

School and all the many “demands” of diplomas, college entrance requirements and SAT Scores. 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.”***

This verse serves as a constant reminder that each and every child has a specific calling in the Body of Christ. This is the priority as I train my children. The priority is to train them in the way that God wants for them to go and in consideration of their own specific gifts and bents. This would be impossible to do if I were to pursue the world’s “scope and sequence” to the detriment of the “scope and sequence” that God has placed in my heart for each of my children. God has been so faithful to show me His desire in training up my children.

He has given me a vision for His awesome plans for my children in verses like Jeremiah 1:4-10...

“Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Behold I cannot speak; for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”

God has a very big plan for my children. He wants for my children to be trained up in His Truth...little different from what is taught in “schools” eh? He wants for my children to be prepared specifically to become leaders of tomorrow who are useful to root out, pull down, destroy, and throw down the works and ideas of satan that are ruining our culture. He wants for them to be prepared in such a way that they can rebuild and plant for the Kingdom of God. The question I face is whether or not what I am doing is preparing my children for God’s purpose? I can be assured as I walk step by step by God’s leading that I am preparing my children with the best training available for them as I simply pass on who I am...as I pass on my gifts and talents...as I show my children each and every day what true Spirituality really looks like! As I encourage them to follow the gentle, quiet voice of God!

I cannot relax to train my children according to God’s gentle and quiet voice unless I cleanse myself (and ultimately their lives too) of what is impure. 2 Timothy 2: 21 in the Amplified Bible says... ***“Whoever cleanses himself [from what is ignoble and unclean, who separates himself from contact with contaminating and corrupting influences] will [then himself] be a vessel set apart and useful for honorable and noble purposes, consecrated and profitable to the Master, fit and ready for any good work.”***

This cleansing must begin with parents before we may be free to train our children up in the way they should go. True cleansing begins as we surrender all of our weighty fears and cumbersome burdens to God. As we go to the cross emptying out all “self,” we are free to relax and follow His direction by faith. We are able see things from God’s eyes. We become free of the hindrances to loving and learning that are placed unduly upon our heart, soul and mind by the traditions of the world.

Another culprit which hinders our children from loving and learning are the constant distractions. We must purify our home of all the distractions that inhibit us from having enough time to give our children a steady and full “diet” of living ideas. Distractions vary from home to home and from season to season. We

have fought distractions such as too much going, too much emphasis on housework, too many phone calls, too much time on the computer, too much socialization, too much television, and even too much time on busywork in our school lessons. These distractions must be eliminated if we are to simplify our life enough to have time and opportunity to present living ideas to our children.

Even with all the freedom to teach children as God leads...or with our lives free of distractions, we will not “naturally” afford opportunities for our children to come in contact with real, living ideas unless we make it a priority to do so. Quite frankly, it is hard work to set aside time in each day to share ideas with children. I know the value of doing so. I feel convicted that this is one of the most important aspects of training my children. Yet, the only way to bring ideas into my home is to set a priority to balance each and every day with skills and beauty, which brings true education into my home! Sure, we have the daily disciplines that establish good personal, spiritual, and study habits. But, we also need to have daily feeding of our hearts, souls, and minds with a steady diet of ideas from all areas of study...from literature to art to music to nature to poetry to discussions to relationships with others to life to love to heroism to history to geography to astronomy to travel to Scripture! The only way to instill these ideas naturally is to set a priority for daily feeding our hearts, souls, and minds with Ideas!

Give Direct Contact with Ideas...

Just as I have shared over and over in this article, ideas are communicated mind to mind. The natural tendency of parents is to protect their children from direct contact with strangers. This tendency seems to spill over into the area of education. While it is our responsibility to protect our children from harm, often we do more harm to our little ones as we point out the morals which we determine should result from careful study. If we are not guilty of that, we at least try to direct the thoughts and ideas of our little robots...I mean, children...as we instruct our little ones in our opinions or illustrations which simply bore our children and dull their mind. Yes, we do much harm as we step in to attain the lofty position of “fountain-head or source of all knowledge” for our little disciples!

While parents are commissioned by God to command, indicate, stimulate, direct, constrain, and encourage, they are not effective in discipling children through much talk or expounding of knowledge or thought to the children. Parents have a tendency to take too much upon themselves in the education of the child. Whereas there is great responsibility in the education of children, there is great freedom in allowing children and great thinkers to have direct contact.

What mother would not delight in having Robert Louis Stevenson come to spend the afternoon Tea-time with her children? Can you imagine the delight in every one present as the children sipped their cups of Tea and nibbled on their delicacies while Mr. Stevenson shared his wonderful poetry? After Mr. Stevenson shares his delightful poems with the children, we could be joined by Rembrandt. He would present his enduring print, *“The Raising of the Cross”* just sitting back to see the delight, intrigue, and weeping that results from “looking” back in time to the Crucifixion of our dear Saviour. Person to person he would share with the child the pain of Christ...and sadly our part in the crucifixion. Time with Rembrandt would bring us to our knees in deep repentance of sin and praise of our Lord and Saviour Who can speak to us through many means...even the paintings of a dear saint!

What about inviting Haydn to the Tea-time as well? He might joyfully share with your children his thoughts, which would forever lighten their spirits every time they heard his music. He would say, *“God gave*

me a cheerful heart, so He will surely forgive me if I serve Him cheerfully.” He would challenge the children to greatness, as he would share of his experiences in his life. He might tell them of how difficult times often were...but when he found it hard to persevere in the midst of tough times that he would often hear something whisper, *“There are but few contented and happy individuals here below; everywhere grief and care prevail; perhaps your labor may one day be the source from which the weary and worn, or the person burdened with affairs, may derive a few moments of rest and refreshment.”* He might become one of your favorite “substitute teachers” as he would inspire your children to become original by sharing with them the secret to his greatness...*“I was cut off from the world; there was no one to confuse or torment me, and I was forced to become original.”*

If Tea-time were not full by then, we could always invite C.S. Lewis to tell stories that would help us to “truly” see the great truths of Christianity. Or, we could take a walk outside with another guest, Jesus. He could walk alongside of us bringing to our attention the “little” things that He made especially for our delight and pleasure!

Oh, dear friends...this is how beautiful education can really be within the home. We have the awesome blessing of being able to introduce our children (and often ourselves!) to the greatest minds of all time. We can do so in the comforts of our homes. Sure, we glean intellectual ideas. But, we learn much more in the process! We learn what it is like to become a family as we build memories, tie strings of mutual interests, learn from a wide and varied “curriculum” written by the greatest minds of all time...all over tea Or hot chocolate, if you please!!

You know those concerns of just “who” we allow to influence the minds of our children?? We certainly must be careful for ideas. In *School Education*, Charlotte Mason shares an enlightening statement, *“Every habit we have formed has had its initial idea, and every idea we receive is able to initiate a habit of thought or action.”* Because of this, we do have to be careful which ideas are presented to our children and how they are presented to their tender minds. I am thankful that we can relax since we are there to “monitor” those “relationships.” We are able to give our children a taste of righteousness and a distaste of unrighteousness. We are able to study along with them teaching them the difference between truth and error from a Biblical Worldview. In fact, we can use these opportunities while our little ones sit at our feet to teach them that all ideas have consequences. It is during our time together reading or listening to music or studying art prints or walking about in nature that we are able to teach our children to discern the importance of actions and how all actions and habits are shaped by ideas!

This is a powerful ministry as we explain along the way what God has to say about areas of concern. But we need not feel that any one area is to be avoided just because it is an intellectual pursuit because we know that *“In such ways the great thoughts of great thinkers illuminate children and they grow in knowledge, chiefly knowledge of God.”* (Charlotte Mason, *Philosophy of Education* p. 65)

Give Daily Feeding in Well-Rounded Meals...

The biggest benefit that we have experienced as we have implemented the ideas of Charlotte Mason in our Homeschool has been that we have finally been able to balance a well-rounded education in simplicity! I liken it to improving our “diet.” We no longer only stick to eating our “curds and whey,” because we are now able to have a vast array of “mind food!” It is really neat to see areas that were neglected when my husband and I were educated in our public schools. Although we each were able to

pursue some of our interests, we were limited in our choices of extras. Because of these limitations, I never had one course on music, art, foreign languages, poetry, or nature study! My education was simply filled with the basics that would prepare me for “college.” Of course, I “experienced” the joys of cheerleading...dances...boyfriends...and chemistry! In wasting this time of my life, I came up very ill-prepared for my calling in life.

You will laugh...but, I remember calling my mother the first week I was married to take down notes on how to boil an egg! OK! Stop laughing! This is the typical student “prepared for real life in the public/private schools” of our day! Either the “desert” is the focus of the years in school...which actually ends up being a mirage...no one is truly nourished by the “sweet” things of “school!” Or, the “collards/turnips” are the primary food as “studious” students prepare for the big event...COLLEGE! Very rarely are students afforded the many “courses” that feed the mind, soul, and spirit to overflow! Our children can be given a good, nutritious meal for their minds with many varied “courses!”

Children need daily “nourishment” of all types of “ideas” for their growth! They need Great Literature...Fine Art...Soothing Poetry...Beautiful Music...Captivating Nature...Deep Discussion...Quiet Time...Relationships ...Life...Love...Duty...Heroism...Living History...Geography... Astronomy... Ideas of all areas of life!

This can only be obtained as we simplify our life to set aside time to present living ideas to our children. It will take time for children to digest great books. It will take much time and sacrifice to put our children in direct contact with people who are passionate about areas of their interest! It will take time for children to dig for knowledge that will remain “theirs” for all their lives! It will take time for us to move past the “curds and whey” to give our children the very best “mind-food” available!

Charlotte Mason said, “*It is not too much to say that a morning in which a child receives no new idea is a morning wasted, however closely the little student has been kept at his books.*” I would say that no matter how closely a child is kept at books, an education is wasted if the child is not fed a generous diet all throughout his education. May we redeem each and every moment with our children so that they may be fed daily in mind, heart, and soul!

Gladys Hunt wrote in her book *Honey for a Child’s Heart*, “*As Christian parents we are concerned about building whole people—people who are alive emotionally, spiritually, intellectually. The instruction to train up a child in the way he should go encompasses so much more than teaching him the facts of the gospel. It is to train the child’s character, to give him high ideals, and to encourage integrity. It is to provide largeness of thought, creative thinking, imaginative wondering—an adequate view of God and His world. He can never really appreciate the finest without personal redemption. But many a redeemed person lives in a small insecure world because he has never walked with God into a larger place, which is His domain. We have books and The Book at our disposal to use wisely for God’s glory. A young child, a fresh uncluttered mind, a world before him—to what treasures will you lead him? With what will you furnish his spirit?*”

Yes...before you is a child. A fresh, uncluttered mind...a whole wide world before him...to what treasures will you lead this dear one? What will you provide for his need for constant nourishment? Will you present to your child real, living ideas? Will this child live the abundant life that God can offer to him? Education is a Life! Well...Real Education is an Abundant Life!!

Choosing Resources for Read Alouds...

There are often a multitude of opinions and voices giving thoughts and ideas about which books are best! It can be so confusing! Here are some ideas to help make choosing books and using those books practically painless!

- **Make It Simple!** Find something interesting that YOU may want to know and understand more fully! Read! Enjoy! That is all there is to it!
- **Look for the Best!** The best books are usually those old goodies that have stood the test of time! Dig out your favorites from your childhood! Hit the antique stores looking for the older treasures! The oldies are certainly the REAL GOODIES!
- **Look for Life!** Twaddle is empty and void of life! Most textbooks of today are mere twaddle. Want a great read aloud...look for stories that are full of life! It may be living history...or it may be living literature...or it may be an art print book! Go for the LIVING books!
- **Don't judge by size or shimmer!** Great books cannot be judged by appearances! The greatest books can be slim or thick...shiny or old and musty! My favorites are the "old, try and true" with copyrights before 1900 's! Take a peak inside to see if you can find literary power!
- **Look for Books that bring you to look at past and present ideas!** Ideas will build character and feed the mind! Enjoy books that keep us in touch "with great thoughts by which the world has been educated." As you look at the past, you are able to gain understanding of our present! This adds depth to your Homeschool!
- **Let Children Dig!** Charlotte Mason recommended that Children DIG for their knowledge for two reasons... *"What a child digs for is his own possession"* ...and, *"ideas must reach us directly from the mind of the thinker, and it is chiefly by means of the books they have written that we get into touch with the best minds!"* Let them get direct contact with original resources and turn them loose to DIG!
- **Teach children how to USE BOOKS...**Charlotte Mason said that *"until they have begun to use books for themselves in such ways (narrate, outline, analyze, trace cause to consequence or consequence to cause, discern character, perceive how character and circumstances interact, get lessons of life and conduct, get knowledge which makes for science, write their own questions from the passages), they can hardly be said to have begun their education!"* Whole books are great for building real study skills which are the basis for a complete education! Instead of requiring children to practice skills in a dull drab workbook, let them practice their skills of spelling, composition, and creative writing springing from a wonderful piece of literature!
- **Don't limit read alouds to teaching the skill of reading!** Children need read alouds beyond their level from early ages. Even more so, they will need the gift of family reading! The tendency of parents is to read aloud to children only until the children are able to read for themselves. OH! Don't stop then! Read to all your children...all their lives! I dream of the treasure it will be when my children bring my grandchildren to gather around my fireplace to read aloud! This makes reading aloud a heritage not just another subject!
- **Balance life to make TIME for Read Alouds!** Reading through books takes a lot of time! If we are to have time to really enjoy the gift of family reading, we must balance all of our day! We cannot spend too

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much time on busywork...errands...or other time wasters (TV, Telephone, Too Much Computer, Too Much Socialization!) We must make it a priority to have a set time each day to travel to lands far away...without distraction!

How 'bout it? Painless enough? See? Reading aloud is a fun and easy way to teach our children painlessly! Reading aloud is a treasure that is too rich to be passed by! Happy Reading!

The Process of Learning...God's Way!

“But the GOAL of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” 1 Timothy 1:5 NASV

I will never forget the day I ran across 1 Timothy 1:5! I had just finished my first year of homeschooling. We had enjoyed a year of becoming re-acquainted with one another. The year before we began homeschooling was the first year I had worked outside of the home since before Matthew was born. That year reaked-havoc on our lives, so you can only imagine the changes that had to occur that first year of homeschooling to bring my heart back into conformity with God's great plan for my life! I spent the year in God's Word, in deep prayer, and intently seeking His Will in my life. It was perhaps one of the greatest years of change because it was the first year in my life that my heart could safely come home to rest in my calling!

Sounds as though there was very little focus on education...that is exactly right! The focus was actually on reviving my soul for the great calling. Looking back that was God's main purpose for that year. As my heart came home, I also began to notice that some weeds had grown up in my children. Their obedience had to be established firmly that year. The whole year was spent beginning the process of true discipleship shared in Jeremiah 1: 10, *“to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”*

I came to the end of the year having taught some of the basic skills to my son. In comparison to the time that we had spent “re-doing” and mending relationships severed by the interference of my career, I felt that “teaching” time was much too small and must be much different for the upcoming year! I began to re-evaluate what we had been doing that was working...praying for direction to go...and studying ideas of how children could best be taught. I was in for a big surprise!

One day in my quiet time I ran across a passage that would change our entire direction for our Homeschool...1 Timothy 1:5! I read those dear words, *“But the GOAL of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”* WOW! I was shocked! Could God be any more specific? He had a goal for all of the instruction (religious and intellectual) for His children! The surprise was in what that goal consisted of! I had always read about how God wanted for us to be in the world but not of it...of the race that was set before us...of how we were to fight a good fight, not being distracted as we battle...of how we were to train up our children in the way they should go and that they would not depart from it...BUT, I never considered that these and many other Biblical principles could relate to the education of my children. I never imagined that God would be so specific in His commands, goals, plans, and process of learning!

I read this passage, my first thoughts were that God never mentioned things that appear to be the focus of those thinking about education. He did not say that He wanted for instruction to prepare children for SAT tests...for diplomas...or even for college! His goal was for a high standard of Godliness!

Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines Goal as *“the point set to bound a race, and to which they run; the mark. Any starting post. The end or final purpose; the end to which a design tends or which a person aims to reach*

or accomplish.” God’s goal is for His students to end, reach or accomplish three things...having love from a pure heart...having a good conscience...and having a sincere faith! In other words, God’s goal was for His children to mature and grow in Godliness...to become like Christ. The only way possible to reach this high aim is to seek to have a process of learning that is also established by God Himself! To have God’s Scope and Sequence for reaching the mark!

For a look at God’s Scope and Sequence—His Process of Learning, let’s go to 2 Peter 1: 5-8...“...***Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.***” Quite a different Scope and sequence huh?

The typical Scope and Sequence is usually concerned with one and only one thing...gaining knowledge! Every aspect is shaped around cramming in as much knowledge as possible. The focus is on getting through as much content as possible. There is little or no concern for whether the student retains what is taught or whether the child gives any thought to the information. The focus is on how much the child can learn and how fast they can do it! There is a strong danger in focusing on knowledge alone. In 1 Corinthians 8:1, we find that ***“Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.”*** The word “puffeth” reminds me of those puffing fish...not a lot of substance, actually afraid and defenseless, but puffed up to look big!

I remember that pride/puffing up as I was graduating from High School. I knew everything! Likewise, I was not very loving OR wise! It took time until I learned the secret that it was not grades or completion of my study that determined real wisdom and real happiness...it was much, much more!

Ecclesiastes 2:11 says, ***“My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.”*** The reason that my knowledge was empty, was that it was not my work...it was the work of my teachers and textbook writers. I scratched my head in confusion about the value of my education until I realized that my entire education was only supposed (God’s purpose...not really that of our teachers!) to teach me the skills to learn so that I could begin the process of real education! The process that would enable me to fulfill my purpose in the kingdom of God. The delight had been stolen from me as we never completed the process of learning. I had 12 years of pouring in of knowledge...bits and pieces that I did not relate to or care about. This process was constantly shortened so that I ended up with a facade of education instead of a real education! I had no genuine interests...no purpose (beyond wanting to make money and maybe one day have a family!)...no plan for my life!

This is exactly what happens as we shorten the process and look for a shortcut that is easy and generic! God knows of our desires in the flesh for a shortcut to the learning process! He knows that our flesh wants ease and fast results...even with our children! Ease and fast results may shorten the process, but the fruit is much different! Sure, I had an “education” but was it a real education? No! It was a shortcut that hindered the process of maturity. Shortening the process always is a short-change! It inhibits discernment. The person does not give thought or challenge the validity or truth of ideas! Shortening the process decreases the retention of knowledge over time. A person might be able to remember the information for a test, but it has no real impact on their life. The most frightening fact is that it does not take too long for a person to discern that getting the facts correct is more important than thinking or expressing thought! A short process, placing

importance in knowledge alone does not benefit a person in the least! The person comes out empty...without direction...without understanding and wisdom!

God's Plan...

God's plan is much different! His plan is good and has good fruit! As we look at God's plan, we find that His plan is a tri-fold plan (Knowledge, Understanding, and Wisdom) toward developing maturity in His child! Each of us needs maturity for our life purpose! God reveals His purpose for maturing His people in Ephesians 4: 12-15. He says that Spiritual gifts are given...

“For the perfecting of the saints (yes, these little saints as well as those of us older saints!), for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (The goal is to become like Christ, Christ is THE STANDARD, not the church or others! So, we are becoming LIKE Christ...not like a “good” Christian...a preacher...a Sunday School Teacher...a good homeschooler! Just like Christ!) ***That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*** (Another Goal...they will KNOW what they believe...and will not be carried about by what they reason or think among ourselves or by false teachings!) ***But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”***

God's perfect plan...His Goal is for each and every one of us to use our giftings and talents to edify (To build; instruct; improve the mind in knowledge...moral and religious and spiritual...in faith, and holiness; to teach or persuade to build up in Christian knowledge; to improve the mind.) one another as we grow up in Christ. As we attain knowledge and understanding and wisdom, we do so to help others to mature in Christ! The purpose for our learning is for us to be equipped to come along side of others along the way heavenward!

As you can see, God's perfect plan for maturity does not merely focus on learning a bunch of facts! God's plan begins with each of us just as we come to Him! We come in deep need of salvation! We are all sinners, living in death and condemnation. ***“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified (declared innocent...righteous!) freely by His grace through the redemption (purchase...buying ack...rescuing from sin and its punishment!) that came by Christ Jesus.”*** (Romans 3: 23-24) ***“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*** (1 John 1: 8-9) The greatest gift that we give our children is to teach them of sin and the penalty of sin in their lives! We cannot go forward in training our children Biblically if we do not first teach them of sin...of the glorious payment of the penalty for their sin...and of the free gift of salvation!

That salvation begins by Faith! Romans 10: 9-15 says, ***“...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard?***

And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel, and bring glad tidings of good things!” What a tremendous responsibility we have to share the gospel with others, especially our children! Not just any gospel, Romans 1: 17 says, *“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith, from first to last, just as it is written, “The Righteous will live by faith.”* Yes, teaching this Gospel of Faith in Christ must be a priority in each and every Christian Home.

Where is the priority in most families? When training up children, the first thoughts are in training up of habits, intellect, and behaviour. Without true regeneration of the soul, there is no permanent change! There is no purpose! There is no satisfaction in life! We are created with a deep need that can only be filled by coming to Jesus Christ for salvation! We may try to fill that need with many distractions, including the pursuit of knowledge, but that need can only be filled as we come to Jesus! As we come to Jesus in faith, we begin the process toward real maturity...real education! This is the same process for all...including our children!

Let’s go back to 2 Peter 1: 5-8...*“...Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Knowledge alone is unfruitful, barren if we are not growing in the process God establishes toward maturity!

Yes, we are to give all Diligence (common at the beginning of salvation!) to add to our faith-- Virtue (High Standards), then Knowledge (intelligence), then Temperance (being able to control oneself...self-control...habits!), then Patience (Being able to endure...to persevere...to be steadfast!), then Godliness (Piety...True, Real, and Sincere Christianity), then we are ready to minister to others in love! Ministering to others in Love is where we are going!

Our purpose in educating our children is not to see them do well on SAT tests, which can only measure if they are able to answer questions similar to the standard, typical student in traditional schools of our government! God-forbid that a Christian child be brought up to think and answer questions similar to those trained in Humanistic Government Schools! Our purpose in educating our children is not to give them a mere diploma, a piece of paper stating completion! God never speaks of children or adults ever “completing” their education in this world! Our completion will be that glorious day when *“we shall know fully, even as I am fully known!”* Our purpose in educating our children is not even for our children to be accepted, attend, and graduate from the “college” of their choice! These are standards of our world of which God requires His vessels to be cleansed of... *“Whoever cleanses himself [from what is ignoble (ignoble meaning dishonorable, evil, common... Common means average, standard, traditional, familiar, conventional, customary.) and unclean, who separates himself from contact with contaminating and corrupting influences] will [then himself] be a vessel set apart and useful for honorable and noble purposes, consecrated and profitable to the Master, fit and ready for any good work.”* (2 Timothy 2: 21...Amplified Bible).

Training up our children is not focusing on the standards of our world around us! Instead, training up our children begins by introducing our children to God. Training them includes teaching them of how special they are to God! It includes teaching them to call sin--sin! (A rarity today in our culture!) Training entails

showing them forgiveness...how God forgives us of sin and requires that we live lives of forgiveness toward those sinning against us! Training up our children includes teaching our children skills that help them to use their Spiritual Gifts to build God's kingdom! Training our children is training up our children in the way they should go...not in the way of the world!

Way they should go?

God has established His plan for Real Learning. That plan is a process not a curriculum! Let's take a look at "the way" or the process for Real Learning. The Process of Real Learning is tri-fold. Let me explain this process.

Just as we see so much focus in "schools" on Knowledge. This is actually the first stage of learning! Notice First Stage rather than The Entire Process! This first stage includes Collecting Knowledge or Ideas. This is the stage that a person gathers information on a topic...looks for answers to their questions...studies in-depth on a subject...collects information/stuff on a topic...learns to label data/stuff. Later on a person in the beginning stages of learning a new topic would study intensely on a subject or apprentice with someone to learn a new topic. If you will note...one difference in this stage between God's Way and the typical way of "schooling" children is that the student labors for himself and moves beyond this stage toward understanding and wisdom.

Let me give you a "picture" of this stage of learning. I am currently learning about Herbs. I am interested in two aspects of Herbs...growing/harvesting my own herbs and using herbs for medicinal/culinary purposes. Being "One-of-black-thumb-and-many-dead-plants," I am in the beginning of the process of learning about herbs. I have selected many wonderful and trustworthy resources (books/friends/family/television programs) on the how-to's to help gather information on the subject. I bought seeds and a few plants last year to begin my garden. Through trial and error, I have developed questions about this topic that will bring direction in collecting more information from books/friends/family/television. As I learn more, I am digging deeper into the subject looking for more how-to's that will preferably help me with trouble spots!

This brings me to the second stage in the process of real learning. This is Understanding. It is during this stage of the process that the learner begins to process knowledge. Processing knowledge involves thinking it out...finding a place for information...discerning...figuring out how things work best (or not so well!).

Back to my study of Herbs...Learning how-to's would be very shallow without Understanding how they grow...discerning what would contribute to better yield...figuring out why some herbs grow differently...thinking out how each herb could affect the growth of others...learning how to use each of the herbs in a variety of ways...figuring out which herbs will not grow well and why...deciding which combinations/amounts are safe for each of our family members...so on. This is the stage that all the information begins to become "my own" information. I am able to Understand and Discern my own way of doing things...from how to make the herb garden, to how to cultivate the herbs, to how to use all the herbs properly! This is the stage that I make my plans for the optimum health of each of our family members! This is the stage where I test out all of the different ideas for growing and using the herbs.

I must state here that just as with any study of any topic, the first two stages always take the longest. The common error in educating children is that we are conditioned to expect learning to take only moments or at

the most a few short days. The children are expected to be interested in what is introduced, take in just the snippet given, and spit out the answers desired of him from the parent or worse yet, curriculum guide. This contributes to shortening the process, but at the detriment of real learning. Real learning occurs when one “owns” or “possesses” the knowledge in knowledge, understanding and wisdom! This takes years...many years for it to occur in its fullness! The less time involved, the less benefit to the student.

Charlotte Mason said, *“Children must labor.—This, of getting ideas out of them (books), is by no means all we must do with books. ‘In all labour there is profit, ’at any rate in some labour; and the labour of thought is what his book must induce in the child. He must generalize, classify, infer, judge, visualize, discriminate, labour one way or another, with that capable mind of his until the substance of his book is assimilated or rejected, according as he shall determine; for the determination rests with him and not his teacher.”* She continues to say that Narration is the best means for assimilating as she says, *“The simplest way of dealing with a paragraph or a chapter is to require the child to narrate its content after a single attentive reading,—one reading, however SLOW, should be made a condition.”* Yes, narration is one form of teaching children which seems to have a hidden power within which makes the process of learning much quicker. I think this is because the child has to dig for what they get. Their minds are fed with ideas which naturally bring questions to their minds...as they continue to read/listen, they find answers to their questions...then, they communicate their knowledge and understanding by narrating orally about what they are learning. They dig up great ideas directly from great minds...make it their’s...then, they are ready to communicate great ideas themselves!

Charlotte Mason said, *“I think we owe it to children to let them dig their knowledge of whatever subject, for themselves out of the fit book; and this for two reasons: What a child digs for is his own possession; and what is poured into his ear, like the idle song of a pleasant singer, floats out as lightly as it came in, and is rarely assimilated. I do not mean to say that the lecture and the oral lesson are without their uses; but these uses are, to give impulse and to order knowledge; and not to convey knowledge, or to afford us that part of education which comes of fit knowledge, fitly given...ideas must reach us directly from the mind of the thinker, and it is chiefly by means of the books they have written that we get into touch with the best minds.”*

The temptation comes as the teacher is pressed by expectations of others to shorten this process in order to help enable introduction of much information. This is done in many harmful ways. The process is often shortened by eliminating the search for ideas or thoughts. In many cases, the children are merely given snippets of information stripped of ideas that they are to memorize and spit out on tests or examinations. This material never creates a relationship with the child because it is devoid of real, living ideas. The child cannot relate to the information because it does not require the child to do any work beyond surface scanning or at the most, short-term memorization. The student does not seek out information because all of the information deemed important is spoon-fed to the child. This results in shortening the process to “spoon-feeding” mere brute facts that are to be memorized for the “test” which only determines right answers, not understanding or ability to apply the knowledge gained. This process does not give the child time to care about the subject or look for ideas or information which are of personal interest and enjoyment. The child is not required to get into the minds and thoughts of others. Memorization totally eliminates the process of thinking it through...discerning and challenging thoughts and ideas...reaching their own conclusions...or finding a “place” to hang the information! This shortening of the process dulls the senses to only figuring out the “right” answer instead of enjoying the pursuit of knowledge, understanding and wisdom.

Shortening the process never yields the fruit of the third stage of Real Learning...Wisdom! As the student completes the process of learning, we find the fullness of Real Education, that of Relating to and Communicating the Knowledge and Understanding gained in order to help others to understand and glorify the Lord. This stage requires much Knowledge and Understanding. It is the “test” of all that has gone into the person! Granted that all information may not result in a life message or a book, but all information contributes to the wisdom of the individual. Any study will result in some form of application or communication about the information and understanding of knowledge. There are many ways of Relating and Communicating Knowledge/Understanding to others. One means is Narration, as discussed above. Other means are doing whatever you learned about, discussing what you think/believe/understand, Journaling, sharing what you are learning, completing a project, teaching what you know, writing (books, booklets, how-to’s, research) about “your” subject...so on.

Back to the Herb study...there are many ways beyond a mere “test” that I could demonstrate my knowledge and understanding on this topic. I pray that I will be able to grow and use herbs for our medicine, tea, and dietary needs, as well as, to enjoy the beauty added by a variety of herbs in our yard. I could demonstrate knowledge and understanding by discussing, sharing, teaching or writing about herbs. I could directly show others what I have and will learn. I could practice what I am learning in my own yard/kitchen. Just knowing my love for writing, I will probably write articles/booklets/or a book about an area of special interest in the field of herbs...probably my biggest area of interest, infertility/pregnancy uses! The one thing to note is that this has not and will not occur over-night! As matter of fact, I do not feel “qualified” to write on this subject now even though I have spent the last 5 years studying about various herbs which are best for the certain conditions of health that our family faces most commonly. This will just take a lot of time and study!

Now...let’s take this into the Homeschool. It is vital to understand the process of learning based on Scripture. For one thing, God created humans. He knows best how real learning occurs! Another thing, God has a specific plan for each child. He knows how each specific person must progress to work toward their calling! Finally, God does not function according to the world’s Scope and Sequences. He bases the process for each person upon His premise that **“precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little.”** (Isaiah 28:10) Never does He run ahead or lag behind...He trains the individual all along the way! God also bases His plan upon seasons. There are indeed seasons in which children will learn most naturally. We don’t have to struggle or fret, we can focus on exactly what our child needs to learn today or what the child needs to prepare for the next season of their life or ultimately for their calling! Is it behaviour?? Math?? Phonics?? Bible Study Skills?? Writing?? We don’t have to try to teach all that they NEED to learn today or ever! We can rest knowing that as we teach **“precept upon precept...line upon line...here a little, there a little”** that God will lead and bless us all along the way! We do not have to settle into one way or one “set” curriculum for teaching our children. We can use all ideas from all approaches or curriculums that will work for this season...we can also use what works for the next season without being limited by locking into “systems!” We can pursue delightful studies based upon the interests of each of our individual children...caring about their love of learning more than any “system” or the opinions of those who simply do not know or care about our children (or our God!)

Yes, we can rest as we trust God in the area of teaching our children! As we do, we will find more fruit. We will find children who not only learn...but they delight in learning! There will be much less stress, confusion, burden in your heart, soul, and mind! You will find rest and purpose in your life! You will find that God’s promises will be well worth the effort as you find your child loving from a pure heart...having a

good conscience...and a sincere faith! You will be part of training up the children in the way that God has called for them to go. Is this your desire? Well, Jesus says ever so tenderly,

“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.”

Real Education...

Charlotte Mason Style!

We have experienced a surge of interest in the tried and true educational methods and philosophy of an educator from the late 1800' s...Charlotte Mason. Her tender, gentle manner of teaching children has not been lost in the past...it is experiencing a “revival” in Homeschools, Private Schools, and even in the hearts and minds of public school teachers which takes her ideas into the 21st Century! This article gives you a brief introduction to the method and philosophy of this dear woman. May you glean many ideas from this wisdom of yesterday!

Education is An Atmosphere, A Discipline, A Life...

Miss Mason summarized her approach in the simple phrase, “*Education is an Atmosphere, a Discipline, a Life!*” This summary includes three key teaching tools that Miss Mason used with every student she taught. These teaching tools are the foundation for all of her work. They were the secret to the Real Education that Miss Mason brought to children of all classes, religious persuasions, capabilities, and interests.

The first teaching tool is that of Atmosphere. Charlotte Mason believed that children were of great worth to God. She felt that children should be free to learn and grow to maturity in an atmosphere of acceptance, value, respect, nurture, serenity, contentment, and stability. She believed that the home atmosphere was the center of a Real Education. She shared that the Atmosphere of the home should be relaxed, stimulating, positive, and enjoyable. The home should be inviting, warm, and filled with opportunities to learn at all times!

The second teaching tool in the Charlotte Mason Education is that of Discipline. In the 6 Volumes written by Charlotte Mason, one-third of her writing detailed the importance of habit/establishing good habits. Truly, the most critical aspect of teaching is the formation of good habits. The responsibility for formation of habits in the children is ours...the parents. Children constantly form either good or bad habits. They will either form attentiveness, concentration, truthfulness, self-control, unselfishness, service, excellence, obedience—or restlessness, wandering minds, dulled senses, non-thinking, non-communication, failure, discouragement, disobedience. We, as parents must make the best use of our time to instill the habits of a good life.

The third teaching tool is Life...or the Presentation of Living Ideas. True education takes place in real life. When we begin to see all of life as a classroom, we will truly equip our children to become self-educated, life-long learners, who delight in learning! In order to do this, we must teach our children how their education relates to real life. The artificial classroom experiences stunt the growth of their minds. Their minds deteriorate without the stimulus of ideas. Charlotte Mason believed that children need to feed their minds on the best intellectual food—God’s Word, Great Literature, Fine Art, Beautiful Music, Real Living History, and direct contact with Nature!

She taught that children needed direct, real life contact with those real, living ideas and that when the

children were given the best “mind-food,” they could glean directly from the mind of the author/artist the ideas presented, formulate their own questions, and find answers directly from the work presented to them.

How-to Implement...

These ideas may sound great...but how does one implement them into the home? Here are some quick ideas to help you get started. For more details, take a look later in this book!

Use Whole Living Books...There are multitudes of wonderful books that can be used to teach children their school lessons. The problem presents itself as we find that we have limited time with our treasures! Because our time *is* limited, we must be very selective about our choices. Choose to read the best books available on each topic! Charlotte Mason felt that books written by individuals passionate about their topic were the “mind-food” that our children crave! She eliminated textbooks in favor of whole entire books, first-hand resources, classics, and biographies. Textbooks, busywork and activity branches must be pruned in order to have time to truly enjoy whole, living books! Give the best! Give the children a direct relationship with the best authors/artists/composers instead of just having a nodding acquaintance with them...you won't be sorry!

A Different Approach to Teaching Language...I call this Language Arts...The EASY way! Miss Mason substituted Narration (retelling what is read), Dictation (writing down what is read to you) and Transcription (Copywork...copying directly from books) for tedious Language Workbooks or Grammar Lessons. Because the lessons include seeing good models of writing, the students do not need formal grammar lessons until older (around 4-8th grade...even at that age we have found informal lessons will suffice). They are able to learn the art of writing by modeling after great literature. This method is an easy, natural way to encourage young writers. Don't destroy their natural inclinations toward Language when you can choose an easy, natural and effective method proven throughout history!

Short Lessons...Short lessons have several benefits. They encourage children to develop the good habits of attentiveness and excellence—in quality and neatness—while preventing the contrary habits of dawdling and sloppiness. Lessons are completed early in the day, usually before noon, leaving afternoons for leisure and *real learning!* For children, this means running, climbing, yelling, exploring, building. This also means time for working alongside of the parents, practicing instruments, nature study, handicrafts, chores, family business or ministry, visiting lonely relatives/neighbors, cooking, sewing, so on. This adds depth to the lifestyle of real learning! The children know exactly what is expected of them each day. They get their academic work done promptly and correctly so the rest of the day is free for natural learning so common in the average home centered on real learning. These short lessons also eliminate the need for homework while giving the children plenty of time for real life and relationships!!

Time for Humanities...Short lessons have another added benefit. In most schools, the children are kept so busy with tedious repetitive lessons that they never have time to be exposed to humanities...much less come to love Art, Music, Poetry and Fine Literature. Art, Music, Poetry, and Literature are vital for a well-balanced life *and* are a vital aspect of a living education. By presenting only skills, we starve the child and ourselves of beauty, emotion, and understanding. We need not do this. Instead, we can begin introducing and studying the humanities while our children are young and forming their personalities. They should be given the best...the excellent. Betty Carlson in *The Gift of Music* has said, “*The more we acquaint ourselves with that which is truly great and beautiful, the more we will dislike and turn away from that which is shallow*”

and ugly.” This captures what Charlotte Mason encouraged us to lay before the child—that which is great, beautiful, and truly excellent.

Inspire with Ideas...The emphasis in our society has moved from encouraging people to think, reason, and discern—to now accept, feel, and conform. This was not so in the Charlotte Mason Education. Children were inspired to really think. They were encouraged to enjoy knowledge for its own sake rather than for grades or artificial recognition. Miss Mason felt this was best taught as we inspire them with Real, Living Ideas. You can do this by simply putting them in direct contact with great minds via great literature, art, music, and history. Miss Mason encouraged parents to give their children at least one new idea each day. She did this by introducing them to a wide and varied curriculum including all forms of human (and divine!) expression.

Reach toward Self-Education...This education may seem overwhelming, but there is a key toward attaining this ideal education. The key is Self-education. Charlotte Mason believed in equipping the child with skills needed for self-education. Self-education meaning that the child learns the skills of researching, relating to, and responding to information for himself. The child gains learning skills, which move the child to independence in learning. The child is not dependent upon the teacher to gather, pre-digest, and teach the material. Instead, the teacher directs the child toward the carefully chosen words of the author, leaves the child and the author alone and then allows the child to respond to the information by various means (narration, discussion, demonstration, or creating a product to communicate their knowledge). Self-education begins the process of building life-long learners.

A School Day in a Charlotte Mason Homeschool...

So, what does this education look like in the home? There are as many applications of the Charlotte Mason Approach as there are families. There is *no* right or wrong way to implement these ideas...just take these wonderful ideas and implement them *your own way!* That is just what we have done...our own way!

In our home we have implemented a well-rounded plan for our lifestyle of learning. Our plan includes seven aspects of a Real Education. Come join us as we walk through our typical day in our Charlotte Mason Homeschool...

Quiet Times...Our days begin with each family member having his/her own personal quiet time. This is not pre-determined by me. Each member of our family spends their quiet time based on their own abilities and preferences for study and worship. The one thing that is determined as a standard is the set time and the respect for the quiet time of one another.

Chores...Usually each family member rolls on into this aspect of our day as they finish their Quiet Time. Because our quiet times vary in time, this was the next logical time for our day. The children are expected to do their portion of the chores. They feed their animals...help to clean the house...help with maintenance of our vehicles...etc. These things are usually checked over while everyone gets ready for our “table time.”

Table Time...This is the time each day that we teach the skills necessary for our children to learn on their own. We have short lessons in Bible Study/Bible Memory, Reading, Writing, Latin/Greek, and Math. These lessons are based on their individual abilities and speed rather than on any certain grade level. We have found that having a set time each day with set expectations has helped our children to work independently at

earlier ages...become responsible for their own individual progress...and develop an enjoyment of these often tedious studies!

Family Time...Our family time is at a different time of the day than many families. We have to finish our work early in the day so that we can enjoy our morning and early afternoon with my husband. I used to wonder just *why* my husband would not help me teach “subjects” that I “deemed” as important. Well, it was because he had much more important things to teach than a mere textbook! He has the responsibility from God to teach my children **WHO HE IS**. This is perhaps one of the most vital lessons taught in our home. He teaches many skills that only he could teach, but that is not enough to “educate” our children in the way that God wants for our children to be educated. He has to teach his love for God...his life story/message...his wisdom...his knowledge...his understanding. There are so many lessons that are more vital than a mere subject and those lessons are taught in our moments with him. This time usually frees me up somewhat because often my children spend time with my husband while I catch up on my responsibilities. I have been amazed to see the abilities of my children at such young ages...but it all comes from “catching” who my husband is...what a family is like...and who we are as a family!

Productive Free Time...This is the time that our children have free each day to pursue interests, hobbies, and studies that they would like to pursue on their own. If you were to come into our home, you would find our children doing a whole host of things that they enjoy. Our typical day is a mix of anything from observing and studying nature to writing books to helping dad build/fix things to sketching prints studied in our picture studies to “dancing” to Classical Music to climbing trees to playing dress up to re-enacting a war to running to playing to doing crafts to practicing instruments to extending hospitality to our extended family and friends...so on! These things may not seem like “school” but they are actually the most productive times of learning for our family!

Ministry...This is one area of our lives that has afforded the most opportunities for our children to be trained up for their callings. Although we do primarily minister in many obvious ways, we also take great delight in the little acts of service that are less obvious and what I would call “quiet ministry.” This includes making cards for the sick...praying for those on our hearts...taking meals to those in need...smiling at and encouraging those who are weary and worn along the way (gas station, grocery store, bookstore, library...so on!)...sharing hand-me-downs...offering hospitality...carrying books/boxes/etc...pushing shopping carts into stores...cleaning the house so mom can have more time to write/bake/sew for others...so on. The ideas are unlimited! Our training ground for our little “missionaries” is within our own home. This training needs to be a part of every day life for all committed Christians!

Family Reading...This is one of our most treasured times of the day! Actually if you were able to come into our home during this time, you would consider this one of the most “quaint” times of our day. We usually do our family reading right before bedtime. Because I have a personal **LOVE** for tea and coffee time, we usually have a ritual of making up hot tea or mocha coffee or hot chocolate along with some light snacks. We curl up with our steaming cups and goodies while we take turns reading our Daily Bible Reading selection, next chapter of our Read Alouds (we alternate between Classics, Biographies, Stories, Fables, Animal Stories, etc...), and cuddle up to share observations and thoughts about Art Prints. This is such a special part of our day...yet, the time that we “cover” all the things that I desire for my children to study before they are grown!

This ends the typical day in **OUR** Charlotte Mason Homeschool! Perhaps, you can gain a glimpse into the riches of this approach “revived” from this dear woman. The approach and philosophy of Charlotte Mason brings gentleness and freedom into educating children toward their callings in life. The ideas of this dear lady live on because they are built upon premises that are as old as time. Truly, we can agree that Education *is* an Atmosphere, a Discipline, and a Life!

Relationships...Ahhh, Marriage!

Just a short 6 days ago my husband and I celebrated our 13th wedding anniversary. No pomp...no circumstance...no fireworks...well, except when he kissed me good morning! I get kinda mushy as I reminisce over the memories that we have shared in the last 15 years. We have walked together through good times and bad...through sickness and health...through change and adversity...and through all the growth that is inevitable for High School Sweethearts growing up together.

As I think about our marriage, I think it is amazing that another human being could love me so completely...even when he *knows* me! We have grown through the years in a love that goes beyond any words that can be written on a page. Truly our relationship is a beautiful picture of God's plan for man and wife that originated in Genesis...the beginning!

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord GOd formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: and she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

How are you doing? This marks the end of another year of homeschooling. Are you cleaving more to your spouse than you were at the beginning of the year? Are you “one?” Are you truly answering the call for which you were created?

Believe it or not, we were not created to HOMESCHOOL our children! This statement would have taken my breath eight years ago as I began the journey to train up our children by teaching them at home. My children were my life. I had spent all my time at home as a homemaker up until the year before we began to homeschool. I loved the simple things about being a woman. But, that year I went back to work to pursue the career that I had left behind as I came home to have children. I had never completely left that career behind. It was always a desire in my heart to have MY career. I had intentions all along of going back to work when the children were older and in school so I could have MY life!

All of that changed as I began to homeschool. A series of events brought me home, never to look back at the life of the “career woman”...facade that it is. For the first time in my life, I felt that I had purpose and a “real” profession that could bring true joy and fulfillment while storing up eternal rewards...the real profession of parenting!

The only “hole” in this profession is that it was child-heavy and missing a link! At the end of that first year of homeschooling, I looked at this incredible man that I had married only to think to myself, **“WHO IS HE??”** I had spent the year getting to know God in a depth that has forever changed my life...I had finally learned to relax and enjoy parenting as never before...but, there was one thing that was needful! There was one area of my life that was not complete...my marriage!

Sure! We were friends...we talked...we enjoyed our home and family...we enjoyed one another...we rarely had any disagreement. The problem was that **all** that I could think of was the children...lesson plans...goals for their education...what was for dinner...so on! I began to feel a little...well, let’s get honest—REAL discontent that Harold was so uninterested in homeschooling and all that my life consisted of that I found myself thinking that we had very little in common. Sure he cared...but he rarely had ANY ideas or insights! To be real honest, I “felt” that he was neglecting his responsibilities mandated by God because he had so little interest in our homeschool lessons and plans.

It was during that time that the Lord laid on my heart a gentle conviction that I needed to **love** Harold...just love him, and let God teach me a lesson in this. Are you pawing at the ground to see whether the Lord socked it to him or to me? ha! Well, it was **much** different than I had planned. God taught me that there was something more important than all of the lessons I could teach my children...or of all the goals that we could set for our family...or of all the things that we could decide to buy! Instead, God taught me of His number one priority...that one that led His Son to die for me on the cross...the priority of relationships!

As we go back to this passage in Genesis, we find that God saw a great need in His perfect creation. Adam had it all. Health, wealth, prosperity, daily communion with God, sinlessness...well, all but one thing. He was alone.

In all the creation, God saw that every single thing was good but one thing. **“It is not good that the man should be alone.”** We are not talking about a man who was not seeking God...or that was living outside of God’s Will...or that was not going to God as his “all in all.” We are talking about a man in the very presence of God with a deep need...of a help meet!

As I read this passage, this is the part where I begin to have a pattering in my heart. I automatically go back to the days of my youth. Remember that verse in Genesis 3:16? Of course, women do! They think about the curse of sorrow in conception and child bearing...oh, and that ugly word **S-U-B-M-I-S-S-I-O-N!** But, I think back to my single days and about my desire for a husband! **“I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”** I was so lonely and so incomplete before I met Harold. I had no purpose in my life. I was aimless. There was an emptiness that was a deep grief until that blessed day that I first saw him! I knew immediately that this was my “Prince Charming!” He was everything that I always dreamed of! Oh, yes! I did dream! Tall, dark, handsome, dependable, consistent, hard working, and even a Christian...hoot! Even 13 years later...my heart races!

I happen to know that I am not the only one who has had this desire! If we are all honest, this desire is inborn in us...it is simply the way that God has created us! Even my daughter has always had a desire for her husband to be! When she was just three years old, she “entertained” our family during her birthday dinner with a question that did not **really** entertain me because I saw something deep within her that reminded me of myself...she asked those tender words, “Daddy, will you get me a husband?” Harold answered her, “Yes,

darling.” My dear daughter went back to eating in contentment and rest...she knew that her Daddy would take care of her now and even later when the time came to give her to “her” Man...the one she would one day complete as a help meet.

There is often a false teaching in the church. We are not taught that we are created so that we may “complete” our men. That we are created specifically for that purpose. We are that missing part of their being...their rib! Instead we are taught to become adulterous, even if it is spiritual adultery. Got your attention? Well, as we are taught that serving God and using our gifts are for the *glory of the church or to parent our children*, we are taught a false teaching which often leads to a very dangerous form of adultery...spiritual adultery. You know this sin because one looks to “another” for direction...for evaluation...for explanation...for teaching...for affirmation...for counsel. One tries to look good, be good, “do” for, and to build up. The efforts are always to take care of everyone and everything except the husband, the one we are created especially for! If this were in the physical sense, one would have no doubt that adultery was going on...it is when the heart commits spiritual adultery that many more of us “godly” women fall!

I remember reading a few years ago an article that brought deep conviction to my heart. The author wrote about her tendency to look everywhere *except* to her husband for direction. She would read books for direction...go to her pastor for direction...ask her friends for direction...go to her mother...and even pray, oh pray her own little way! One day God convicted her about this tendency. As I read this, God spoke to me about my tendency to have my “needs” met everywhere but at home in our marriage relationship! I looked to everyone *and* everything *except* my head...my darling husband! I was “doing” and “living” for everyone and everything except my precious husband. If I did the same thing sexually, I would be thought of as a tramp...but, the heart was one of those hidden things that only I could know my unfaithfulness.

I went to my husband confessing my sin. He looked at me and told me that he had just wished that I would listen to him first and trust Him and His Judgment.. He told me that if I would just listen I would not make as many mistakes...I would not be as likely to lean upon my own understanding! He also was very touched that he was the priority of my heart. That was a changing point for our relationship. Not that I was perfect. We had another trial that really tested my faithfulness to him.

How did I do? Well, uh...do you call it failure at the beginning or the end? ha! We moved to North Alabama with his job. He took over the bills and all decisions of provision for our family. He took the headship of making decisions for all of our activities including where we go to church and when. I rested in his decisions for our family. You would have been proud! I also completely supported his call as a trooper. He had to sacrifice much time with our family. His hours had to be long just to pay the bills to keep me at home. Did I mention earlier that my desire was for my husband? Well, it took (and takes) a great deal of walking in the Spirit to die to my desire for time with him...but I did and still do die to this deep desire constantly!

Want to know my failure? Well, we joined a wonderful church and worshipped there for several years. The Body was wonderful...the teaching was enlivening...but something was not right. My husband was the first to notice. I thought he was being touchy because there is such a tendency of Law Enforcement to feel alienation because of the lack of understanding of others for their job. However, it was a real disrespect for his authority...not so much his authority as he wore the badge (which was a problem too!). It was more a disrespect for his authority and leadership over our home.

I began to hear a constant “prayer request” of the women...that their husbands would become the “spiritual leader” that God wanted for them to be. I began to pray for them...but this request was constant and by so many women that I began to be perplexed. I felt that my husband was a perfect leader of our home. Sure, he had faults...but I *knew* that I was the “Queen” sinner! I was so thankful for Harold’s faithfulness, tireless dedication, and constancy as my Spiritual leader! Oh, to see this for these other dear women...or was it there all along?

Well, one day I was meeting with a minister of our church about a position within the church. I would be serving in a quiet place of service behind the scenes. I had to meet with her to discuss details about this responsibility. One of her concerns was that we were not active in the Sunday School Program of the church. She said that she knew we were active in every thing else but Sunday School, but why not Sunday School? I explained to her that my husband worked every Saturday night until 4-6 am on Sunday Morning. He always came home...went to bed...and got up at 10 am to go with us as a family to church for the morning service on Sunday. Some weeks that was the only time that he could go to church with us because he would work evenings on Sunday and Wednesday. I told her that it was very important to Harold to worship with us as a family and that this commitment to family worship and faithfulness to his job required that for that season we would have to miss Sunday School...our entire family.

This young, unmarried woman sat there in shock and asked me why I did not just come on to church *without him* so that our children could be brought up in Sunday School. I was stunned. This was only *one* thing that we missed of all the many things going on at the church. I shared with her that we already taught our children at home about the Lord...and that it was a priority to teach them that we worship as a family, complete family. She settled on that...offered me the position. I told her that we would pray about it and get back with her. She decided to pray then for God’s blessing.

This is where I began to get REAL sick. In her prayer, she prayed that God would convict my husband about becoming a spiritual leader of our home...I remember very little after those stinging words...I was sick that she would say something like that about my husband who WAS a spiritual leader of our home. There were those words that I had heard from so many discontent women of the church!!! I finally figured out where it was coming from...the leadership! Here I was *knowing* that my husband was a godly leader of our home. But I did not say anything...I couldn’t! I was just too shocked! I left that room with my ears burning and a sick feeling in my stomach. As I got in our car to go, that burning got worse...my stomach began to churn. In less than a block, I began crying...actually sobbing!

I could not believe that I could be so unfaithful and unloyal to my husband. I did not even stand up for him! He worked awfully hard for our family...into the wee hours of the night just to provide a way for me to stay at home to teach our children. It wasn’t just his commitment to our family that drove him to his tireless dedication...it was that calling by God for him to serve and protect the lives of those entrusted to him by God. His calling went beyond the walls of the church to our community and state. He was a glory to the Lord as he worked faithfully and diligently in his thankless profession!

I went home and hated to tell him about my unfaithfulness, but I did. I was so mad at myself. He looked with compassion and said that it was ok. NO! It was not! I had to do something! I called and called the lady back. She was unavailable for two more days. I am really glad that God gave me those two days. Harold shared his heart with me and said that this grieved him terribly. He shared with me that his passion came from those tough moments of holding little bitty girls and boys as they die on the side of the road from

accidents caused by drunken drivers...those long hours were worth it all as when he did not have to see them in pain or when he did not have to go to knock on the door of a momma or a wife to tell them that their loved one was dead! Oh, I really had failed him!

I did get in touch with this lady a few days later. I confessed my failure and shared *why* that I felt that I had failed this wonderful husband that God had given me. I shared with her that I had committed spiritual adultery on my husband by allowing someone else to try to lead me astray from HIS leadership that God had for our family in this season. I shared with her that my husband *was* demonstrating his leadership as he was following the Lord even though it meant persecution and misunderstanding of himself or his family. I also told her that I had noticed in our church a growing discontent being spread between the husbands and wives. That many women were complaining about their husbands not being the “spiritual leaders” that THEY thought they should be. Oh, yes...this was a time of instructing this young unmarried woman about Biblical submission to the authority of the husband...not others. I told her that I was in sin in not defending my husband’s convictions and godliness because I knew that he was in the center of God’s Will. As I called this a temptation to “spiritual adultery” that I simply would not commit, she was very humbled and apologetic. I really believe that she had never considered serving in marriage as more sacred than serving the church. The seeds of truth were planted!

Also, that situation was THE changing point for our relationship. Harold had always sacrificed all of himself and his money and his time and his energy for our family. He needed a help meet for him. He needed someone committed to being a glory to him and not to “a career,” to “self,” or even “a church!”

The Bible teaches us in 1 Corinthians 11: 7 that we are created to be a glory for “our man” not anything or anyone else! This is God’s plan! Sure! God is glorified through this Man that He created...but God also chooses to bring Himself glory through our marriage...our godly picture of marriage! This goes along with 1 Peter 3, where we are given a mandate for holiness which contributes to building up and encouraging our husbands as they step up to the challenge of Biblical Manhood. We learn in this passage that God’s plan is for the married couple to bring Him glory as they are heirs together of this awesome grace of life! We find another reference of this in Titus 2: 3-5, where we are given details about our ministry as godly women which is to teach the younger women good things—to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet and chaste, to be keepers at home, to be good, to be obedient to their own husbands so that the Word of God will not be blasphemed. Yes, because when our homes are in order—Biblical order—the Word of God is affirmed as Truth! Even in Proverbs 31, we find that The Virtuous Woman does her husband good...every single verse in that chapter details all of the many things that a godly woman does to take care of her household...to do her part in completing her man!

Yes, in everyone of these Scripture passages, we can see the Biblical challenge to be a help meet for our own husbands...not a help for everyone and everything else that beckons for our attention. Even back in Genesis, we are taught that woman was created to be a help meet for man...that is where the beauty and purpose in life begins! This Scriptural basis can constrain us from going any old way or doing any old thing and it can give us a vision for how beautiful our life can be as we accept our true calling as a help meet!

Help meet...hum? What is that? A few years ago, I asked Harold just what it was that he felt that I was created to “be” and “do” in our relationship. I was astonished at his answers. Perhaps, it was because I found his answers to be so Biblical! He shared that he cherished most of all my encouragement, support, knowing that he had someone on his side when he would come home from work. He wanted for me to be his helper in

taking care of our home and our children...but if I did only one thing each day, he wanted for me to be cheerful when he came in from work. In other words, the most vital thing I do each day is just use my spiritual gifts within my home...the most important being encouragement!

Being in law enforcement, he does not always make people's day! He comes home weary and worn. Just needing a smile, hug, and an ear to listen! This is not just a need for my husband...the Biblical definition for help meet in Hebrew means "one who surrounds, protects, relieves, brings deliverance, helps out of prison, joins together, lends strength and assistance, encourages, helps in time of need or distress, adapts, builds up, affirms, lends vision for him and his home, serves, respects and reverences, promotes him, completes him, inspires him, challenges him, loves him!" This is the call for all women...to be a help meet for him!

In Scripture, the same word for help meet is used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. This does not give us the "job" of Holy Spirit for our husband...rather it means that we are to be accept this plan for our lives! If we do not want to undergird our husband as a help meet, then we are not wanting to live our lives walking in the Spirit, because walking in the Spirit means that we are surrendered to becoming more like Jesus...allowing His Spirit to control our lives!

So often it is more tempting to try to teach or direct our husbands toward what we "think" they ought to be...or how we think that they ought to lead! Often, if we will just submit...oops, there is that word again!...to their leadership, we would be much happier in our lives. The problem happens to develop when "we" think that God's direction or God's plan is just not possibly the direction our husband might take! We begin to think that our husband is not godly "enough" to earn our submission. We then, rationalize our disobedience or at worse, our ungodly behaviour...thinking that it has to be ok because "HE" is not leading as God (really WE) would want for him to lead so it must be ok for us to take over!

It may be that WE want to be popular at the church or in our group or with our family, doing all of the things that WE think we should be doing, whereas our husband sees our character flaw of becoming anxious when we get stressed...or our tendency to get too busy to have time for our own family and homemaking. It is often less controversial for them to let us go our own way...out from under the covering of their authority! I have been guilty here on this one! I always end up in a situation that is difficult and heartbreaking when I forget to use that simple word, "NO!" ha!

Maybe we have a less obvious manner of not following our husband as we get impatient for his decisions and go to everyone else for their ideas of how things should be done or which direction we should go! This is still unfaithfulness to our husband. Our friends, family, pastor, or teachers cannot KNOW the direction that God is gently revealing to our husbands. Harold has always seemed to have the perfect answer at the perfect moment. My hardest lesson was in learning to go to him first instead of shopping around for ideas that were not truly the answer but only what I "wanted to hear!"

Now for the last way that I have been guilty of not following Harold's leadership—Oh, you have probably done the same thing...if you are a woman! He gives his answer...it seems too simple or as if he has not thought it through as "carefully" as I THINK he ought to think it through...then I keep asking him until I am SURE that he gives the right answer. Well, actually by that point, he is giving the answer that he THINKS I want or he totally rejects my ideas JUST so I will stop asking!