

ously! If we KNOW the answers, then we can share with them our understanding. If not, weigh out those difficult questions! Go to God with the child for the answers! God is interested in answering those tough questions. Miss Mason continued with this emphasis and some wonderful how-to's that may help in your home as it has in mine.

“Let us not try to put down or evade their questions, or to give them final answers, but introduce them as did he to some thoughtful commentator who weighs difficult questions with modesty and scrupulous care... take the measure of children's minds, to help them over real difficulties, give impulse to their thoughts and direction to their conduct. Between the ages of six and twelve children cover the whole of the Old Testament story, the Prophets, major and minor, being introduced as they come into connection with the Kings. The teacher opens the lesson by reading the passage...there will be probably some talk and discussion after this reading. Then the teacher will read the Bible passage in question which the children will narrate, the commentary serving merely as a background for their thoughts. The narration is usually exceedingly interesting; the children do not miss a point and often add picturesque touches of their own. Before the close of the lesson, the teacher brings out such new thoughts of God or new points of behaviour as the reading has afforded, emphasizing the moral and religious lesson to be learnt rather by a reverent and sympathetic manner than by any attempt at personal application...(12-15 year olds) read for themselves the whole of the Old Testament...”

“Children between the ages of six and nine should get a considerable knowledge of the Bible text. By nine, they should have read the simple (and suitable) narrative portions of the Old Testament, and, say, two of the gospels. The Old Testament should, for various reasons be read to children. The gospel stories, they might read for themselves as soon as they can read them beautifully. It is a mistake to use paraphrases of the text; the fine roll of Bible English appeals to children with a compelling music, and they will probably retain through life their first conception of the Bible scenes, and, also, the very words in which these scenes portrayed. This is a great possession. Half the clever talk we hear today, and half the uneasiness which underlies this talk, are due to a thorough and perfect ignorance of the Bible text...But let the imaginations of children be stored with the pictures, their minds nourished upon the words, of the gradually unfolding story of the Scriptures, and they will come to look out upon a wide horizon within which persons and events take shape in their due proportion. By degrees, they will see that the world is a stage whereon the goodness of God is continually striving with the willfulness of man; that some heroic men take sides with God; and that others, foolish and headstrong, oppose themselves to Him.” Charlotte Mason, page 248-249 Home Education

This, the reading of the Bible, is the crucial base that must have a central focus in the home. However, this is not all of the parent's responsibilities. There are more!

Instill the Habits of the Religious Life...

One third of Miss Mason's writing was devoted to the importance of establishing Discipline...Habit...in the life of the child! The Religious Habits are vital if we are to disciple our children in the way God wants. Just what are some of these religious habits?? Here are a few...

Thoughts of God

Our thoughts of God affect much of our behavior. For this reason, as we teach our children from the Bible or from our life, we must give them an accurate view of God. Give your children "fitting" ideas about God! Let them know WHO God is! As they encounter tough times, which they will, let them know that God can meet any of their needs during that tough time. As they experience joys, let them know that God delights in every blessing that is bestowed in their lives. When they are scared, let them know that God is the God of ALL comfort. These are thoughts of God that are not beyond the child...thoughts that will shape the child as they grow into maturity.

Your greatest tool for teaching correct thoughts of God will be your own life and the lives of others. All of the stories in Scripture can be used to learn the various aspects and characteristics of God. Help the children to search for ways that God shows HIS Character and Sufficiency through every situation in their lives and the lives of others. These thoughts of God will offer more than just knowledge to your children...they will teach your children that God wants a relationship with them. This is truly the most precious gift you could give your children!

Reverent Attitudes

Ever notice just **how** obnoxious children can behave at their own church? This is a habit! We have endeavored to teach our children to be reverent at church at all times. The funny thing that we have found is that this training carries over beyond church!

Children need to learn the habit of reverence. Not only are unruly children a distraction in the church, but they are very frustrating to others. For the elderly in the church (or community), children running all around about them can be very frightening. A broken bone for the elderly may take years or may never heal! It is entirely thoughtless for a child (OR a parent TO ALLOW this!) to be unrestrained and endanger these precious people!

Not only that...there is nothing more distracting than children or teens whispering during a church service or getting up and down. This is not inevitable...it is a poor habit. What about the young mother who is steadfastly teaching her children to behave in church? The poor example of one older child can set back the mother's efforts while instilling a lack of reverence for God in the child!

Reverent attitudes are catchy! We found that our children never were too young to be reverent in the services of our church. Nor was the idea of being considerate to elderly or those sitting behind us too difficult for our children. We never used the services of our church nursery. This habit from infancy instilled in our children a deep reverence for God, worship, and even others. They learned early that others were very precious and must come before themselves or their selfish desires. Be encouraged to instill reverent attitudes young and continue in spite of those difficulties that will inevitably arise. The fruit is worth it!

Regularity in Devotions

"The habit of regularity in children's devotions is very important...it is worthwhile to remark that the evening prayers of children and of school girls and boys should not be left until the children are tired and drop asleep over their evening exercises. After TEA is a very good set time for prayers when it can be managed." Charlotte Mason, page 142 School Education

Isn't this just TOO precious? I just found this quote after years of having an evening Tea-Time including our daily Bible Reading and daily Read Alouds. You can only imagine my delight as I found affirmation to our family indulgence!

Before I lose you, we keep this simple and easy! It is really a glorified snack time! We do pull out the tea cups...I want to have memories spilling forth from each and every tea cup one day rather than having perfect, unchipped cups that have no ties to our family!

My "macho" "ALLLL" boy J usually puts the water on to boil...Elisabeth helps to get out a cup for everyone present...they both pull out goodies to snack on while mommy reads...then, we all cuddle up on our couch or in my bed to snuggly memory-making (Ohhh! This IS school at our home!).

Although you will find devotions different in every single home applying the ideas of Charlotte Mason, may you be challenged to make this time YOUR OWN! Make it special! As it becomes regular, you are instilling habits that will change the lives of your children AND...you will be making a memory!

Reading the Bible

This habit is not the same as the family reading time...this is a habit that needs to be instilled in the **personal** life of the child. Charlotte Mason recommended giving the children THEIR own little BOOK of the Bible to read through. She recommended a little copy of a gospel such as the gospel of Mark. I must have just plain odd children, but they have enjoyed the Old Testament JUST as much as the New Testament books. One thing that has made Bible Reading easier for our children was giving each of them their own **large print** edition of the Bible. A Large Print Edition will make reading easier **and** less intimidating for your beginning readers.

We have also tried to help our children by making a set time of our day for them to have their own quiet time. This has eliminated the guesswork that often burdens young Bible Readers.

One other thing that has helped our children to develop the habit of reading the Bible is to set the example ourselves. Children rarely continue any habit that is not modeled before them by example. Not to mention, if we are doing our own quiet time, we can be of help as the children encounter obstacles because we will know what helped us overcome those same obstacles. One example from our life that I found was not knowing what to read and study each day. As I found my personal need to have some alternatives, I also found that my children needed alternatives for those days that they were short on ideas. If I had not been "doing it" myself, I would not have even **known** the obstacles...much less **HOW** to help! You may want to find some resources that give them lists of passages to choose from or topics to study. This will help them to continue this life-sustaining habit!

Prayer

Prayer should not be a difficult habit to instill in your young children. Children **LOVE** to pray to God! They are the best intercessors! The difficulty comes as they grow older. Too many people begin to get the idea that prayer is an inconvenience for God or that He does not care about the trivialities of our lives. This could not be further from the truth! God has no greater desire than to have a relationship with each and every one of us! The duty that we have is to teach our children the value of prayer...to teach them of God's heart for them...and to teach them that there is **never anything** in their life that is too big or too small to bring to His attention.

If you want to encourage your children to continue this habit, why not encourage them to begin a prayer notebook. It need not be fancy or even big. All that they need is a record of God's work in their lives. Our prayer notebooks are very simple. We keep a list in the back of our Bible Journal. The list just has the request, the date of the request and God's answer. This is a mini-history of God's dealings in your lives! Begin one today!

Praise

If there is one habit that can change any day or any situation...no matter how difficult, it is the habit of praise! Oh, we are not just talking about at church. We are talking about praise at church **and** at home! Charlotte Mason wrote on pages 143-144 of **School Education**,

"Perhaps we do not attach enough importance to the habit of praise in our children's devotions. Praise and thanksgiving come freely from the young heart; gladness is natural and holy, and music is a delight. The singing of hymns at home and of the hymns and canticles in church should be a special delight; and the habit of soft and reverent singing, of offering our very best in praise, should be carefully formed..."

Children should be trained in the habits of attention and real devotion during the short services or parts of services. The habit of FINDING THEIR PLACES in the prayer book and following the service is interesting and aids attention, but perhaps it would be well to tell children, of even ten or eleven, that during litany, for example, they might occupy themselves by saying over silently hymns that they know."

I have not found this too difficult for my children either. Children come to maturity and deep understanding of the truths of God much earlier if they have the habit of praise. We have given our little toddlers their own "journals" and Bibles to keep up during our church services. From early ages, (yes, before they could read and write) they would sit in church "taking notes" and "following along" during the music and lessons. The fruit of this is now evident as they continue to follow along the service and take extensive notes "just like mom!" One thing to note, if you have a pastor that uses a lot of Scripture, it is VERY difficult to follow in Scripture **and** take notes. My son prefers to jot down the Scriptures that are shared during the service, along with notes about what the pastor is teaching and the Lord is leading... then he uses those Scriptures to look up in his quiet time. What a priceless habit to instill!

Sunday Keeping

"The people who clamour for a Sunday that shall be as other days little know how HEALING to the jaded brain is the change of thought and occupation the seventh day brings with it. There is hardly a more precious inheritance to be handed on than that of the traditional English Sunday, stripped of its austerities, we hope, but keeping its character of quiet gladness and communion with Nature as well as with God." Charlotte Mason, page 144 Home Education

Make Sunday a special day. I can honestly testify that on the Sunday's that we have not made the day a special day unto the Lord, my whole week is off track! Yes, it is crucial to take that one-day to heal and refuel, and renew for the new week ahead.

Charlotte Mason recommended that parents make Sunday special and different from all other days. She thought that children should have special Sunday stories...Sunday hymns...Sunday walks...Sunday talks...Sunday painting...Sunday knitting...Sunday games...all special to the day --quiet and serene! She challenged parents to make Sunday a day of reflection...teaching...prayer...thinking of God...praising and showing thankfulness...and of course, Devotional Reading.

Bible Recitation

One last habit to instill in children is hiding God's Word in their heart! They are NEVER too young to memorize Scripture! Little infants can begin to learn these wonderful truths. Toddlers LOVE to repeat small verses. Once the habit is set, the mind can memorize vast amounts of Scripture!

Charlotte Mason shared about Bible Recitation on page 253 of Home Education, *“The learning by heart of Bible Passages should begin while the children are quite young, six or seven. It is a delightful thing to have the memory stored with beautiful, comforting, and inspiring passages, and we cannot tell when and how this manner of seed may spring up, grow, and bear fruit; but the learning of the parable of the Prodigal Son, for example, should not be laid on the children as a burden. The whole parable should be read to them in a way to bring out its beauty and tenderness; and then, day by day, the teacher should recite a short passage, perhaps two or three verses, saying it over some three or four times until the children think they know it. Then, but not before, let them recite the passage. Next day the children will recite what they have already learned, and so on, until they are able to say the whole parable.”*

This is the time to develop the habit of Bible Memory...actually this is the time to instill all of the disciplines and habits of the religious life!!

Our children are like sponges during these years. They are continually soaking up knowledge. For this reason, we want to give them a thorough and deep knowledge of God. They are continually soaking up ideas. For this reason, we must guard those ideas as they are going into their minds, while planting those ideas of God that are fitting and necessary to prepare our children for life. Our children are constantly soaking up ideas that form habits—good **and** bad! For this reason, we want to be sure to accentuate the good, while plucking up any bad habits!

This is Discipleship...that most important aspect of education! Yes, the Religious Side of Education!

“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

1 Timothy 4: 13, 14-15...



Excerpted from *A Charlotte Mason Primer*.
Companion tapes are **ALSO** available!

How Can We Encourage Quiet Times??

By Cindy Rushton



This area of discipleship has been one of my greatest priorities. I realized in my own personal walk with God that just going to church did not equip me to even know WHERE to begin on those daily quiet times. I did not want my children wandering around in the same predicament, I wanted for every opportunity to be used all along the way!

In the early years, we trained our children bit-by-bit as we sat for "FAMILY" quiet times. As they became familiar with HOW to study the Bible, pray, and praise, they wanted to have "their own" quiet times. We provided them with the VERY best materials so our children could have EASY access to the Lord during their quiet times. This is our same recommendation for you with your little blessings. What do we mean? I hope the following will help...

- ♥ **Little Children...**Bible Storybook, Picture Journal, Music/Praise Tape
- ♥ **Little Older...**Give a prayer basket or a prayer tote! Include a pretty Bible (large print—boys don't care about pretty!), a pretty journal (we suggest that you look at our **MAKE YOUR OWN DISCIPLESHIP JOURNAL**), a devotional or Bible Study Guide, nice pens, and of course, pretty linens!
- ♥ **Deeper Studies? Add to their library...**A study Bible with concordance/cross-references/study notes/maps, topical reference (to look up things by subject), complete concordance (to look up individual words and all references in the Bible to them), Bible Dictionary (look up meanings), other Bible versions, Bible commentary by respected theologians, study book on the Bible or a topic in Scripture, Bible Study Software, Greek/Hebrew translation dictionaries, etc.



The Rushton Bible Reading Tips...

By Cindy Rushton



- ♥ **Pray...**Never begin a time of Bible Study on your own! Go to the Lord in prayer! Ask Him to teach each of you. He will be faithful to meet you every time you come to Him!
- ♥ **Review from your last reading...** As we read through our Daily Bible Reading, we begin by reviewing the passage from the day before. I allow our children to do this. They love this!
- ♥ **Read aloud from the Bible!**
- ♥ **Narrate story from Scripture...** This is simply letting the children re-tell what the passage is about. If it is not a passage that is easily shared in a story, then let them share their insights into the passage!
- ♥ **Discuss ideas, any questions, and any difficult words.** Look up any new places on a map. This is WHY you should read/study Scripture WITH your children. This is when you will share insights with one another...glean deeper truths from Scripture...really search for more than the casual glance at Scripture!
- ♥ **Pray...**ask God to really work in your lives to make your study applicable in your lives!



Helps for Bible Memorization

By Cindy Rushton



These ideas are included to help you as you hide God's Whole Word in Your heart...

- ♥ **Make a commitment to learn a certain amount of Scripture each week.** You can work on ONE of your favorite verses FOREVER...but make a commitment to learn a bit each week! I guarantee you will learn more than you ever plan!
- ♥ **Be consistent!** Set aside a regular time each day for working on memory work. We usually work on ours individually during our Quiet Times.
- ♥ **Have a set time to quote your passages to one another.** Maybe over breakfast...or while running errands in town. Just be sure to share your verse with those you love. You will be surprised how fast you will learn it and how easy it will be to remember it forever! Plus! It may become a favorite of others too!
- ♥ **Allow opportunities to quote what they know.** The hardest part is learning your verses, the most fun is quoting it, so make opportunities to quote them! Make it be tickets to go play, to eat dessert...you get the point!
- ♥ **Sing Scripture songs.** Steve Green has a great tape for children *Hide 'em in Your Heart*. You can get his or others at your local Christian bookstore. I have also seen many great praise and worship tapes that are filled with Scriptures set to songs. These guarantee immediate results! Get one and enjoy!
- ♥ **Memorize passages together.** We are now trying to memorize Psalm 1 together as a family. This makes it easier to quote along the way!
- ♥ **Write it out. Keep Bible Journals!** Well, that is what this section is all about!
- ♥ **Play games...** Write out Scripture on index cards, one word on each card. Scramble and try to put in order...Write out Scripture Verses on a piece of paper with your words separated enough that you can cut it out into a puzzle, while you are putting it together, see if you can remember what is missing!

When swimming, have a race to see who can quote a Scripture first and then race to the other side. You get the idea, so have fun!

- ♥ Let your older children help the younger ones (or YOU!) to memorize verses.
- ♥ Don't know what to memorize? Try to memorize verses in which you can use for your personal life... Verses to help with specific temptations. (As matter of fact, you may want to make and keep a list of verses related to areas of your weakness and temptation!)... Verses to help encourage you, as well as, your loved ones...Verses for evangelism...Verses which are God's sweet promises.

Make Bible Memory fun! Make Bible Memory a part of your daily Spiritual Disciplines. The fruit is UNBELIEVABLY SWEET!



Build A Ministry! A Family Ministry...

By Cindy Rushton



I love this time of year! It seems to bring out the “ministry” side of every one! You see such a gleam in the eyes of those that give ministry just a little try!

Growing up in the Gunter family, I have quite a blessing in my heritage. My mom and dad both LIVED ministry, even though they will probably be surprised that I wrote that when they read this. You see, they probably never even considered their “lifestyle” and actions to be “ministry.” Goodness, we were like every one else that I knew. Ministry was that big, formidable thing that preachers and missionaries in Africa did! Or so we thought?

My memories of holidays, especially once we were all getting older, were of my mother always reaching out to those that were easily forgotten along the way. The last few Christmas Holidays that I was at home were REAL lessons in how to meet those UNMET needs that others simply missed. For example, one Christmas I caught (the best way to train your children in ministry...let them CATCH you ministering!) my mom checking with the local nursing home to see if any of the elderly were “left alone” for the holidays. Sure enough, there was ONE. Oh, I still get tears when I think of the rush in our home to prepare room for that precious soul. Could you imagine the loneliness of being ALONE...the only one left behind? Oh, my mom’s heart burned a passion for ministry into the depths of my soul. But, that was just my Mama!

Another holiday, she did the same thing. She found that all of the elderly were ok that year, but there was a little boy in the State School who was “left behind.” He was the child of a prominent family. Not “perfect” enough to stay at home with them. Oh, he was so very precious. But, in their eyes he had been an inconvenience...a “black-eye”...not “good” enough. However, my mom could not stand to see this little boy left as the ONLY one at the State School...especially when he could join OUR family! Oh, yea...once again, Mama’s passion burned deep into my heart and soul! She went into a flurry of getting ready. Oh, she had already prepared enough of a meal and goodies that we could have fed an army. That was just my mom! But, that was not enough. She also went out and bought this little boy a WHOLE Christmas, just as she had bought us “her children.” Just the look in her eyes as that little boy woke up on Christmas morning was enough to impress upon me the JOY and real DELIGHT in ministering as a family. It changed MY life!

Oh, I could go on and on about the “little things” that my mom and dad just DID that impressed deeply into my being a passion for God and ministering in “little ways” to others.

As I look back on my childhood, I remember going to town with my parents. My dad was a milkman (Really, isn't that cute? And I am NOT illegitimate! My mom was married to the milkman!).

On Saturdays, especially in my teen years, my dad would carry us with him to “pull-up-the-milk.” (straightening and putting out fresh milk.) I did not think much about it until I was grown and watching how my toddlers would greet EVERYONE when we walked in a grocery store...or the gas station...or a mall...or the airport...oh, EVERYWHERE! I thought that was sweet and so friendly...but, it never hit me that it was a genetic thing until one day when we went home to see Daddy.

Daddy was already scheduled to serve at the concert in the concession booth. His men's group had that weekend, so we were given complimentary tickets to go with him. When we walked in, he had the children in his arms as an addicted Papaw always does! They were almost in “harmony” as they waved and said, “Hi! How are YOU doing?” to everyone! My eyes filled with tears. The miles had not taken away my dad's impact on the lives of my children. It had passed down from him to me to them!

Daddy has never had an enemy! I have never heard him talk bad about anyone or even any circumstance. He is the most cheerful and encouraging person I know. If he is awake, he is ministering. Not that I think he plans it that way, but because that is WHO he is and WHAT he is about.

I caught this from my mom and dad. It was part of WHO I am. So, you can imagine how much delight I take in seeing others join in with a ministry to others during this time of year. Oh, that this spirit would permeate our culture EVERY day of the year! Oh, that families would step forward to minister as a family...doing “their” thing! Maybe feeding a lonely person...maybe buying a special gift...maybe just smiling...maybe just taking time to look in the eyes of others and really listen to how they are really doing.

This is one of our greatest delights in our family. We love ministering TOGETHER! I think it is simply awesome to see how God wove our family together. Each of us have different, yet perfectly harmonious gifts. When we simply live and work together using our gifts, we have a full-fledge ministry. A Family Ministry!

Your family is probably much the same, whether you have realized it or not. That sibling rivalry can become a ministry when you realize that your differences can make you a great team! Oh, even the various ages in the family make a great ministry for every family! In our family, we can use all of the willing helpers we can muster together. We have so much fun doing things with parents and children. But, it gets even more fun when we bring in the grandparents or others in our family!

I know, I know! Sounds ideal? Ready to skip this page! WOE! Stay here a bit! Think about your family.

What is your family really about? What do you “just do” because it is YOU?? What are the differences that may at times annoy you, but are those very things that make your family, your family? Do you know what the gifts and natural bents are within your family? Think about each member...what are the gifts that you see the strongest within them? How do the gifts seem to balance out any weaknesses of others in your family? What are some things that all of you enjoy doing together? How could those things become a ministry for others around you? Have you taken a look to see what you REALLY inherited as a legacy from your parents?

Let the by-gones be by-gones! Look at the richness that you DO have! The blessings that we have as a family only come as we learn unconditional love for those closest to us. We are given the gift of KNOWING the “smut” on those who live with us, but choosing to love them so unconditionally that we join arms with them to strengthen their weak areas and illuminate their strengths. So often, we hold grudges about weaknesses and mistakes to the detriment of remembering and gleaning from those little blessings that were imparted to us by the “great people” we were blessed to live with! So, don't look at the “smut.” Rather, think back for a bit at what you had to hold on to. Look at what you WERE that you may have taken for granted.

So many people look at ministries such as Beth Moore's...Joyce Meyer's...Billy Graham's...or numerous others. That seems to be the alluring “ministry” life that is so coveted. Many put off ministering to others in hopes of a full “ministry” or the blessings (or sometimes PERMISSION of the church. Yet, as I look at our ministry, I know as never before that there ARE things that are being done through the “ministry.” But, the real call is to BE who God called us to be WHERE we are. Our “ministry” only shares those things with others in hopes that all of you will be encouraged along your journey.

It is all part of our call as a family. However, the real rewards will be as our children look back on their childhood to see those things that made “them” who they will become. You never know...it may be buying a hot chocolate for someone who was just a little thirsty...or paying for the gas of someone who never knew who did it...or smiling as a ministry to those downcast along the way...

I really have no idea yet what they will carry with them. I really do look forward to seeing what goes with them one day as they begin their own family ministry.

As for today... Why not add a touch of ministry to the life of others? Why not seize the opportunity to be THE ONE who has a heart tender enough to see those real needs? Why not use those gifts of those in the family today to minister to others? Why not use the little things to truly impact today...and possibly even many tomorrows?

Happy Ministering!

Language Arts.....The Easy Way

By Cindy Rushton



Well, it has now been 9 years since we took the most frightening step ever in the education of our children. It all began over a period of a few months...

I began Homeschooling probably like many of you. I brought into our Homeschool all of my education. (Scary! I know, but I have to tell you that I absolutely LOVED school! Yep! Even Grammar!) By that, I mean that *all* of those ideas that were tried out on me during my school years I brought into my Homeschool without any questions about “why” we would do it that way or if it “could” even work. I had loved school and my children were destined to have the best SCHOOL ever in my home!

You can imagine my dismay on the day that I sat my darling Second Grade genius down at his desk to write a letter to his grandparents, only to find myself in a full scale war. We had just moved to another state. He HAD to write a great letter to them. After all, WE Homeschool...they were not too fond of the idea...and this brilliant child could fill in the blanks of his workbook perfectly! I looked at my ever so precious child and realized that instantly something had happened to his fingers (and his brain!). He seemed to have an allergic reaction that instantly spread from his fingers to his head, leaving him staring into space and only seconds away from bursting into tears (with me!).

If that were not enough, it was as if all of the sudden blinders came off of my eyes. I realized that he really hated writing of any kind. The poor little thing would rather do any chore than sit down and write. I knew that something had to be done.

In the meantime, you have to know that God had already begun a total revival in my own life. For the first time ever, I had realized the awesome call of being a godly wife and mother. As a result, it seemed that on a daily basis, God was showing me more and more areas of my life that He wanted for me to bring to Him for His way. You probably know what was next. Yep! Homeschooling! God wanted for me to come to Him for His way of teaching my children. As I cried out to Him, He began to beckon to me...

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest, [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. For my yoke is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne.” Matthew 11: 28-30 (Amplified Bible)

I was certainly “laboring.” The burden to make this child write was getting heavy quick. The last thing I could do, especially with Grandparents wanting a great letter from this little darling, was rest. The child was sending me off the deep-end quick! Let’s suffice to say that the words “harsh, hard, sharp, and pressing” were perfect descriptions of my teaching techniques and ideas for dealing with the little critter! As you can probably guess by now, the very first area of Homeschooling that He began to show me a better way, His way, was in the area of teaching Language Arts.

Since then, I have to tell you that everything has changed! That same son has shelves full of bulging notebooks on topics as varied as Sailing, Navigation, Civil War battles, the Great Men and Women of the Civil War, Russian vocabulary, Latin and Greek Roots, Poetry, on and on. He now has several of his own books in print (more on that in a minute!). He has written articles for publication (by the request of other magazines!). He is even writing articles and books with me at this time. Yes, it is almost like a dream come true. All because God’s ways DO still work!

Does God have something to say about Language Arts? Yes, beloved, God has much to say about teaching Language Arts. In fact, of all of the subjects that we teach to our children, you would not believe how much the Bible addresses Language Arts. Of all the books in print on teaching Language, the Bible is the best and easiest to implement in our homes, even today. Want to see some of the ideas from long ago? Let’s dig in. You are sure to find that teaching Language Arts can be easy too!

Read Alouds...

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Philippians 4:8

Probably the simplest, yet most effective technique for teaching our children is the most obvious—great literature. Literature has power. Literature is effective. So powerful and so effective that it is the means that God used to reveal the truth of His love and grace to mankind and the medium He chose to transform lives and the way of thinking of people throughout history! Yes, books have a special power. Power to transform lives. Power to turn our children’s heart away from the Lord...or power to inspire them toward greatness.

Just as our Heavenly Father gives us the very best in literature, the Bible; so, we can give our children the best that literature has to offer. We can give them the books that teach them what is true... honest... just... pure... lovely... good report... virtuous... and praiseworthy. We can introduce them to “friends” that will forever encourage them on their life journey. We can give them access to the thinkers that know, really KNOW, their topics so well that only a book could hold all of their thoughts on that topic. Yes, we can give our children the very best literature, introducing them to topics in a way that can not be beat all while

we inspire our children toward greatness with great literature.

I am very thankful that early into our Homeschooling adventure, God wooed me toward the use of great literature as the core of our Language Arts studies AND as the foundation of our entire Homeschooling curriculum. Even now that our children are in junior and senior high, the core of our curriculum for all subjects that we teach our children comes from the library and from our own growing collection of great books.

As we have included more and more great literature as the foundation of all of our studies, we have found many, many simply wonderful benefits. One of the most distinct is that our children learn much faster and remember what they have learned much longer as we read real books on the subject. This does not mean that we have to read EVERY book on a topic being studied. Just a few well-chosen books are usually ample for any great study. As time has gone on, our children help us more and more choose books for themselves. Another great perk for basing education on great literature. Not only is it great for our children to help us plan and implement studies now, but the as they learn how to research and study topics of interest, they are more likely to be prepared and trained to continue learning for the rest of their life.

We begin our new studies by introducing our children to a biography on a person, a book about a time period, books written by a certain author, or even a non-fiction book on the topic. If there is enough interest, we turn the children loose and they can pursue the topic deeper. Many of our greatest studies began with just one simple book, developed into HUGE notebooks on the topic, and now have become part of who we are as a family. This is where we find education really happening...when our children dig deep for themselves on various topics that come along.

Through the years, my children have found topics that we studied for only a week, sometimes two. Other topics begged for us to "dig in" for a month or a semester. Still other topics have become part of "who" we are with our children continuing them for years (Matthew's Civil War study has continued since 2nd grade and now he is in the 10th grade!!). As the children are cut loose to dig deeper, real learning takes place. Soon there is no need for textbooks. In fact, so much more is learned through great literature that you will



How To Use Whole Books in the Homeschool??

- ♥ **Make books important to you!** Value them. Be a reader YOURSELF. Trust books as YOUR source to learn. As your children see YOU reading, they will naturally become great readers.
- ♥ **Choose the best over the mediocre!** There is ONLY SO much time with our children...make it the best!
- ♥ **Slow down to read.** Gladys Hunt wrote in her book *Honey for a Child's Heart*, "Busy Schedule is the Enemy of Reading." We make time for our priorities...are they the important? Should we curtail activities to free up time to read more? Life is full of choices--good, better, or best--which is it?
- ♥ **Allow the book to be the teacher!** Children LOVE big words...in books the authors choose just the **right** word...the children learn this gift from direct contact. Children LOVE stories which teach consequences...The good live happily after...the evil are ultimately destroyed. Children LOVE to think...allow them to discern...just give plenty of ideas for them to think upon! Children LOVE to collect great thoughts!
- ♥ **Become exposed to the very best so you can select the very best for your children...** Listen to your family. Find great book lists. Really look at books...get a feel for the excellent! Ask your librarians which books cannot stay on the shelf. Ask which books THEY are most excited about. Look at their recommended lists. Ask your friends which books they are reading and enjoying? Look at catalogs! Really read the reviews and find books that are perfect for you and your family.
- ♥ **Give abundant provision!** Charlotte Mason said, "...for the best thought the world possesses is stored in books. ...our concern is abundant provision and orderly serving!"

want more time to dig into other great books rather than dry, dull textbooks.

You may say, "How do you choose what they read?" I have to tell you that it has gotten so much easier as time has gone by. At first I had no idea which books were great and which ones were going to disappoint us, or even downright offend us. I made many bad choices, but the good news is that God is a Redeemer and He can redeem all of our blunders! In fact, as I look back, there are many books that we read in the early years that were just plain silly. They almost seem like a waste of time as I look back. However, God has shown me that more is learned as we read aloud than just "ideas" and "worldviews" on a topic. When a precious mother sits down to read a great book with her little ones, she is teaching them that she really cares about them...that she values the time she has with them...and that families tie strings through the memories that they make, even the silly ones.

You may have no idea where to begin choosing great literature, but you can rest knowing that you are not going to mess up. Not too sure? Need a little help? Well, one of the things I recommend is to read for yourself. Dig through articles, catalogs, books. Get online and ask your email discussion list for some of their favorites. There is great value in mom-to-mom mentoring, especially since so many of us come into Homeschooling with no idea of what we should and should not include in their education.

Another recommendation that has helped me along the way is that I use many helpful resources with great lists of recommended books. I usually buy at least one resource each year that lists books for each age of my children. Some of my favorites are *Who Should We Then Read*, *Books Children Love*, *All Through the Ages*, *Hand That Rocks the Cradle*, *Let the Author's Speak*, *Honey for the Child's Heart*, *A Family Program For Reading Aloud*, and *Great Books of the Christian Tradition*. I have found great recommendations for wonderful books in magazines and newsletters. I just jot down the suggestions so that I have ideas when I go to the library. As a matter of fact, my person reading list has been printed and is available through our company. Just look for *The Never-Ending Rushton Reading List*. It is a simple list that can help you find real books for teaching all of the

subjects to your children. If you need more help with books that inspire your children toward greatness, I finished a book last year (*Inspiring Our Children Toward Greatness Using Great Literature*, see our listing of books we publish for more information) that will help you to not only find great books, but also how to use literature across the curriculum. There are many, many other great resources out there. Just find one, use it fully, and enjoy the blessing of great books.

Perhaps your budget is extremely tight and books seem a bit out of reach. Try some of my favorite resources, which happen to be free! Check out home school catalogs! Most of the home school family-run curriculum companies carry only the books that they would read themselves to their own children. You can find great ideas intermingled throughout their catalogs that will help you teach your children with ease! I have found many catalogs through the years that have helped me choose better books for our family than even those listed in book lists. Since this has been such a help to me, one of our “musts” for our catalog is that each catalog or issue of our magazines “must” include detailed descriptions and reviews that can help others to find the books that will be perfect for their family. Other catalogs are the same way. Check those out and you are sure to find some great book suggestions!

Another way to find great books is through your local librarians. I have found some of my most favorite treasures from recommendations of my librarians. Through the years they have seen us so often that they know what we are looking for! They have been an incredible resource for ideas of great books. They have recommended many wonderful books on the topics of study, many that I would have never normally come across. As I have told them what we were studying, they have even bought the books that I was drooling over, great for our tight budget! What I love about them is that it really saves me money as well as my valuable time not to mention having another point of view to help me along the way!

One other thought...Don't forget about the incredible resource you have in your friends and relatives! My mother gave me the entire set of *Little House Books* that we had read as children! What a treasure! Don't forget the resource of your memory. Chances are that you do not remember that 5th grade textbook, but you probably remember that wonderful book your mother read for Christmas that year... that was a real, living book. Great books are all around for you to discover so do not waste your time with substitutes!

Quick Tips for Teaching Phonics

- ♥ Give LOTS of TIME to learn the skill of reading!
- ♥ Teach them to GO SLOW and take their time reading through the passage!
- ♥ Teach them based upon THEIR learning style!
- ♥ Beware of Distractions that keep them from giving their full attention to the lesson!
- ♥ Practice over and OVER AND OVER!
- ♥ Give plenty of review all throughout the day....as you go along the way!
- ♥ Try Big Print—especially be sure to give them their VERY OWN large print edition of the Bible when they are VERY young!!
- ♥ Keep reading to them...their children...and their children's children. This is a family LEGACY!!
- ♥ Encourage CONSTANTLY!
- ♥ Read as much as possible!

Narration...

Easy as A,B, C!

- ♥ **Read a book to your children.**
- ♥ **Let them retell the story to you.**
- ♥ **Either JUST listen or you can take down the story on paper to keep in a notebook.** (Special Note: You do not have to do this with EVERY book. In fact, if you were to do so, you would get very, very weary! It's perfectly OK to just listen to them as they share an Oral Narration. In our home, we only use Written Narration as a tool to train our children to compose on their own.)
- ♥ **Re-copy the narration for a Copywork assignment or type into the computer for a printed copy of the narration.**
- ♥ **Remember that probably the MOST EFFECTIVE Narration is in REAL LIFE...as you go along the way, talking with one another about what is being learned. Not everything must be on paper for a GREAT Education!**

It is just that easy! So, why not dig in???

Narration...

Now you may say, "That is great, but how do you use literature as the foundation of your Homeschool and still test and figure their grades???" Well, Narration is the key to being sure that your children are learning from read-alouds. Narration is as old as the Bible. In fact, much of the Bible happens to be divinely inspired Narration (Want to see how different writers with totally different personalities narrate? See the first four books of the New Testament!). If it works for God, you can rest assured that it will work for your young writers!

Narration is simply telling back what the book or story is about. In Narration, the child is able to naturally relate back the information that they deem as important as they read or listened to you read. No need for tests because you hear them tell back what they really learn. You will know that they understand what has been read if they are able to put it into their very own words and retell the passage to you. In fact, studies have been done which show that we learn 5% of what we hear, 10% of what we see, and a whopping 95% of what we teach. Narration is a perfect method to allow the child to "teach" or re-tell what they are learning in their own words. Once they have it, they will keep it!

Some other benefits of Narration are that the children are able to learn to create stories without the toil of making one up because they already have the characters, plot, vocabulary, and story line. All that they must do is articulate the story! What is neat about Narration is that the greatest writers and thinkers are actually tutoring your children.

If you had a choice between a textbook written by a committee or lessons taught directly by a skilled author such as Robert Louis Stevenson, C.S. Lewis, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Martha Finley...what would your choice be? My choice is clear, I want for my children to learn from the greatest writers of all time. As a result, their writing style is influenced by those they read and study. However, they do not become clones. Instead, their writing becomes more unique than with any other approach to Language Arts. Their writing skills become more advanced quicker because they have had non-threatening experience with composition. Plus, they find writing to be easy, natural, and fun! All because of Reading and Narration!

Do you remember when they were little how they had that one little book that you had to read over and over? They could look at the pictures and tell it word for word. If you were reading it and you missed one word, they knew it?? Well, guess what? That is Narration in its simplest form. You were reading the book and they learned the story and could retell it. It is amazing how we trade in the natural for the artificial! If you will think back, your children were even learning vocabulary without the dictionary...grammar without a

Homeschooling The Easy Way Manual

grammar text...how to tell a story without a lesson on how to write...how to love books without a word of instruction by you! Give it a try and really listen to what comes out!

To use Narration in your home school, simply read a book to them, let them re-tell the story and that is it! After we have used this technique in our Homeschool for the last 9 years, I have found that there is more being learned through Narration than I first realized. If there is one thing, other than reading aloud that EVERY family could truly benefit from, Narration is that one thing (well, there are a few more things, but that is coming in a moment!)

If we want to encourage our young writers to really develop a love of writing, we have to find ways to let them REALLY know that what they are sharing is very, very important and very, very special to us. Narration does this. Actually Narration could easily be called discussion or relationship building. As the years have gone by, if I were to be “pinned down” on the one thing that has really spoken volumes to my children about my interest in their writing, Narration would have to be it. It takes TIME to really listen, with interest, to what another person is learning about a topic. This is exactly what we have found to be essential in making Narration work in the Homeschool.

The foundation that is laid as we “listen” to our little ones as they talk on and on and often ON about a topic is simply irreplaceable. Just listening to them talk about Indians... or Glock Pistols... or the Circulatory System... or the History of Dance... just listening communicates to them that what they KNOW is really interesting to others. This is a crucial stone in the foundation of a great writer. EVERY writer needs to know that what they are writing is interesting to others. As our children learn that THEY are the “professional” on their topic, we will find them bubbling over with enthusiasm to share with others about what they know.

Now, note! This is mostly ORAL. There is a time. I repeat...THERE IS A TIME to learn how to write their Narrations and thoughts down on paper. But, children need many, many years of Oral Narration before they ever begin to write on paper about their thoughts and ideas. They also need Oral Narration for the rest of their lives. Just because they can put their thoughts on paper, it is not the time to cut off the discussions and time of listening to them.

For more formal, Written Narration, you can begin by taking Dictation as the child retells the story to you. Re-copy the Narration neatly and assign the children to copy the Narration into their Copybooks. As they have gotten older, my children do this for themselves. Do keep in mind that my children are in 10th and 7th grade. If there is one danger for Homeschooling mothers, I think it is that many rush into this step just to “document” what their children are learning rather than to move into this step as they are really ready. Oh, and I only know this because I DID!

Want to know when they are ready? Well, I recommend moving gently into Written Narrations as the

Tips for Encouraging Our Young Writers...

- ✓ Teach them to dedicate all of the writing to the Glory of God! 100%!
- ✓ SLOW down to teach LITTLE BY LITTLE, STEP BY STEP!
- ✓ Encourage them to become great readers! (Begin by reading aloud as a family!)
- ✓ Beware of YOUR criticism!
- ✓ Encourage a standard of **excellence** instead of perfection!
- ✓ Study the writing of different authors
- ✓ Focus on getting what they "do" know on paper...the alternative is what we see in writing courses and tests...writing what they do not know!
- ✓ Give a purpose for writing (notebooks, journals, letters, creating books, email, article writing, Scrapbooking...)
- ✓ Teach them to **produce** not consume...
- ✓ If you want your children to become great writers, then require them to write every day!
- ✓ Teach your children how to test their writing for excellence.
- ✓ Teach your children that others may not know about their topic and would really love to!
- ✓ Encourage your children to write from the heart!

children develop ease in daily Copywork selections. We did not begin writing Narrations until our children were able to easily copy a whole page of Copywork neatly and with great ease. Also, by that time, their Narrations were very good, sounding much like the story and following the story line without leaving out much and without chasing rabbits. If you need more help with this area, check out our books on Language Arts.

Another thing that I think is very, very important is to realize that it can be VERY, VERY exhausting to require daily Written Narrations, EVEN if they could do it. I say this because I have been guilty myself in the beginning of wanting to have every book that my children read recorded by a Written Narration in their notebooks. Just in case you secretly hate Narration because you have a long-winded child, I want to encourage you that Narration can become JUST as "school-at-home" as any other technique for teaching children. If we sacrifice our children at the altar of "our way" rather than dying daily to our wishes, ideas, preferences, and techniques (Romans 12: 1-2), we will find even the best ideas not working.

Want Narration to be EASY and really work? Make it as natural as possible. Break free from the trap of "documenting" all that they know. Eventually, you will find that a real education cannot ever be accurately presented on paper. Enjoy what they are learning. Get to KNOW your child. Don't substitute knowing your child for documenting all that you are doing in your Homeschool. Yes, you CAN document an overview of their education. But, the best things are those things that you will have as treasures to ponder in your

heart. Breaking the heart of your child is simply not worth a few pieces of paper that will just be stuffed in the attic. Plus, hold on and we will get to a FUN and EASY way to document their real learning in a bit (*Notebooking and Creating Books!!!!*).

Copywork...

Ok! But! What about learning how to write? What about developing the skill of handwriting? What about Spelling? What about Grammar? What about Punctuation? Oh! Beloved, this is where Copywork comes in!

Copywork is another way that I teach Language Arts. We do Copywork the easy way too. Copywork may seem to be a foreign word, but it is a very simple concept with far reaching benefits.

With Copywork, my children simply copy a selection (of their choice) each day into their Notebooks. My focus is not on the subjects, but rather on the skill being used as they pursue areas of interest. For those of you who are familiar with the benefits of Unit Studies or Literature Based Learning, you will know that deep studies on topics of interest easily cover subjects as our children are given a full education. Actually, we have found that our children have covered the subjects more fully and in greater detail than they would have by simply receiving a nodding acquaintance with a textbook study, plus they remember what they are learning!

Their Notebooks are simply 3-ring binders with loose-leaf paper. We found a few years ago that it helped to use plastic sheet protectors in which you slide paper into from the top to protect the work as soon as it is written. We keep paying Wal-Mart employee salaries with the number that we buy each year but it is worth the cost as our children have created wonderful Notebooks full of beautiful Copywork! *(more on that in a bit!)*

When we first began, I chose short selections from Bible verses and poems in which we liked. I would write the selection at the top of a page and let them copy underneath my copy. Now, my children choose their own Copywork from gems that they find along the way. They choose from Narrations of books we read aloud, favorite passages of Scripture, great narratives that we find along the way, favorite poems and quotes, or neat facts that they run across and just want to keep in their special Notebooks. I do want to note that their Notebooks are their own collections of treasures.

This in no way eliminates formal instruction although it changes it from how you may be thinking of it. You see, as they are copying the passages, they ask about punctuation, grammar, and spelling that they have never seen. It is in this natural way that I seize the moment to teach how things should be and why or how to look up the answer. We have used general resource books like *Learning Grammar through Writing* and *The Writer's Reference* as basic texts to look up our questions. We have also made "Grammar and Spelling Rules" Notebooks to collect the different rules and examples of their use. This is so much more applicable to our real life than a workbook that does not address the areas in which we really need help. Not only do they remember the rules better, but they also learn how to research problem areas for the future.

Back to Copywork...After they copy their selection for the day, they check for any errors and to make sure that their copy is as neat as possible. If their work is not neat, I make them re-copy. In all of the years that we have used Copywork, this has only been necessary a couple of times (of course, our children KNOW that I will make them re-copy if their work is not the best that they can do). This has been a great encouragement as they have learned to do their nicest work, plus they have the incentive that their Notebooks are their very own special treasures which makes them take pride in each and every page!

In using Copywork, I have found that we have eliminated much of the busy work as we eliminated dry

workbooks, spelling and vocabulary tests, and even the silly assignments that give children a bad taste for writing. Their work has had a purpose and in turn, has had meaning. The daily lessons are not for a time filler or “just because.” Their work builds a real life project, a notebook. It also has developed disciplines that have prepared them to be good citizens and great writers.

As we look back over the last 9 years, we can see their improvements as they have developed the skills of writing. We can also see their character as we take a peek into the selections that they have chosen along the way. All of the benefits have gotten better as the years have passed.

This brings me to another great point about Copywork. It does not end just because children get to a certain age. Up until about 100 years ago, Copywork was an integral part of every child's education and lifestyle as they grew into adulthood. In fact, I found in one of my favorite books, *The Imitation of Christ*, that the author, Thomas A' Kempis was noted to have copied the Bible at least 4 times in his life. This was hardly an accomplishment of an elementary age child. This was a life discipline that probably was one of the major contributors to his wonderful literary style that has shaped generations of godly men and women. This is not the only example of great men and women being disciplined and taught by Copywork. There are many, many more examples dating as far back as the Old Testament. In fact, take a peek at Deuteronomy 17: 18-20. The Kings were trained by copying the law in a book that could be carried with them. Yes. This model has worked and continues to work in disciplining great writers and great leaders.

We still use Copywork. As matter of fact, as our children have entered junior and senior high, we have found even more great benefits. Their Copywork has entered a new realm as they have gotten older. Now, they are creating their own “textbooks” (notebooks) with truly dependable information on all of the subjects that we are studying. It just does not get any better than this! Besides having reliable information, our children are blessed with studying topics much deeper than they would study if they were merely cramming for a test. As they copy the information, they are still having the benefits of “seeing” spelling, grammar, and great writing models. However, there is more. They are learning how to research any topic of interest to find the gems of information. The lessons that have been learned reach much, much further than a mere bunch of facts learned for a test. This old method is just as sure and true as it was hundreds of years ago!

Dictation...

Dictation is another area of teaching Language Arts that greatly prepares children for their adult life. I took copious notes by dictation in college and still continue to do so during Church, Bible Study, classes, and seminars. This skill is necessary for all of life and should not be neglected in the Homeschool.

Just begin to use Dictation by allowing your children to become familiar with one or two lines...you may want to begin by dictating your grocery list, including spelling aloud the words slowly. If your children are a bit older and familiar with spelling through read alouds or Copywork, they may be ready for you to use a

Bible verse or a neat quote. Let them study over the spelling and punctuation until they feel that they KNOW it! Then, review the selection pointing out spelling that looks confusing, punctuation marks (explaining why they are there!), and noting how it should be set it up on the paper (indented, skip lines... whatever). When they are ready, SLOWLY dictate the selection along with even spelling words that may be difficult after they have had a chance to try to spell it on their own. This will keep from having error instilled in their minds. After you are finished, give them the copy and let them check it themselves correcting any errors. That is all there is to it!

Again, just as Written Narrations come after years of Oral Narration and Copywork, so do Dictation exercises. I have found that my visual learner does better with Dictation than my Auditory Learner. She seems to “see” the spelling of words in her mind. Students are not ready for Dictation exercises until they have had much, much experience with “seeing” the spelling and punctuation through reading and Copywork. If you have an older child who is still not a great speller, try Dictation. Do note: even as the children develop a great skill in this area, they still need for most of their efforts in Language Arts to be expended in their Reading, Oral Narration, and Copywork.

As your students get older, they can handle greater challenges with their Dictation exercises. The same longer passages that they use for Copywork, they can use for their Dictation exercises. You can use anything from speeches, to narrations, to Bible passages, etc. Just give this old model a try!

Notebooking...

Ok...You love ALL of these ideas. You are completely convinced about the power of great literature. BUT... you have one very real problem. Your child loves workbooks. Not because the workbooks are interesting... or full of information...or even challenging. The reason they prefer workbooks is because they really do like “seeing” the work they need to do AND looking back to see all that they have accomplished. Your questions are, “Do I have any options here? How can I implement a Literature Based Approach to education AND meet these very real needs?” My dear friend, there really is an answer! Notebooking!

Now, this is a topic that makes me hyper! This is the one technique that pulls everything above together. All of those books that you have read have great material, pictures, and information that can be kept in Notebooks. All of those precious Narrations can be safely protected in Notebooks. All of those daily Copywork lessons can find their home in Notebooks on each of the topics that your children love so much.

So, how do you do it? You are ready to jump right in? Getting started is as easy as A, B, C. First of all, **begin with one notebook for each child.** When we began Notebooking, we bought one big 3-ring notebook for each child. They kept just one until that one notebook was filled to overflowing. Then, we divided their notebooks into natural divisions, not by subjects. You will find your children with lots of great

interests. Many will deepen over the years while others will die out. Don't make "Notebooking" the goal... instead, make their delights in learning the goal and use Notebooking to develop their interests.

Have no idea what you need? Notebooking can be as economical or as extravagant as you want. You have much freedom in what you choose to use. You will need some **basic supplies** such as one notebook per child, plastic sleeve protectors, paper (Use card-stock for mounting specimens or lined paper for Journaling, Copywork, quotes, notes, or lists! You may want to consider Acid free/lignin free paper if you are mounting pictures of your walks and findings!), sketch paper for watercolor pictures or sketches from nature, top quality sketch pencils, top quality watercolors and brushes, index cards for data entries, and scissors! This allows versatility in what goes into our notebooks. We put **EVERYTHING** that we can press flat in ours! For things needing mounting, we use mounting tape or archival safe glues for mounting.

Then **add your goodies!** Add sketches, Copywork, samples of nature specimens, or photos...we find that our notebooks can include whatever we want to add for that subject!

As you see a subject developing into it's own notebook of interest, take it from the general notebook and make a notebook of its own. In just one year after Matthew began Notebooking, he divided his binders into many different topics... Poetry, General History, Military History, Civil War History, Bible Verses, Book of Centuries (timeline), Science, Scouts, God's World Papers...so on! The focus is not upon subjects or a number of notebooks. Instead, the focus is upon his favorite areas of interest and learning to use the skills of learning in a daily disciplined study. Before you get the wrong idea, I do want to note that he does not work in each notebook each day. As you begin Notebooking, you will soon find that just one passage of Copywork per day added to your notebook adds up fast! The purpose is to learn skills so that the writing delight will grow naturally!

Allow your children to work back and forth on different notebooks. This is **EXACTLY** what I do in my personal life/writing. In fact, as I have studied the disciplines of professional writers, I see that most have many studies and writing projects going on at any given time. If writers need this change of pace, how much more so will our children? Allow room for them to change their pace and their focus. If they seem to get frustrated with one topic and a breather does not bring back the passion, let them put aside the notebook for a period of time. This always allows my children a breather. Either they come back later with a renewed interest **OR** we just let the notebook wait. Personally, I have notebooks that I began 16 years ago that I work on maybe once a year. Children may or may not have a renewed interest in an old study...that is **OK!** Ministering to our children and encouraging a love of learning are far more important than anything that they may or may not **DO**.