the top. Tie yarn as a hanger.
Fringe the bottom, and you have a fun, sweet gift!

At Battle...

“These trials have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold...refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

1 Peter 1:7

I read these dear words on the back of a book by Elisabeth Elliot and my heart began to pound. My friend, Vicki had sent a book that was just perfect for me. She did not know my weary heart. But God did and He wanted to refuel me and get me back ready for the battlefield.

It was a tough time. I was tired. I had just released the book. We had just finished our first semester of school and a busy traveling season. It was December, so we were busily going from this to that which is not like our usual settled schedule. There were parties that we could not miss because often it is the only time to get to see those who mean so much to us. Christmas programs that are such a blessing as they turn our hearts back to Christ. Making gifts from the heart for those who are so dear to us that money cannot buy just the right gifts to demonstrate our deep love for them! This Christmas was full of those things, plus something much more wearing.

I was sensing that heart wrenching, body trembling pain that comes from time to time...grief! I have only had three times in my life that I felt grief this intense...at the death of my best friend, Mamaw Alma Lee, the month I was due to have our Samuel who had gone on to be with the Lord and at this time. You see, it was that one year anniversary of the loss of our dear Mary Grace. Little Mary Grace was with us for only a brief moment, but her life will forever impact our lives. Mary Grace was not the only one of us missing the holidays. There was little Samuel Lee, John Peter, and Martha Ann. Thinking back about them reminded me that Mamaw and Papaw were away from us. The excitement of the holidays was tiring, but I guess the absence of those dear to us and the thoughts of what might have been were wearing me thin.

Just as I needed to take that time during those moments surrounding their death to mourn before the Lord, also had to take this time to renew my mind so I could see from God's eyes gain. I was finding myself a little cloudy again in grief. I have read writing by a dear friend, Mary Woodis titled ***And the Grief Goes On...*** This title describes my feelings that day. Just when you think you have it all down and it won't hurt so much, it comes back. Sure, you grow, but it always hurts.

These Trials...

I was looking down at the words again, ***“These trials have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold...refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*** Yes, my faith is worth more to God than all of the gold refined by fire. It was important for me to go back to battle with the one who was wanting to defeat me through yet another trial of faith. I was tired and weary, but God was giving me His touch of comfort to say that this too, would prove to the adversary that my faith was genuine. It would somehow bring praise and glory and honor to Jesus...yes, others would see Him revealed through the process. Yes, it was back to the battlefield for yet another trial.

I don't know what your struggles are when they raise their ugly head to battle you, but I know that our struggles are not our imagination. They come in all different shapes and sizes. They come at the most inconvenient times! Paul addresses how to handle these days in battle...whether it is weariness from being too busy, weariness from struggles within the home, weariness from carrying the weight of the Homeschool, weariness from struggling through difficulties with your children...

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His Might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6: 10-20

The way we battle is through re-dressing in our armor! In homeschooling, we must remember that we are not struggling with our children, our precious gifts from God. Nor, do we struggle with the call to Homeschool. Both are given to us by God for blessings. Our battle presents itself as we find ourselves not ready for the battles at all. We can be sure that there will be battles sneaking up on us along the way as we seek to train and re-prepare our little arrows to shoot forth into battle for God! Since these are inevitable, we must put on the armor! Our armor is simple, but powerful! We are armed with truth...righteousness...the gospel of peace...faith...salvation...the Spirit, which is the Word of God...and prayer! When the tough times come (and they will!), we have armor that carries us into battle as victors. This was essential for me as I felt the battle raging in my soul!

Truth...

For one thing, I knew God's truth. He had called me to be a godly woman. I knew I was in the center of His will as I accepted the tough times that come from being a godly woman. Godly women will get tired and weary! They are usually those self-appointed martyrs who want to serve and do for everyone at all times irregardless of their own soul's needs! (Oops, I may step on toes here! Maybe my own! Ha!) Homemaking is tough work. It is the ministry that is most overlooked as women glamorize over becoming the next Elisabeth Elliot! It is that quiet ministry that builds others in our family (often unnoticed and unappreciated) so that the kingdom of God is strengthened by the body not just one hand! Godly womanhood sometimes hurts as we walk by faith and yet it does not always turn out just like we think it should turn out! Godly womanhood also means that often we are going to look so different from the ways and traditions of this world

that we find a loneliness that is only quenched by God! Knowing God's truth is essential to battling as an assured victor in contrast to an unsure, wobbly kneed warrior!

Righteousness...

That Breastplate of Righteousness is also totally necessary! We often look at tough times as a spanking from God. If we are to battle as a victor, we must learn the difference between chastisement from God and sifting from satan! The bottom line is our conscience...are we righteous? If we are, we can count on pruning from time to time...but during the pruning we can stand firm because we will know that pruning only results in a greater production of fruit! I feel this sounds like a parable so let's get personal!

I felt that God must have been mad at me or was punishing me if He did not answer my prayer for more children. The most devastating blow was one that felt personal. I had one request of God when I had stepped out in faith to get my Tubal Ligation reversed. I asked God to bless that step of faith and preserve my tubes at all costs. Well, 3 months after reversal, I found myself pregnant! I was elated. This soon crashed as I found myself seemingly miscarrying. If that were not enough, I felt even more forsaken by my dear Lord as we found that my pregnancy was ending due to a Tubal Pregnancy? I could not figure God out? Why would He allow such pain in my heart after I had done as He bid? Why didn't He protect me and give me the desire of heart? Actually, why did my Sovereign and Almighty Lord not step in and do something to change this situation? I battled Him for months. I had dear friends who really did not know how wrong they were, but they would say things such as "The Bible says you will have your womb blessed if you are righteous," "If you just repent from your sins, you would have a fruitful vine," or "Have you ever thought that God may be reproofing you for your sins?" "Maybe it is not God's Will for you to have any more children?" Of course, I had beat myself up with such thoughts! I could not understand what was impure with our family! I remember the defeated feeling coming from those blows. But, God had not spoken yet.

The battle was waging. The words were cutting to my heart. But, they were not words from God. One little moment with God gave me peace in the midst of that trial. His Word spoke differently in 1 and 2 Peter about our afflictions. I found that our perfect example of sinlessness, Jesus Christ, suffered. (1 Peter 2: 21-22)

"For this is THANKWORTHY, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For EVEN hereunto were ye called: because Christ ALSO suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: WHO DID NO SIN..."

Yes, Jesus suffered for our sins! My little mind finally clicked! No! I was not suffering from sinfulness or as a rebuke. I was suffering from righteousness...from conscience. My suffering was part of the race before us!

So often, we forget this in not only personal areas, but in the area of homeschooling. We have a bad day...or a bad year. Then, we think it is time to throw in the towel. We believe, like our dear cheerleading squad says, that what we are doing is not "right" because times are tough! Well, look at this example of Jesus Christ, Himself. The only "right" thing to fix the problem of sin was for Jesus, Himself to come, live a sinless life, and give Himself as a sacrifice for our sin. It took the Sinless One to restore the relationship broken by

sin...but not His sin, ours! The “right” thing did not feel good...was not easy...and was not even His Will. But, it was still right!

What about His Words in John 15?

“I am the True Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it (means to remove what is offensive, cleanse or purify by separating and carrying off whatever is impure, to clarify), that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the Word, which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in The Vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am The Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch (to be cast forth is to be cut off from God’s Power so that they must do it on their own!), and is withered (faded, dried up, shrunk, become dry, wrinkled, decayed!); and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned (in commotion, to feel the excess of the heat, hurt, or injured). If ye abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be My disciples.”

Could it be that tough times have lots of purposes? Some may actually be because we are being chastised. Some may be because we are in the flesh and not abiding in Christ. But, what ministered to my soul is that some may be because we are bearing fruit and God wants more fruit! Don’t allow yourself to be beaten in the battle until you are defeated! Stand in firm with your Righteousness!

Peace...

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace...” This goes along with the other pieces of armor. Our society has a deep need for God’s peace. You know that peace that passes understanding. You can’t really explain it! You may not like the battle waging, but you have peace in the midst like you would in a storm. Why don’t we all have that piece of armor that can bring peace in the battle? I think it is because we are so often given a whop-sided view of Christianity. We are told an overdose of God’s grace, which is sufficient to sustain during every sin, every difficulty, and every battle. We are told of God’s love, which is so deep that we cannot fathom how far it reaches. We are told of God’s hope, which is worth walking every step of our lives in spite of how tough things can get. We are told of God’s future, which will end all of this pain, suffering, and all of the battles one great and glorious day! BUT, we are not told a whole lot about battles, suffering, God’s wrath, long and treatorous races, the narrow path, and the storms of life! In turn, by just a lack of preparation, we are caught by surprise as our enemy catches us unstable, wanting to delay the battle until another day, or totally oblivious to the fact that battles, suffering, pain, storms and just tough times are inevitable.

Let’s look at that verse again...from the Amplified Bible. ***“And having shod your feet in preparation [to face the enemy with the firm-footed stability, the promptness, and the readiness produced by the good news] of the Gospel of peace.”*** The only way we are prepared for battle is to expect for it to come. We cannot do this with a whop-sided view of God and life. We also cannot do it alone. We must be prepared by His Spirit as we learn of the Gospel. This is done as we renew our mind through prayer and Bible Study. Want to stand firm in the storms...those tough days? Stand in the Gospel! Stand in peace firmly rooted in the Word of God!

Faith...

It is nice to know that battles will come, to know truth to help give you strength, to know where you stand with God, to be prepared for battle...but when the fiery darts come to you from the wicked one, you must quench those darts with a shield of faith. We will look at this a little more in a moment as we look at our commitment to Homeschool, but for now let 's look at all of our life... There are many prisoners of war from this Spiritual battle just because of myths and lies and deceptions and falsehoods spread about by the wicked one. We see this in some of what I shared above from my personal battle, but what about Mom at home? So many of us are getting wounded from the little darts of what determines happiness and success for a woman. We look at our husband and just know he is not perfect and could not appreciate us like WE deserve! We look at these little kids (yes, I used that word on purpose!) who do not appreciate one thing that we do for them or any of our sacrifices that are just to make their lives better. We just know that there is something better out somewhere else! Do these sound like little darts that are shot forth with the sole purpose of destroying the fruits of the spirit in your Christian Home? You can be sure they are!

Want to take this to the Homeschool? Well, look at the hindrances to following the direction of the Holy Spirit in our Homeschool? First, we have that myth that we are working toward a diploma or toward college. Why are so many families losing discipleship time for a means toward the end instead of the end itself? What do I mean by that? I mean that the diploma is not the end. College is not the end. God's purpose and calling is the end. Sure, a diploma would help to signify determination, completion, and skills. College may help to qualify a child for their field in which they serve God in His purpose for their lives. But, they are not the finish mark! They are just another turn in the race. Because of this, we do not allow for our homeschools to be centered around striving for the goal of a mere diploma or acceptance into college. We strive toward the goal of godliness and let God take care of details like requirements for each turn in the race!

Another myth...if we follow God for homeschooling, then we will sometime have to get serious about academics and quit playing. I think that this comes again from a misconception of the race. Academics are designed to prepare our children with skills necessary to serve the Lord and the Body of Christ. They are a tiny portion of the big picture. So, should they be in our daily structure! We have found truth in Matthew 6:33, ***“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*** Those who seek academics usually find that at the end of the journey, they have lost all the extra time that they hoped to use to train the character and heart of the child. Those who neglect this training usually find that there is something lacking in the child that seems to keep them from truly internalizing what they are learning. Perhaps it is because God has a different plan from that of the world. He says that knowledge is a “part” of the godly person. The Bible links together three aspects of learning over and over again. They are Knowledge, Understanding, and Wisdom. Mere academics only focuses on one area, the most simple and unfruitful area...knowledge. This is the primary reason that things do not stick with the child. Even here, the myth blinds people from finding what really works!

Another myth is that a parent must have a certain scope and sequence of learning for all children or the child is not taught well. Scripture says, ***“My heart took delight in all my work and this was the reward for all my labor.”*** (Ecclesiastes 2: 10 NIV) The child who labors to please the parent or to fulfill someone else's guidelines for “school” will have no heart for their education nor care about any one area of learning. Their free time will be plagued with boredom, need for entertainment, poor behavior, and aimlessness. There is no wonder! The child is not created by God to be identical to all other children. The child is created with a specific purpose and a specific gifting that will need to be nurtured. I love

Proverbs 22:6 from the Amplified Bible, *“Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.”* Training children in copycat “schooling” may be fine for schools, but the Christian home needs to heed the instruction to train each of their children in the way that God wants for them to go.

Can you see the dart and how it bounces back broken from a simple faith in God’s truth? Every myth and lie from satan will do the same. For this reason, the Homeschool mom will need to constantly renew her mind through prayer and Bible Study!

Salvation and The Word...

Oh, don’t go out to war without your last two pieces of armor! If you are not saved, this may sound very confusing. Or it may make perfect sense for you as you see the need to face the cares of life with some protection! The helmet of salvation and the Sword of the Spirit...the Bible are the protectors of the mind. We must come to the truth of salvation and our need for God before we will be protected. Faulty thinking is inevitable without relying on God. There is instant defeat in the battles of life if we let our minds go unprotected.

The wicked one will yield a heavy blow to your mind by bringing accusations about God that are simply not true. He will bring accusations about you that are not true. He will whisper doubts and fears into your trembling soul. He will come against you at the very moment you lay down your Sword thinking that the battle is over or you don’t have to carry that Sword at all times. He just loves for you to try to fight on your own. Christian Mother, hold on to this part of your armor with all your might. Use it confidently! The days may get long. The battles may get weary. But, if we are faithful to keep on our armor by renewing our minds, we can stand against the wiles of the devil!

The Battle...

What happened in my little tango? Well, the Lord supernaturally evened up the odds on the battlefield. Some more trials came my way. The children broke out with the Chicken Pox...we all got colds...the computer crashed 3 times...and we had an ice-storm. How were the odds evened up with so much more seeming “tragedy” on hand? Well, He slowed me down. He brought me to a point that I knew I needed for Him to renew a right spirit in me and restore my soul. All of my plans were instantly changed by the calamities going on, so I was able to have to spend time at home relaxing, baking, sewing, and spending time building memories with my family. (in other words, time taking care of mom!) Through little things during those days, I felt my strength coming back and my heart fluttering with excitement for the next thing that God wanted for me to do on the journey! I was able to spend time reading and dwelling on His Word, that balm for the weary soul! I found myself prostrate in praise of my Lord Who supplied all my need and handled every thing that caused me to fear.

This was a tough time, so I know that not all of our difficulties end with a total revival of the soul, but this is what is available for each and every soldier who is facing trials on the battle field. Yes, the armor is there for us. But, best of all our Lord is there Who may be praised and glorified and honored and revealed in each of us as we are good soldiers!

Education is a Life...Even for Mom!

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3: 13-14

Is it REALLY January?? For many of us this is mid-year! I have noticed that my steam tends to get less and less this time of year. Please note...MY STEAM...the children are still on the go...BUT my steam is puttering! Usually I notice this post-Christmas! The wear from busyness that is so typical during the holidays seems to get to me especially strong this time of year. There happens to be almost a traditional mid-year evaluation that tends to pump me “back up” so that I can reach forth for those treasures that are before us in the rest of this lap of the race! I know...you are thinking, “But, how do we build back steam when we feel so BLAH and the children are still needing us??” Well, let’s look at some specific ways to bring back LIFE into MOM!

Revival...

The very first thing that we must do to bring life back into the Homeschool is probably very obvious. Mom must be revived! I am not talking about pulling out a big tent and bringing in an evangelist. Actually, I am talking about a much more powerful change. One that is quiet, but renews the right spirit in your soul! Revival actually means to revive vigor or animation...revive strength, force of body, energy, efficacy. When one is Revived, they are brought to re-animation, renewal, recovery, and life. True revival occurs once one is refreshed with joy or hope.

For the Homeschool mom, revival will take lots of quiet time with the Lord. Quiet time re-evaluating her vision. Taking a look at what God wants to do and where He wants to take the family. Quiet time checking to see if the family is progressing heavenward. Although there are lots of homeschooling ideas and lots of wonderful resources available, the mother will never feel satisfied until she finds the direction that God wants for her to move with each of her children. Such joy comes from the simple assurance that we are on the right path. We can’t find that path unless we find God’s vision for our family. This may sound like a lot of work, but it is probably the simplest step in homeschooling. All that must be done to find God’s vision is to find God’s Word and listen to His Spirit through Scripture and Prayer.

Come to the cross. Surrender all! God will take you right where you are. He will give you a revival of Spirit. He will strengthen you, even if you are at your weakest point! He will renew, recover and refresh your weary soul! He will bring life into you!

Re-Commit to Homeschooling...

Why are you teaching your children at home? What do you really hope to achieve by bringing your little ones into your home to learn from you? What do you want to instill in their lives? May I suggest that you start with a Biblical Basis?

We began to build our first home about 4 years ago. Hours were spent planning every detail from materials to the best way to proceed to the costs to the best place to find materials. When we figured the costs, we found that 1/3 of the cost of our home was under our feet. No one could see the inner workings. They could not see the costly pipes that we choose for plumbing. They could not see the cornerstone, which had to be perfectly set if all else were to line up. Everything had to line up too or our home would have fallen with the first shake or wind that hit it! Building on top of old Huckleberry Hill meant that we had to do a lot of ground work to get ready to pour the footings of our home. We could not merely pour the footings on sinking sand. Harold wisely worked to get to the rock to pour the footings upon. Pouring directly onto the rock, gave us a firm and unshakeable foundation. The foundation was hidden work, but probably the most vital work. I would go one step further, we could have re-done any other part of the construction if we messed up, but once the foundation was laid, we were already on the course set by it.

The foundation of the Homeschool is vital to the home that you will be building. Proverbs 14: 1 immediately comes to my mind, ***“Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.”*** I really cannot imagine that any woman would set out with the intention to tear her home down with her own hands. I can imagine that it is quite upsetting to come to the end and realize that one was foolish and has destroyed the home herself, with her own hands. What can eliminate this dilemma? The same things that would eliminate a home not standing in the physical realm! An excellent foundation, excellent materials, hard work!

The best foundation is the Word of God! We find in Matthew 7: 24-27 this same counsel, ***“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”***

To have a proper foundation in homeschooling is critical! You must use materials (your blocks, mortar and fill) that are 100% Scripture! Nothing else will give you the “stick-it-with-it-ness” like Scripture! Try some of these in your foundation of your Homeschool...

Isaiah 54:13...Results from all your efforts!
Deuteronomy 6: 6-9...How we should teach!
1 Timothy 1: 5...The goals of all instruction!
2 Peter 1: 3-8...Virtues to attain for spiritual maturity!
2 Timothy 2: 19-21...How to be ready for God to Use!
Proverbs 29: 15-18...How and Why to Parent!
Colossians 2: 6-8...How and Why to Walk in Christ!
Ephesians 4: 12-15...Why Spiritual Gifts? The Main Thing!
Psalm 1...The way of the godly and ungodly!
Philippians 4:8...Standards for what is taught and what is used to teach!
Jeremiah 1: 4-10...The Call!
Proverbs 22: 6...How to Train and the Promise for Faithful and Diligent Training!
Matthew 6:33...The priority!

Joshua 24: 14-15...Choose Now Whom You Will Serve!
MANY More!

Why a godly foundation? Well, there are many reasons. God blesses those who trust Him and His way! Just when you feel blah or that it is time to breath some life into your Homeschool, you will find that using more Scripture and spending more time finding out what the Bible has to say about what you are learning or how you are learning will breath new life into your Homeschool!

A godly foundation sets things in their proper order. Families are more likely to be restrained from going in too many directions with their activities and their studies. This restraint helps each member to move towards God's individual calling, but that is not all! It also gives a special gift to the family. It gives family unity. The family has ties of mutual interests and time for real relationships! A godly foundation is essential to academic excellence! How is it going for your family now?

A few years ago, we went through some pretty tough days in our homeschool. It seemed that all was beginning to be a burden. All was artificial. How did we remedy this? We simply dropped our textbooks and scope and sequences and began to trust God for HIS plan for our children. We have found that simplifying our Homeschool to a short table time helped drastically. The children do use a Math Curriculum (***Making Math Meaningful***) and texts for their Language Skills (***Hey! Andrew Teach Me Some Greek*** for Matthew's Greek Lessons and ***Simply Phonics*** for Elisabeth's Phonics.) We use the Real Bible for our Bible Study! We use Copywork, Dictation, and Narration for instructing our children in Language Arts Skills. (see our new book for more details!) It is that simple.

Keeping what we do simple has elevated the stress of trying to develop fancy schedules for every year. It has saved us money and preparation time. It has helped for the children to know what is required of them every day. It has taught skills effectively with their complete attention. It has instilled good study habits, which are crucial to further research and higher levels of study. Keeping it simple has actually helped the children to excel beyond their grade level, which keeps their minds fresh and excited to learn more! I think that the simplicity has mostly helped to encourage them to follow God in more individualized study toward their life purpose! Yes, it sure pays to follow God first. You have benefits academically and which pay off spiritually as well!

A good foundation even takes care of other concerns that a parent might have about the social or emotional life of the child. If all is built upon God's ideas and God's priorities for the family, you will find that children will be nurtured in their relationships at home first. They will be free to mature more quickly because they will develop those important relationships with their parents and grandparents. They will have deep ties of family because they will grow with their siblings to become best friends. These relationships will set the tone for outside relationships instead of unhealthy peer relationships setting the tone for relationships within and outside of the home. John Taylor Gatto cries out for children today in his life-changing book, ***Dumbing Us Down***, as he shares, ***"it appears to me as a schoolteacher that schools are already a major cause of weak families and weak communities. They separate parents and children from vital interaction with each other and from true curiosity about each other's lives. Schools stifle family originality by appropriating the critical time needed for any sound idea of family to develop—then they blame the family for its failure to be a family. It's like a malicious person lifting a photograph from the developing chemicals too early, then pronouncing the photographer incompetent."*** You will find

that doing things God's way will eliminate a lot of mistakes while building a strong person who can truly offer our world answers!

Renew Your Goals...

Goals are the LIFE of the Homeschool and the LIFE of the Godly mother! Feel weary and blah? Take a moment to evaluate home...Where are you going? What is your mark? Are you going that direction? IF so, be encouraged! If not, it is time for renewal and redirection! Let's look at my goals as an example for a check-up. If you do not have any goals think about some of these...

Godly Children...Our key verse for the purpose of our Homeschool is found in 1 Timothy 1:5, ***“But the Goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”*** NASV If God is so specific that the goals of instruction are for the student to have a pure heart, good conscience, and a sincere faith, why would I focus on any of the high places of modern education? My main questions are more Spiritual. Is there enough Bible? Children must be immersed in Scripture for spiritual growth and spiritual maturity to occur. Is your relationship with God on track? Are you on fire for God, or are you stagnant and in need of a revival? Get deeper in your walk with God and you whole family will be blessed! Ideas...Start a new Bible Study...Study the Psalms...Listen to Praise Music...Spend extra time in prayer...Read an inspirational book! Academic Excellence...What is going on with lessons? Take time to study education. Re-educate yourself about what “school” is and isn't. Become Homeschooled yourself! Implement principles from God's Word into your Homeschool! Some ideas from Scripture of what and how God wants for children to be taught... ..Teach what God says! (Proverbs 2: 6; 3: 5-6; 9: 9-10; 24: 3-4; 15: 33; Isaiah 48: 17-18; Deuteronomy 6: 20-25) ...Use the Word of God as your Text! (2 Timothy 3: 16-17; Psalm 32:8; Romans 15: 4) ...Teach by Example! (Titus 2: 3-8; Romans 15: 14)...Teach by Lifestyle! (Deuteronomy 6: 6-9; 11: 18-21) ...Teach about what God has done in history and why! (Deuteronomy 6: 10-5; 8: 1-20; Joshua 4: 4-7; 4: 24) Seek for God's Way, be faithful to train them as He directs and you will find direction and blessings beyond measure!

Love of Learning...Children have a natural appetency toward learning in all areas. We can “feed” this desire by slowing down to enjoy learning...reading a really good read aloud...taking time to go for nature walks...so on! Am I instilling a love of learning or destroying those natural appetencies just to satisfy “requirements” or to please others?

An Appetite for the Best...The appetites of my children stem from my appetites. If I love what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, praiseworthy, then my children will acquire an appetite for those things. If I take time to enjoy the beauty in art, music, poetry, literature, nature, and Scripture, then my children will also acquire an appetite for the beautiful! If my children do not have direction from me, they will go unrestrained and accept whatever is offered to them. What appetites are we developing?

Lifetime Learners...My goal cannot be to teach it all! That would be impossible, but many moms wear themselves out trying to attain this impossible goal! Why not reach for a possibility? Teach them skills necessary to learn on their own and instill in them a love of learning! Then, encourage them to reach for self-education. Without self-education, our children will not be prepared to become lifetime learners. Truly, if they do not choose to continue their education for all of their life, even if they have all the how-to's, they

would be the most crippled child...that would be a hole that could not be filled! What does our free time look like? What is the Atmosphere of the Home? How can I make home a "Home Sweet Home?"

Godly Leaders Who Share God's Truth With the World...I love Jeremiah 1: 4-10. When I think of the neat things that God has in store for my children, I think of that passage. As I do, I think of my role in these years to live a life of ministry before my children. The evaluation comes as I check my heart's motives...as I check to make sure we have enough margin in our life to take time for real life ministry along the way...as I make sure that my children have opportunities for missions in their daily lives today!

Instruction that focuses on each child's giftings and talents and nourishes and directs them toward their calling... If I am to train my children according to Proverbs 22:6, our home must allow for them to practice using their gifts and talents. They must see me use my gifts and talents in real life. Are we nourishing and equipping them to find ways to use their gifts and talents at all times? Are we setting the pace by living before them real, sincere, practical Christianity? Are we letting their education be individual, shaping them toward their life purpose? Are we living out our life purpose before the children?

Re-Charge...

Well, we have looked at several areas that really affect the life of Mom. Perhaps, this has triggered some thoughts of areas that are needing a re-evaluation in your own life! Perhaps, we have not even looked at your struggles. Take a look deep within to see what it takes to bring life into the mid-winter blahs! Maybe you need to take some time for Bible Study. Maybe it is just a nice tea party that would do the trick. Maybe it is a long, hot bath with a cup of hot tea and some Mozart playing gently in the background. Maybe it is a nap! Maybe it is an afternoon with a friend while the children play dress up. Maybe it is an upbeat book with lots of humor to get the chuckles out! Maybe it is a few moments of time studying education and planning. Take time to take care of Mom. Education is a Life...not just for the children! Yes, Education is a Life... Even for Mom!

Worldviews...For Such a Time as This!

He was just a little boy. He would grow to become a mighty and very powerful leader. They knew it! That is why he was one of the “certain” children to be chosen for an educational program just perfect for re-training the elite! Everything he had been taught of his parents would be undermined. He would be taught the ideas and tongue of a people with a different view of life! How did he fair? Much better than many children, because he was firm in the Worldview of his parents. Even though this little boy was taken away from his childhood home, he “purposed in his heart” to stay true to the training of his parents! By doing so, he changed the culture around him...and went down in history!

Who is this marvel? I am sure that you have guessed by now that this young person was none other than Daniel. Let’s go to Daniel 1: 3...

“And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes; Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and of Azariah, of Abednego. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”

Let’s go back in time here! God’s people had seen mighty works. You know many of them...the calling of Abraham and the mighty leading of God in his life...God’s work in the lives of the great men such as Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph...God’s protection of His people by taking them into Egypt during the great famine...God’s deliverance of His people from the great and mighty Egyptians...the wanderings in the wilderness and God’s provision of their every need...and finally the entrance of His people into the long-awaited Promised Land of Canaan! Daniel lived his life around the time of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah spent 42 years preaching, warning, pleading, and trying to wake up the nation to no avail! Jeremiah had warned his people that unless they repented of their sins and turned back to the Lord that great judgment would befall them. As we enter the time of Daniel, we find that all of Jeremiah's fears were realized. His people were invaded, conquered and taken into captivity by the mighty Babylonians...the Holy City of Jerusalem was completely destroyed with many of the most precious treasures (including the children) taken into the palace to be defiled by King Nebuchadnezzar.

What on earth does this have to do with our day and time? Well, perhaps I will never write a more difficult article in my life. I believe with all my heart that God is preaching, warning, pleading, and trying to wake up our nation to no avail! We have had the riches of availability of the Word of God...freedom to worship as we please...prosperity unlike any time in history...yet, our nation has turned away from its God! We are much like people of Jeremiah/Daniel’s time. Take a look at Jeremiah 2: 11-13... ***“Has a***

Nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols. Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror, My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, (Looking toward human traditions and human ideas...the human “god” of education!) and have dug their own cisterns, (their own approaches, ideas, and philosophies rather than going to the source of LIVING water!) broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

Much has occurred the last years in our culture. The erosion of our culture as we know it has finally come to catastrophic proportions! We find that all areas of our life as we know it have somehow changed from our traditional way of life which was centered around God’s values or more commonly known today as “family values” to a culture centered on Government and institutional life. Every year, I see more and more families pouring out of the public schools, not real sure what is wrong...but, knowing that it is not working anymore.

What has happened? Our Nation has changed its god! Our people have exchanged their glory for a worthless and empty way of life! We have refused to go to the Spring of Living Water for all our sustenance. Instead, we have dug our own cisterns, which cannot even hold water, much less keep us going as a people!

It is time for the remnant of God to get real serious about their faith. I have felt a deep, urgent need within to go beyond my basic teaching of skills, delight-directed studies, and basic daily discipleship with my children to freshly prepare my children anew to live in a new century...one devoid of the Christian worldview. One of the things that the Lord has quickened in my heart and soul is the need to prepare my children to be such children that they could purpose not to defile themselves regardless of the temptations...that they could stand firm in their purpose come what may...even possibly martyrdom. I feel such a sickness in my soul. I fear that it cannot be contained in mere words. The seriousness of the task lying before our children...the great evil building up around us in the light of the one world government we are currently living in...the grief that fills your heart as you think of the fiery furnace that our children must pass through to try their faith...the yes, more than a possibility of our children facing martyrdom, almost an assurance that they must if they will be found faithful. This all brings me to my knees in humble prayers that God will help me to use these days wisely to prepare them to stand for Him come what may!

We can easily look back to the story of Daniel and see the wickedness of Babylon. We can certainly understand why he did not want to conform to the ways and foods and ideas of Babylon! But, it is quite different to look at our culture and purpose to not conform. After all, we still have the words “In God We Trust” on all our money...and well, it could not be that bad to let our children be exposed to the real world as long as they minister to others...right? Wrong!

David Quine wrote in his awesome book *Let Us Highly Resolve*, “*The objective was to replace the thoughts and ideas he had grown up with as Truth with a complete set of new ideas. His heart and mind were to be conformed to the thoughts and ideas, to the Laws and Customs of this new country.*”

In the last 150 years, we have seen a battle waging for the hearts, souls, and minds of the children. It has been a public battle, but the church has gone to sleep! Asleep in the midst of the battle! Yes, asleep! Wooed to sleep by the Enemy himself! Battle? Sure, the battle was on when John Cotton declared, “*Take the Children!*” Compulsory Education, the means to take the children, was resisted vehemently by the parents. John Taylor Gatto wrote, “*It was resisted—sometimes with guns—by an estimated eighty percent of the Massachusetts population, the last outpost in Barnstable on Cape Cod not surrendering its children until the 1880’s, when the area was seized by militia and children marched to school under guard.*”

(sound like Daniel's story here?) The ideas of the parents could never be changed to accept a one-world "utopia" but the children were another story. It would only take 4 generations later to get to our generation...now what do you think about tomorrow's generation?

We have gone to sleep. The Christian Worldview is no longer distinct in our culture. Even the dearest Christians are unable at times to separate Truth from the Opinions and "Reasoning" of our Culture!

What about us? What about our children? Would our children be able to "purpose" not to defile themselves? You know Daniel was so pure that he would not even defile himself with food and drink! Are our children prepared to remain firm in their convictions? Do we even dare to be different enough today that they would be any different by their convictions? Are they so firm that they are willing to suffer unknown circumstances rather than move from their convictions? Are they so firm in their Worldview that they could withstand the teaching of another Worldview possibly without access to the Word of God...and still stand firm? Are their hearts fixed upon the One True and Living God?

I prayed for six months for the Lord to give me a Scripture of His purpose for our ministry. He recently gave me the awesome verse found in Colossians 2: 2-8...

"My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (My Goal, My purpose is to encourage you in heart and encourage you to be united in love and come to understand God more fully! But, why?) I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."

This is a time in which Truth is perverted by fine-sounding arguments...hollow and deceptive philosophy...human tradition...and basic principles of this world as never before! It is very difficult to really discern Truth in the midst of all the voices! But, we must not only discern Truth but we must instill it in the heart, soul, and mind of our children!

I went to a retreat a while back. Mary Glynn Peoples was the key note speaker. She shared many things that have shaped my life and ministry, but one thing sticks in my mind as I consider times such as this. She said that in our culture, you could liken our lives to the great big ocean. I must agree. The waves are raging and beating down upon many. The storms are torrential and wearying! She said that just as an island in the midst of the ocean catches the eye of the weary, the worn, the needy...so, we must purpose to be an island in the midst of our culture! Isn't this beautiful? We should catch their eye as we are the ones carrying the banner of Truth! She asked us to commit to being islands in the midst of the roaring ocean.

What do you think? Interested in becoming islands? Islands which bring relaxation from the trials...answers to the seeking...God's wisdom to the reasoning...rest to the weary...love to the hurting...truth to the deceived...salvation to the lost?

There has never been a more important time to become serious about our calling as the Body of Christ. It is vital that we forsake the pressures to conform to the traditions of our Babylon. We must determine today to teach our children God's view of life! We cannot afford to sleep...to continue in the busyness of our world to the detriment of lost souls...to avoid responsibility...to resist the call to true discipleship...to walk past the hurting while hurling our judgments about them...to wound our dear servants...to continue dissension in the ranks...to lose our focus! We cannot afford to be distracted during this time in which God wants for us to prepare our children to stand firm in His Purpose for them in our culture! What shall we do for our Lord? Shall we begin in our homes? Shall we go back to the Bible for God's View? Yes, let's answer to the call to train our children in a Christian Worldview! We are here for such a time as this!

Education is a Life: The Presentation of Living Ideas!

“‘Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life.’ In other words, we know that parents and teachers should know how to make sensible use of a child’s circumstances (atmosphere) to forward his sound education; should train him in the discipline of habits of a good life and should nourish his life with ideas, the food upon which personality waxes strong.”
Charlotte Mason (*School Education*, page 182)

Educating children at home is the perfect opportunity to afford children with a real, living education. We can arrange the circumstances...the atmosphere of the home...so that the child is able to learn most effectively at all times. We are able to know the child so well that we are able to train habits that affect every area of their life. And yes, we have the awesome responsibility of nourishing the child, not just physically, but mentally as we present a “diet” of living ideas.

Ideas? What could we possibly mean by presenting our children with a “diet” of living ideas? It is said that all children, as well as all adults, need a generous “diet” of living ideas each and every day! Ideas are the “life” of the person...and of the home. They insure growth in the hearts and minds. Ideas insure delight in studies. They are the ties that bind relationships with the past and between people today...including family members! Ideas diminish boredom, which easily inhibits the atmosphere and discipline of the home. Ideas feed the heart, soul, and mind of the person. Yes, Ideas are a vital part of a real education.

Just where do we find Ideas?? We find them person to person! Charlotte Mason says, *“Apparently no one has power to beget an idea by himself; it appears to be the progeny of two minds. So-and-so ‘put it in my head,’ we say, and that is the history of all ideas—the most simple and the most profound. But, once begotten, the idea seems to survive indefinitely. It is painted in a picture, written in a book, carved into a chair, or only spoken to someone who speaks it again, who speaks it again, who speaks it again, so that it goes on being spoken, for how long? Who knows!”*

Ever noticed how with just a few moments a child seems to pick up “ideas” from other children? Or how about a few moments of reading...have you noticed how the child picks up vocabulary and thoughts of the author...how they are challenged to greatness or influenced to poor behavior? Or how about music...ever seen how it affects each and every person within its contact...whether it lends the soothing atmosphere that comes from a few moments of listening to exquisite Classical Music...or whether it brings chaos by listening to music that brings an air of confusion and distraction?

Ideas are not explainable. They are everywhere! They influence the moods, the aspirations, the inclinations...they permeate society! Perhaps this is because they are communicated in so many ways. Charlotte Mason wrote, *“Education is a life. That life is sustained on ideas. Ideas are of spiritual origin, and God has made us so that we get them chiefly as we convey them to one another, whether*

by word of mouth, written page, Scripture Word, musical symphony; but we must sustain a child's inner life with ideas as we sustain his body with food."

Sustain LIFE with ideas? But how? Ideas nourish the heart, soul and mind. Ever seen dullness in a child...an adult? All minds, regardless of age or current abilities, enliven with a good steady diet of living ideas! Boredom is chased away...delight begins to develop...and purpose is found! All with a good, steady "diet" of living ideas!

First Things First...Getting to Know the Child!

Charlotte Mason said, *"We must know something about the material we are to work upon if the education we offer is not to be scrappy and superficial. We must have some measure of a child's requirements, not based upon his uses to society, nor upon the standard of the world he lives in, but upon his own capacity and needs."*

In our world today, we find that children are seen as no more than animals. Behaviorists have convinced us that children are to be trained, but their plan is much different for the "training of children" than the plan of our Lord. They see children as no greater than our household pets. They do not take into consideration that God made children different from animals. He made them in HIS image and breathed LIFE into them. This likeness of our Father makes us different from animals. Thus, our needs are much more different.

All children come to us curious...in deep need of ideas to feed their heart, soul, and mind... and with abilities to learn. Actually Charlotte Mason said that we find them, *"with intelligence more acute, logic more keen, observing powers more alert, moral sensibilities more quick, love and faith and hope more abounding; in fact, in all points like as we are, only more so; but absolutely ignorant of our world and its belongings, of us and our ways, and, above all, of how to control and direct and manifest the infinite possibilities with which they are born."* Our challenge as parents is to continually supply our children with an abundance of ideas which challenge their minds...help develop their character to become more like Christ...and help them to understand the world about them. So how do we do that? By including the Presentation of Living Ideas into their daily "diet!"

The Presentation of Living Ideas...

Since Ideas are presented to us so that we are fed in mind, spirit, and soul, we find that we are given two areas of life in which to present living ideas. Those areas include the Spiritual life of the Child and the Intellectual Life of the Child.

God has created us with the need to be nourished both spiritually and intellectually. Perhaps, the greatest error in parenting is the neglect of one of these areas. It seems to me that conviction without moderation is the primary culprit leading to this neglect. Let me explain...Parents may be convicted about the deep need of Spiritually Disciplining their children to the detriment of preparing children intellectually for their calling in life. On the other hand, far too many parents become convinced that children must be prepared intellectually to the neglect of the Discipleship of their children to God. We can do both! We can train our children

Spiritually and Intellectually for God's Glory! Yes, as we seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness, all of these things are added!

Ideas of the Spiritual Life...

It is essential that we begin with a firm understanding of the complexity of the child that we are working with. God has made the child so that each one of them can learn of Him in various means. Susan Schaeffer Macaulay shared in her book *For the Children's Sake*, "“We have tolerated a separation between the ‘secular’ and the ‘religious.’ The people have had to close their minds to all other aspects of life and intellectual questions when they entered the ‘faith’ box or that of ‘experience.’ It is as if they were called upon to leave philosophy, literary questions, art, social questions, historical views, political action, science, and so on in a sort of mental parking lot outside the ‘religious experiences.’ True Spirituality covers all of reality...the Lordship of Christ covers all of life and all of life equally. In this sense there is nothing concerning reality that is not spiritual.” Because of this, if we want to experience True Spirituality, we must re-draw our map of reality. Because our culture has embraced the Humanistic Worldview and the New Age Worldview, we often find that Christian parents seem to close off aspects of life that must be understood if we are to understand God completely. We close off many areas of life that are intended by God for our pleasure in this life.

We must see that God is Lord of All. We must use every area of our life to teach our children about God and His plan for our lives. We must live lives of discipleship. Discipleship provides for both the Spiritual and Intellectual needs of the child. Discipleship is a walk that uses every opportunity in life to point our children back to God. Discipleship is a walk in the abundant life that God has intended for our growth and pleasure!

In Deuteronomy 6:6-9 we are given instruction for how we are to disciple our children, ***“Here, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 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 gates.”***

Ideas about God and Spirituality are not to be left to chance. We are to diligently teach them to our children. We find all throughout Scripture that in every case in which parents were not diligent in passing the “torch” to the next generation, that there always arose a generation who did not “know God” and “did what was right in their own eyes.” We are given the challenge to present ideas of God to the next generation. We must do so deliberately.

Presenting ideas of God includes much more than merely taking children to church. In order to present ideas of how God really is, we must disciple our children daily in all areas of life. This includes daily time in God's Word (privately and as a family!)...Living a life of prayer (as you go along the way!)...Being a family of praise and worship of our Lord (yes, enjoying in true gratefulness the little ways that God provides for you and your family along the way!)...Living a life of ministry to the world around you (yes, ministry in YOUR life today...at Walmart, the library, in traffic, in your home...rather than waiting to go to Africa!)...And even studying other areas of life that are commonly

“boxed” out due to a lack of understanding those areas from a Christian Worldview (we will get there in a moment!).

If we are to present ideas of God, we must be faithful to diligently teach of Him as we go along in all areas of our life! This will bring the understanding that will train up a generation that seeks to know the very heart of God! This will develop children with a passion for serving our Almighty God at all times and in all places in which they find themselves! This will pass the “torch” to the next generation!

Ideas of the Intellectual Life...

One of my favorite quotes by Charlotte Mason comes from her book *School Education*: Developing a curriculum (page 170-171), *“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.”*

The first aspect that drew me to the ideas of Charlotte Mason was her emphasis on using real literature as curriculum for teaching children. Little did I know that her ideas went much further than using “books” to educate children...she believed in giving them direct contact with REAL people past and present who loved learning...whether by firsthand contact or through their creations. This made sense! It was simple...it was natural...and it was effective! This soon became part of my philosophy of education.

How do we most effectively present ideas of the Intellectual life? Well, here are some brief suggestions...

Value the mind of the Child...

The minds of children feed upon real thoughts without a need for our meddling. By meddling, I mean that children are able to absorb ideas with very little explanation, lecturing, or sermonizing on our part. Their minds are actually dulled as adults expound on ideas, which are easily assimilated into the minds of children without the explanation of our wearying “lessons.” Children are equally limited by the constant “babying” which we are too likely to do because we do not have a true respect for their minds!

A funny, yet very true example, of the devaluing of the minds of children is given by Charlotte Mason in her book, *Home Education*, in which she shares a story of a three year old child’s objection to the “entertaining” conversation that so many adults believe children to enjoy! She says, *“Indeed, I am inclined to question whether, in the interest of carrying out a system, the charming Kindergartnerin is not in danger of*

sometimes greatly undervaluing the intelligence of her children. I know a person of three who happened to be found by a caller alone in the drawing-room. It was spring, and the caller thought to make himself entertaining with talk about the pretty 'baa-lambs.' But a pair of big blue eyes fixed upon him and in a solemn person made this solemn remark, "Isn't it a dweffful howid thing to see a pig killed!" We hope she had never seen or even heard of the killing of a pig, but she made as effective a protest against twaddle as would any woman of Society. Boers and kogjes, Russians and Japs, Treasure Island, Robinson Crusoe and his man riday, the fight of Thermopylae, Ulysses and the Suitors—these are the sorts of things that children play at by the month together; even the toddlers of three and four will hold their own manfully with their brothers and sisters. And if the little people were in the habit of telling how they feel, we should learn perhaps that they are a good deal bored by the nice little games in which they frisk like lambs, flap their fins, and twiddle their fingers like butterflies."

I saw this with my children this past fall. (You would think that I could have learned this principle by now!) A friend of mine recommended *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis for my personal reading. I remembered dabbling in that book back 5 years ago only to have to return it to the library much too quickly! So, I decided to buy it for my occasional indulgences. Well, this is what I thought that I would do. My children begged me to read it to them as well. I was reluctant because the story is an allegory of the warfare behind the scenes in every Christian's life. I was not too sure that the children would be able to understand the deeper meaning behind the story. I was actually concerned that they might get things confused since God is considered "the Enemy" and Satan is the "Father" of the key characters of the book...two demons.

Well, well...I must say that reading aloud this powerful little book has been yet another lesson to show this simple mother that God can use all means, especially great literature, to teach our children about Himself! I had once again, unsuspectedly undervalued the intelligence and spiritual discernment of both of my children! Even tonight as we finished our nightly read aloud time, I was astonished as they narrated back the passage read and shared personal applications from their own lives! Truly children are not only capable of absorbing great thoughts...but, they need a constant "diet" of living thought to challenge them to grow, just as adults do! Truly children respond best as we value their awesome minds!

Give Children a Steady and Full "Diet" of Living Ideas!

Children have an "inborn craving" for living ideas! Charlotte Mason said, "*We forget that the child has inborn cravings after all we have given him. Just as the healthy child must have his dinner and his bed, so too does he crave for knowledge, perfection, beauty, power, society; and all he wants is opportunity. Give him opportunities of loving and learning, and he will love and learn, for 'tis his nature to.*" So often these opportunities for real learning are crowded out of the lives of children. It is our responsibility as parents to find the culprits, which hinder our children from having opportunity for loving and learning.

One of the primary culprits is the "almighty scope-and-sequence." Many times it does not appear to parents that the "scope and sequences" which dominate the lives of public school and private school students, and very often homeschooling students as well, are determined by those who have never chanced to meet a child nor seem to care that God has "individual scope and sequences" for each and every one of His dear children. Scope and sequences are not even standard across the various curriculums or among the different states.

I cling to several verses that have elevated many of my fears that arise as I think about the onset of High