

Time for Tea

Reprint Book of
Articles From
Volumes 1 & 2



By Cindy Rushton

A Call to Simplicity

The school year is full swing again! The other day, my husband and I hired a sitter for few hours and we took off on his motorcycle. What a wonderful break in the midst of our first full week of new commitments added to our homeschool schedule. I had felt overwhelmed by all of it added together and the break was nice for my tired and weary mind. On the ride, I was taken by the beauty all around me that I seem to miss in the hurry, in the demands, in the day-to-day busy schedule of the Rushton home. The beauty of the ride brought to my mind to the thought of simplicity.

Simplicity of Purpose...

It amazes me when I think of ALL that Jesus was able to do in just three years of ministry. Heal the physical and spiritual wounds of those around Him. Teach the heart and Person of God. Take time to meet the needs of all in the midst of the demands of ministry. Most of all take the time for His relationship with God the Father. How did He do it all? He was simple in His purpose. Simple but profound! Simple but effective! The desire of my heart is to take each day and make the most of it for God's glory...it just seems that the little things keep popping up needing my attention. For example, last week we had the hard drive on the computer crash...the timing chain on the van break...we all so kindly shared a cold which stole away all our energy as well as our voices. Those little things were distractions that caught our attention away from the most important things...our family glorifying God. It is so easy to let the little things rob us of the simplicity of God's Call on our lives.

He has called each and every one of us to a specific purpose. If we are homeschooling, providing them with all of the greatest curriculum, activities, and opportunities and we have not given them a vision for God's purpose for their lives, then all is for nothing...in vain. Have you as a parent ever thought about what God wants to do with your child? What is God's purpose for your child? Is what you are doing in your home preparing your child for God's purpose? Let us seek God for a vision of what He wants for each of our children! Let us all surrender to God's plan...to God's will in our homeschools and become simple in purpose.

Simplicity in Commitments...

Another area of simplicity is in our commitments. I think that the biggest distraction in the homeschool comes with over-commitment. Have you ever noticed that all the homeschooling families tend to be the movers and shakers in their churches and communities? I think that this is great...but it lends much stress to the homeschool. We come into homeschooling with our already loaded schedules and then add in a full-time teaching job!

God intends for us to function in seasons. We can not do all today. Trying to do so keeps us from doing anything well. In this season of homeschooling, we really must

simplify our commitments to only those things which disciple our children. This does not eliminate all life outside of the homeschool. Rather, it opens up whole new opportunities... preparing our children for God's call on their lives, quiet and rest, family ministry, building family memories, maturing in the Lord. So many Christians commit to "God's work" during this time and actually do more damage to the cause of Christ! They pour all into the church or ministries while neglecting God's call during this season! During this time, may we be simple in our commitments by focusing on discipling our very own families!

Simplicity in Curriculum...

Another area that we really need simplicity is in the area of curriculum. God has an interest in what your children study. That may be a surprise, but it really should not be! God has not made each of our families the same. Our purposes are different. Our teaching styles are different. Our children are different. Our schedules are different. Our budgets are different. Why is it that so many families compromise God's will by copying the homeschools of their friends? While I sold curriculum, you would not believe the number of people who would not buy anything unless their "group" of friends ALL used it. In other words, these parents are all still peer-dependent and their families were suffering for it. They bounced back and forth from curriculum to curriculum without a plan for their very own Homeschool!

I challenge each of you to truly pray about what you choose to teach your treasures! Don't choose curriculum based on what your friends are using unless it is truly the best selection for your family. Don't choose curriculum just because your church school recommends it. Choose your curriculum after you have had time to evaluate it. Choose curriculum that is simple to use and understand. Choose curriculum that encourages you to learn from real life. As you use simplicity in choosing your curriculum, you will find that the yoke is easy and the burden is light...you will find God's will for your very own family!

Simplicity in Homemaking...

One important area of our lives to check for simplicity is the area of homemaking. In so many homes the mothers are so tired...the children are grumbly and disagreeable...the home is messy and out of control. This is where I found myself a few years ago in my home. I had very little time outside of homeschooling and homemaking...especially if I was going to do a good job. The only way that I had time to do anything extra was to let something go! I knew I could not let my homeschooling go and I knew that my husband would not quite go for the homemaking being put on the back-burner...so, I put my family to work. I put my little Matthew (now 10) in charge of the dishes (washing and putting away), feeding his animals (a dog and a bird), keeping his room clean and organized, and keeping our vehicles clean. I put Elisabeth (now 7) in charge of gathering clothes to wash, folding and putting away the clean clothes, cleaning the bathroom, keeping her room clean and organized, vacuuming the house, and feeding her pets (a cat and 3 rabbits). In addition, everyone has the responsibility of cleaning up after himself or herself. This makes housework simple for me. I really do most of the heavy work and basic clean outs of the rest of the house, but it is amazing how little housework I do

throughout the year. I manage to only really have to deep clean about 3 times a year and the rest of the year is just maintenance. I say this because I know how weary it gets trying to homeschool while doing all of the housework all by your self. It is much simpler to utilize and train your help...so get busy with those darlings!

Another area of homemaking that I keep simple is our meals. I bought two books this year already with wonderful recipes to make ahead. The meals are nutritious while simplifying my work! The books are *Dinners in the Freezer* by Jill Bond and *Hearth and Home* by Karey Swan. You simply must treat yourself to them!

Every year one of our greatest expenses for the life of our homeschool is the purchase of books with recipes, time management, and home maintenance. This may sound extravagant for many of you, but I promise that this is the life of our home. The best thing that we can do in our homes is to keep homemaking simple. These resources help to keep homemaking simple so that we can have more time with our blessings while keeping our homes and menus a glory to God!

Simplicity of the Heart...

The last area of simplicity on my mind and I guess the most important is in keeping our desires of our heart simple. It is so easy in our materialistic society to get off track in our desires. We would all love things...we would all love TIME alone...we would all love to have the freedom to pursue some of our own interests as well as our children's. The key to balance in our desires is in surrender!

We really must be content with the provisions of God whether material, spiritual, or emotional. I met a woman a few months ago that I call the discontent woman. She was looking so much at what she did not have that she missed what she did have. She was not grateful for God's provision in blessing her with her children...instead they were an inconvenience. She resented that these little ones were getting all her time and her money and she had nothing left for her. In her mind, she resented the time that she had spent teaching them when she could have been writing books...making money for new clothes for herself...going on vacations away from her family. As the months have gone by, I have thought about how this woman in her discontent was missing the blessings from God which were right before her eyes just because she did not like the simplicity of a life surrendered to God.

May this never be said of us! May we be content in this season to pour into the lives of our husbands, our children, and those souls that God brings into our lives. May we all be faithful to always keep our desires in agreement with God. May we be faithful in living simple lives devoted to God. I am convinced that simplicity is the key to training our children for the Lord. It was the key in the life of Jesus as He ministered to others. Just the same, simplicity is the key to making our homeschools great!

A Look at Home

I remember the first time I ever met or heard of a homeschooler. I was at a ladies seminar with my little nursing infant. It was there that I met a beautiful, mature 12-year-old homeschooler who was taking care of ALL the children in the nursery. I had my doubts and reservations about this thing called homeschooling. But, as I nursed my baby in the nursery and carried on a conversation with this young lady, I realized that there was something different about this one...

The second time I was faced with the thought of homeschooling was when a dear friend of mine decided to pull her troubled six-year-old out of school. I had taught him in church...WHEW! The last thing I thought he needed was to be brought home without "socialization!"

Time has passed and both of these precious children have now entered adulthood. Their families have been support structures to me through my years of homeschooling. What happened? The 12-year-old graduated after homeschooling all those years and went on to college and the mission field. The young boy was transformed in less than a year! He is now one of my dearest friends. Us? Well, God had a plan for us!

We Begin the Journey!

We began homeschooling formally when Matthew was 4. It was the spring before his Kindergarten year of school. I was so gun-ho to teach my little genius! I went out and bought an American Flag, a Christian Flag, a school desk, a chalkboard, a dry erase board, flashcards, and of course, a truckload of school supplies! I was ready for "school-at-home!" The first day I got up my darling 4 year old and almost 2 year old...stood them up like little soldiers...said the pledges, our prayers, sang all those songs that they sing at Vacation Bible School...we were official! Christian Education!????

That atmosphere lasted about 2 days and we were back to our old selves! Cuddled up on the couch devouring stories of long ago...learning all the gruesome facts of every animal God made...developing relationships with great men and women of the past and one another! The only problem I had was that I simply felt guilty...we were learning but we could not seem to go by the plan...the curriculum! You see our curriculum was so wonderful! So many ideas...so many book suggestions for us to read. We wanted to do it all!! I could not bear the thought of not teaching my children every minute detail about every single thing that there was to learn about! So, we devoured learning...but I felt guilty...

Re-evaluation...

At the end of the year that year, I was re-evaluating my year of homeschooling. What worked, what did not work, what we would continue, what we would shape up. I asked my little boy what he liked the best about homeschooling. He did not make one mention of the flags, nor the chalkboards, nor the flashcards, nor even the school desk! He shared

that his favorite thing about homeschooling was our “cuddle-cuddle time.” That time cuddled up reading with one another!

Well, I must say that this was the beginning of a transformation in our homeschool that would bring us to the freedom and life that we now have. I could not have continued homeschooling in the guilt of not doing all I was “supposed” to do. I could not insist on doing what would never captivate the children and encourage them to really love learning. I would have to follow God and trust Him to bear the fruit in our children.

What did we do? Well, it has been a long process but we have slowly given up all the “school-at-home” mentality in exchange for a lifestyle of learning. We have swapped artificial learning modes for real learning that can continue for life! What is the result? I am no longer the one pulling them around doing it all for them...I am no longer a slave to any curriculum or approach...I really know my children and how they learn best...I have complete freedom to teach them the way that God intends for them to be taught.

What Does Our Homeschool Look Like?

What does our homeschool look like? First of all, we have specific goals that are laid out in Scripture. I am no longer the slave to the goals of a certain curriculum company. Our goals are based on God’s Word and we make our resources fit those goals. My favorite verses that share our goals are 1 Timothy 1:5 and Deuteronomy 6. 1 Timothy 1: 5 (NASV) ***“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”*** Deut. 6: 4-9, ***“Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”***

The difference in basing our goals on God’s goals is that my end product that I am reaching for in this race is for children with pure hearts, good consciences and sincere faiths. All the SAT scores...projects...completed curriculum...or diplomas in the world will not ensure that I reach this goal but as we are faithful to love God with all our hearts, souls, and might the Lord blesses us with this being the fruit in our children! As we teach to our children who we are, what is on our hearts, and who God is, then God is able to work mightily in the hearts of our children.

The Difference...

What difference does this make in the homeschool? Well, it first changes our focus. Our focus is not on attaining a diploma and then calling education a success. Actually by the time our children finish their training in our home, they will actually have earned several diplomas by the world’s standards. There is just so much that they need to learn before they enter the world to minister with their own families to our world that needs truth desperately. I would hate to limit the education of my children to the simple goals of

our inferior system of education in our society, so we have chosen to set our goal for completion for them to simply be equipped for ministry.

The next difference is how we teach them. Did you notice in the passage from Deuteronomy how God says that we are to pass down wisdom to our children? I think that this passage alone can show what the problem was that first year that I was teaching my children at home. We had traded the natural way of teaching our children for the inferior “school at home” approach which only brings bondage, guilt, frustration, and strife to the Christian home. I now determine whether resources are right for our family on the following criteria...Are they home-friendly? Are they requiring too much busy-work or do they produce a real product? Is this just a lot of head knowledge or is this learning that is applicable for real life? Are they natural to teach or are they requiring that I do lots of preparation before and evaluation afterward? Can this go on without me...can my husband pick it up and help when I am sick? Can the children do it all by themselves? Would the children choose to do it on their own in their free time? Is the mentality behind the curriculum that the child needs to be fed the material or are they learning so that they can produce a real product? Can the whole family do it together or does it separate my family intellectually, spiritually and physically? Is this learning at home encouraging your children to sense their purpose and mature in order to fulfill that purpose that God has for them? My interpretation of Deuteronomy 6 is that for us to teach God’s way then what we teach must be natural...must be easy to teach along the way...must be a passion (especially if it must be on your heart as well!)...must build relationships in the family...must help them mature toward the purpose that God has for them!

A Typical Day...

So, all of this philosophy of education established, what on earth does our day look like? Well, actually it is not much different than those days when I used to feel guilty! Isn’t that funny? I now see the fruit after the many years of teaching my children in this natural, easy way. We begin our days a little later than many families because I try to stay up to greet my darling husband when he comes in from work. Usually Matthew is up already finished with his quiet time and breakfast when I sleepily arise and begin my quiet time. Around the time that my quiet time is done my daughter is waking and has her quiet time while I get dressed. We then feed our pets...do our chores...finished getting dressed for the day...and settle in for our table time.

Our table time is the time for our skills to be developed. We begin our table time with Bible Study (we study together, read aloud the passage, practice Bible Memory, and share Prayer Requests), then Matthew works on his Copywork while I work with Elisabeth on her Phonics and Math. When Elisabeth begins her Copywork, I make sure that Matthew understands his Math lesson for the day. They work until their lessons are completed thoroughly and excellently. Their lessons are short and predictable each day. This makes schoolwork relaxing and lessons the stress of having to push children who do not know what to expect! My children know that this is all that they have to do each day...but that they are required to do it excellently! I find them excited and disciplined about doing their lessons whether I am around or not.

Once the table time is done, we are busy about the rest of our day. The children fill their day with several things. They have specific responsibilities that they must attend to daily such as care for their pets and our home. They also have the freedom to pursue interests such as music lessons, Cub Scouts, Keepers At Home, Nature Studies, Writing (Matthew wrote his second book during his Christmas Break and is always working on several other books which he also hopes to publish.), Building (Harold and Matthew are partners in all their building projects...the house, things around our land, and even model airplanes!), Baking and Sewing (interests of Elisabeth!), and of course, every child needs time to play.

The other main part of our learning comes from our family reading time. On those lazy days when it is hard to pursue interests outside, we will cuddle up for reading. Most of the time, our reading and picture studies are in the evening after dinner. It is the quietest time of our day. I have found through the years that this is the key to really developing a love for learning. Reading aloud develops the relationships among the family members, develops the relationships with the great men and women throughout history, develops character in the children, creates memories that last for a lifetime, and teaches schoolwork without that “school at home” mentality!

We end our day with Bible Reading and Prayer as a family. If nothing else than just the Bible Reading and Prayer were done, I would still feel that our day is a success but I feel that all the balance of learning as a lifestyle has made our homeschool what God intended for it to be all along!

The Vision...

As I think back over the years, I see that God has really done a great work in my heart! I did not learn it all at once. It took each day of each year to bring us where we are! I am thrilled that God did not let me fall prey to homeschooling the world’s way during those times of insecurity. I praise Him that He gave me a vision for what He wanted to do in the lives of each of my children. My first impression of homeschooling was so different than what our home is really about. I now know what God intended in the lives of all who are homeschooling. It is more than just teaching at home; it is training them up in the way that they should go!

Basic Whole-Wheat Bread

Ingredients that are a must...

Whole Wheat Flour
Yeast (SAF is recommended)
Water
Oil (Pure Olive Oil recommended...note...NOT Extra Virgin Olive Oil)
Honey
Salt
Dough Enhancer

Instructions...(Don't forget to read the tips!)

In your mixing bowl mix...
6 cups of water
2 cups of whole wheat flour
3 Tablespoons of Yeast

Allow ingredients to sponge for 15 minutes. (This activates the yeast and starts it working so much better that if you are using a machine...you only need one rise!)

Add remaining ingredients...

2/3 cup of oil (Pure Olive Oil)
2/3 cup of honey
1 1/2 T. Salt
2 Tablespoons of Dough Enhancer

- Add flour until the dough cleans the side of the bowl...the humidity will affect how much flour is added.
- Knead for 6 minutes with a mixer...until soft and pliable by hand. Remember Whole Wheat will be sticky.
- If you used a mixer...shape into loaves and place in baking pans. IF not you will want to look into tips for recommended rising time...place in a warm area in a large bowl if you must have several risings.
- While shaping loaves, you will want to grease your hands and the working surface (counter) with oil NOT flour.
- Divide dough into 3 equal parts...each part will then be divided into 2 separate loaves.
- Allow to rise till double.

- Bake for 25-30 minutes in a 350-degree oven or until it sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom and are golden brown on the top and the sides of the loaf.
- Allow to cool before slicing.
- If you do not have a bread mixer, you will need to use a smaller batch...Try using the following ingredients...

For 4 loaves...

$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of honey 8-10 cups of flour (remember only till it does not stick to the sides!)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil 2 tsp. salt

3 cups water 2 TBS yeast

2 TBS dough enhancer

Tips for Baking Great Bread!

- Mix 1/2 Golden 86 and 1/2 Fresh ground Red Winter Wheat for best results. Red Winter Wheat makes the breads heartier...Golden 86 makes the bread softer.
- If you do not have a good mixer like a Bosch or Kay Tech, prepare bread in smaller batches...like 2 loaves for hand kneading. The glutes are difficult to develop by hand kneading in larger batches. If the gluten is not developed fully the consistency will be affected.
- If you grind your wheat, it is important to stir while grinding. Get rid of any black pebbles...occasionally they get into the wheat.
- Use high protein wheat...higher than 14%.
- Whole Wheat Bread is great for giving you fiber in your diet, which attaches to toxins and takes them out of your body.
- The benefits of grinding your own wheat are that it increases your nutrition and decreases your need for vitamin supplements.
- For storage of wheat once it is ground, freezing keeps most nutrients! At least keep it refrigerated.
- When you are ready to bake bread, be sure that your flour is able to reach room temperature to help the yeast work better.
- Yeast keeps well for 6 months to 1 year if kept in the freezer.
- If you put oil in your measuring cup before you put the honey...it will make it easier to get the honey out.
- When mixing your bread...add enough flour to just clean the edge of the bowl...use oil for working the bread not flour. Flour will make the bread crumbly and dry!
- Spray your pans with Pam before placing your dough in to rise. The smaller pans, which are available from The Urban Homemaker...1-800-55-BREAD, are most recommended for perfect bread.
- For any failures...use for bread crumbs or croutons.
- If you are working the bread by hand, you will need to place in a bowl for a rising of about 90 minutes...then punch down and allow to rise again for 60 minutes...then shape into loaves and allow to rise for 30 minutes and then bake.
- If your bread over-rises, punch down and let it rise again.

- If you need to freeze the bread...freeze after the first kneading.
- Do not use Olive Oil in Cookies...it gives a bad taste.
- Never pull bread or tear bread during the kneading...you only need to stretch...punch down, flatten, fold over! No pulling apart until ready to divide into loaves.
- For spice breads or cinnamon rolls...use more spices with Whole Wheat Flour.

Cinnamon Rolls...Tomberlin Style!

This recipe comes from a dear friend of mine...they are excellent for breakfast or for a wholesome snack!

1 dozen cinnamon rolls requires 2 loaves of dough from the above recipe.

You will roll out into a rectangle with a pastry roller.

Smooth Butter generously over the dough.

Sprinkle honey or Brown Sugar (recommended) all over very generously!

Sprinkle Cinnamon generously...add chopped nuts, dates, dried apples, apricots...whatever you prefer.

Roll up...pinch ends shut...and knead to completely close any seams.

Slice starting in the middle using dental floss to slice neatly...you will slice in half...slice those halves in half...then slice those parts into thirds. Wala...12 equal pieces!

Place in 9 1/2 X 11 pan already sprayed with Pam.

Mash together once all are in the pan.

Allow to rise...

Bake in 350-degree oven until lightly browned.

For topping...mix...2 Cups of Powdered Sugar, 1-2 drops of butter flavoring, vanilla to taste (about 1 tsp.), and 2 Tablespoons of milk...until thin enough to spread.

Enjoy!

Making Homeschooling Great: Relationships!!

A reprint from *Homeschool Digest Magazine*

Have you ever looked at a homeschooling family and wondered how DO they do it? Their children are all neatly dressed, well mannered, and even have their teeth brushed! There is a general spirit of gentleness and quietness with each family member. Well, my dear friends, we can all make homeschooling great! I believe that the biggest secret is going back to scripture to see what Jesus did in His earthly ministry to stay on track. Think for a moment...what was His chief focus? What did He do when times were tough? How did he spend His time?

Jesus had the greatest ministry of all time. What was His focus? It was relationships. Jesus guarded His relationships. His primary focus was His relationship with God. Jesus went to God at all times. He had regular quiet times with God. What did Jesus do when times were tough? Notice that by having a steady quiet time, He was prepared at all times. But, even Jesus pulled away from the crowds in the midst of heavy demands in order to seek God's solutions and God's will for each and every situation. How did Jesus spend His time? He had a careful balance between His relationships with God, His intimate followers, and those others that He ministered to.

We are no different than Christ in our need to focus on relationships. The greatest command is to love God and others as ourselves. In other words, our greatest focus of our lives should be on relationships! If we want to make homeschooling great then, we must keep relationships on track and then we will bear the fruit that we so much desire to bear!

Of course, the most important relationship is that of our relationship with God! We must be sure that our relationship with God is truly on track. The most difficult days that I have experienced the last 6 years were not really as a result of my curriculum...the children's behavior... my isolation from friends or activities...or my husband not being the "Saviour" that I wanted him to be. No, my most difficult days were as a result of my very own need for time quiet before my precious Lord and Saviour. You may not realize how humbling that it is to admit such a statement but there is a direct connection between my bad days and my lack of time with God. (Just ask all my dear family and dear friends and they will say a big AMEN here, ha ha!) If you want to stay on track during these busy days of teaching your little ones, then you must stay close to your Source of strength! I have found no other way to actually be ready for all of the challenges of homeschooling than to abide in Christ. By abiding in Christ, I mean to truly rest in Him. You cannot rest in God unless you are reconciled with Him, fully surrendered to His plan and His will, and fully trusting in Him to work all for your good. Big order? Well, look at what it yields...you get peace in the midst of all difficulties, hope during the tough times, and that never-ending relationship with Him!

I find that as I abide with Christ, I am able to patiently wait on His timing for events in my life with expectancy and hope! It is abiding in Christ that will give you that firm, immovable, enduring faith! Abiding in Christ is faith building and it bears fruit. I love the Scripture from John 15: 1-17: ***“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”*** KJV

Yes, we must abide in Christ and He in us in order to bear any fruit in our homes. Notice, I did not say that in order to bear fruit we must use “X” curriculum, make “X” on the SAT’s, be involved in “X” activities. It is as we are abiding in Christ that we are truly able to bear fruit in our children. Look at the blessed promise we have...we will bear ***much*** fruit. Unless we are abiding in Christ we will miss it! We will get caught up in the daily grind and miss God’s great purpose in our lives. We will miss the opportunity to bear fruit in our very own homes!

Abiding in Christ begins with our daily quiet time. Notice that I did say DAILY! My friends, there is no greater deception than that our homeschools are just another method or alternative to education. Homeschooling is your chief method of training and discipling your children and you absolutely cannot pass on what you do not have yourself. Spend time getting quiet before God each day. If you are too busy for God, perhaps you are too busy to homeschool!

I do not think that the absence of quiet time in our lives is because of a lack of time, it is really because of a lack of discipline mixed with a belief that we can do it all on our own! It is at this time when we are all too apt to fall prey to Satan. Do be committed to your quiet time and balance it with Bible study, meditation on scripture, and prayer! Each is empty without the other. God wants us to be sincere and pure. He wants for us to live out His principles in our daily life. This is impossible without your quiet time. If you are having a hectic time, spend your time first with God...that is when you need it most! If you are going through difficulties in your homeschool, that is exactly when you need to be spending time with God the most! Want to make homeschooling great? First, start by keeping your relationship with God on track!

If all is on track with God, you are then ready to look at your relationship with your husband. My first year of homeschooling, I went through a complete year focusing so heavily on the children that at the end of the year I found that my marriage was off track. I found little that we were genuinely interested in together...little to even talk about beside the children. We took another whole year just getting back on track. Listening to one another, having late night talks and cuddle time. In order to keep marriage on track, it takes much effort at building the marriage in the midst of the heavy demands. After knowing the danger of getting off track, can you believe that a couple of years ago while building our home, it happened again? I was surprised at the end of our building project that we were off track again. You know these times become so obvious as I have those old yukky symptoms such as feeling lonely, frustrated with the children, or I simply do not know what to do in our homeschool. Ever felt like that??

Well, perhaps you are like me and you will find a big help as you focus on your relationship with your husband. When you hit rough spots go to him and seek his counsel. Often, they will have the perfect solution IF we just ask! I struggled for several months with my son when he was in the third grade studying multiplication. I struggled until I told my husband my problem; he immediately had the perfect solution. How much stress I would alleviate if I would just take him my struggles at the beginning!

It is also important to seek his counsel about what is most important (to teach, to do, etc.) in your life. Many times we get ourselves over-extended when if we were seeking our husbands' counsel first we would eliminate all of the problems before they occur! My husband keeps me on track in this area as he makes me stick to the most important instead of getting sidetracked with details. Encourage your husband to be the head in these areas. If you are like me, you must listen very carefully or you will miss much of their counsel!

Encourage your husband to be involved in your homeschool...teaching what he knows, deciding on subjects to teach, and disciplining the children... Let him know your needs. You may be in deep need of just a daily walk ALONE to pray or think...or you may need a HOT bath daily complete with a cup of tea and Mozart playing in the background. It may be help with a subject or just a time to go to a Bible Study with other women. Many times your very weakness will be his strength, so JUST ASK! When you do ask, I think you will be surprised when you begin to experience less stress. Keeping your marriage on track and getting your husband involved in your homeschool is the biggest secret to making homeschooling a long-term commitment...to making homeschooling great!

The heart of your homeschool is the children. Of course, you must keep your relationships with them on track. I can always tell when my children are not having enough time with me by their behavior and attitudes. There are a few things that we do in our home to keep relationships with the children on track. The first thing is the pace of our home. I am by nature a high-energy person. I could go, go, go and not drop easily. With children, I have had to learn that my energy must not set the pace of our home or we would all be in trouble. Children need time to explore, have adventures, to enjoy a good book. If I stay on the go as much as I can handle, the children lose the freedom to do these treasures of childhood!

I try to limit all commitments so that we have room in our days to let the children be children! We allow our children to choose the one extra activity that they want to do and that is all they may do outside of the home. We limit all other extra things based on these priorities. Matthew has chosen Boy Scouts and Elisabeth has chosen Keepers at Home. All their energies are poured into those activities so that they are excellent at what they do. Plus, they are not run ragged to do a lot of other things!

Another thing that I do to guard my time for relationships is delegate the workload of our home. All families that I know who homeschool for a very long time have learned to delegate the workload. Everyone in your home can do something. If they can mess up, then they can clean up. The lesson is for you as a mother, you must learn to use your help! I found myself wore out about 4 years ago with my whiny, trouble making

children who were doing nothing but creating messes. I decided that the only way I would be able to homeschool was if I had help with my housework. Just one look at the budget told me that hired help was out of the question, so I put the children to work! It was all in the training. You can do it too! Train them to do their part in the house. Even your youngest can fold towels and empty the trash and wash the counters. They love to feel important. Plus, you will have more time to spend with them loving them!

Another area that must be on track is the area of schoolwork. First, use curricula that are home-friendly. I only use curricula that have been designed by homeschooling families. The reason that I do this is because all else is written to create the same atmosphere of a school without consideration for home-life. Home-friendly curriculum can usually be taught as well if the children are cuddled up on the couch or hanging from a tree or, for those of you more traditional homeschoolers, sitting at their desks!

Also, home-friendly curriculum revives the children because most are based on real, living books. Actually, I find that they revive me as well! At times that I feel that school is out of sorts, we usually take a few extra hours to read a good read-aloud...usually that makes our family begin to feel back to normal. I think that what it really does is create a link in our relationships as we go back in time together. Now, this is nice but you can not always do all for your children. Also, you must train your children to work independently. I love working alongside of my children, but my days have become easier now that they can start without me and work without my prodding. Work yourself out of a job! Give them schoolwork that they would choose to do in their spare time! Selecting curriculum that encourages the children to become lifetime learners will be the key to having more time to enjoy relationships...that is most important!

What about others? How do you keep your relationships at home on track and minister to the needs of others? Well, our family ministers as a family. Each of us has our gifts that combine into a family ministry. We are all involved so that makes it easy to reach outside of our home. Because we view our family life as a ministry to the world, our children know that all that we do is for God's glory. They see that entertaining their friends in our home while mom has tea is really ministering as a family. They see that serving behind the scene to get ready for mom's seminars is as important as mom speaking. They see that smiling at others in the grocery store or patiently waiting while mom or dad talks to someone about God is important for those whose souls are weary. Ministering to the needs of others will come naturally after all else in our lives is on track. It will be a part of the whole picture as we make homeschooling great!

So, my dear friends how are your relationships? This is not to make you feel guilty, instead let our Almighty God bring you in close and teach you to become as He is. To nurture those relationships! To see life as He sees life! To not miss the great opportunity to make your homeschool great!

Happy Homeschooling!

The Godly Help Meet...

For homeschooling moms, many times our days focus on teaching the children, mothering, chauffeuring, doing hobbies and even ministering to the needs of others. I remember the first year that I homeschooled our children. I was busy having fun at home teaching my treasures, baking, sewing. At the end of the year I looked at this wonderful man who was my husband and I felt that I did not really know him...that I was not really doing a lot to "help" him like I was created to do. I turned my focus to becoming more of a helpmeet (which is a forever project!) and I saw that all else fell in line as well. Likewise, since that time, I have found that when things were most difficult they always became easier when our relationship was in good working order. The challenge is for you all to seek to find God's design so YOU will not have any holes in your relationships!

A Helpmeet... Not a Hurtmeet...

The first introduction to the word help meet is found in Genesis 2:18-25... *"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a 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 a helpmeet 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: she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his 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."* What a beautiful picture of God's provision for man! God had literally given Adam the whole world but He knew that was "not good" because man was still alone. So, in great provision, God created a helpmeet suitable for Adam. Not a helper to work in the garden for Adam so he could spend his days playing golf (or hunting!)...Not a door mat to walk upon! Instead, God provided Adam with a helpmeet with a very special purpose of being the completer of Adam!

What is a Helpmeet?

Help in its verb form means *"to aid or supply that which the individual cannot provide for himself...conveying the idea of aiding someone in need..."* Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines helper as *one who helps* (gives assistance, strength, promotes, delivers from difficulties or distress, advances a purpose, relief, to contribute strength or means, aids or assists, furnishes or administers a remedy, one who supplies with anything wanted.

Meet is from the Hebrew word meaning, *"opposite...according to opposite of him,*

meaning that she will complement and correspond to him, she is to be equal to and adequate for the man." The meaning of this is also deepened in Webster's 1828 Dictionary, correspond: *"to suit, to answer; to agree; to fit; to be adapted to; to be equal; to be adequate or proportioned."*

A Helpmeet is to provide what is needed or lacking! She is fit for her husband! She is suitable for him! She is adapted for him! She is compatible to him! God created her for his companion...his partner!

The Praying Helpmeet...

A helpmeet is marked by a life of prayer! She will pray for her man! I am not talking about a simple little God bless him...I mean earnest, continual, unceasing prayer. Prayer with a burdened heart until you pray through for him! So often, more time is spent grumbling and complaining about one fault in our husbands than we spend in prayer for them in a whole year! A helpmeet will be busy praying and fasting for her man!

Let's do a check--up: Do you pray earnestly, continually, and unceasingly for him? When was the last time that you prayed about a problem of his until it was answered? Do you care enough about his struggles, his dreams, his concerns, and his desires to pray and fast for God's answers? Do you take your concerns to the Lord or try to handle them yourself? Would your husband call you a woman of prayer? Can he depend on you to be praying for him? May we commit to become a praying help meet today!

The Supportive Help Meet...

A few years ago, my husband and I were talking about the needs of men as I was preparing for my book *Hidden Woman*. (Still not out BUT IS available in audio!) It was very interesting that his first response to the needs of men was that they needed three things...Prayer, Encouragement and Support. Wow! He went on to share other things...which are the outline of this article (and the book) but he felt that he could not withstand the demands of his job in Law Enforcement if those three ingredients were not primary in our relationship. I agree here on this one! Our husband's heartbeat must be our heartbeat! We must really believe in him when the going gets tough! We must purpose to stand beside him EVEN when we have a different plan! This support must be unconditional too...not based on our moods or their performance!

To check up on this area ask yourself...Do you really care about things that are important to him (his job or hobbies or dreams or concerns or his heart's desires)? Does your spirit motivate your husband to be the true leader in your marriage or do you just "take over" when you think he can't do it himself? Do you trust in his ability to handle decisions and provide for ALL your needs? Does he know that you are on his side? Does he feel your support or does he feel all alone? Purpose to be that support structure that he can lean upon as he walks his Christian walk!

The Help Meet Who Respects Her Husband...

The area of respect is the area in which many women unknowingly begin to hurt their husbands. As a result, many begin to destroy their own home in the process. Instead, let's become like the Proverbs 31 woman and create even more respect for him! Proverbs 31: 23...*"Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land."* Respect for our husbands begins at home! They should be fully confident that we would never harm them with our tongues or attitudes! Trust me, if you ever say anything bad about your husband everyone will immediately get their little evil minds going and think 100 times worse than you are saying! Be real careful about this. Our husbands deserve our loyalty in this area! If others see that you honor and respect your husband, they will too!

OK, check yourself in this area...How do you speak to your husband? What about your attitude, what does it say? Do you roll your eyes...act disinterested in what he says...do you correct him the whole time he is talking? How do you speak about him...Praise? Complain? Whine? Admire? Make it your ambition to be like the Proverbs 31 woman by creating respect for that darling man!

A Helpmeet Admires Her Man...

I heard a message not long ago by Denny Kenaston in which he said, *"Every man should know what it is like to be a king! He ought to be a king in his own home!"* Well, what is it like in your home...is your husband king? We ought to have our days wrapped around things, which bless him! We should admire Him Exceedingly! Esteem him! Respect Him Highly! We will get much, much farther with our husbands with admiration than with nagging, comparing, complaining or whining! We will find them drawing near to us as we treat them with the respect that God created them to need. Yes, God wants our marriages to be a picture of the church's relationship with King Jesus! So, how are you doing...Is your husband King of His Castle? Do your actions and words show admiration, esteem, and respect? Do you stop what you are doing to listen to him? Do you create an atmosphere of excitement about Dad coming home? Do you treat him like you would KING JESUS?

The Love of a Help Meet...

I know, I have finally gotten to a given on this point...of course, we LOVE our husbands? RIGHT? Well, I am afraid if it were always that easy the Bible would not have commanded that the older women teach the younger women HOW to love their husbands. We must learn how to really love our husbands. True love is loving them unconditionally...EVEN when they do not perform as we might want! It is pouring our whole life into him...making HIM great. Honoring his wishes! Pouring our whole life into loving him! Oh, how much tougher...it will take purifying our hearts to fill this great need. I Peter 3 says that it is the conversation...manner of our life...that will win them over. This requires that we focus on KNOWING God...becoming conformed to the image of Christ...becoming holy! As we purify our hearts, we will find his heart changing into a heart seeking after us!

What about it dear friends? Do you miss him while he is away? Do you willingly do what he asks? Do you honor his wishes even when he would never know? Do you revolve your life around him? Do you love unconditionally? Is your heart pure? Are you purposing become like Christ or are you too busy trying to help God conform your husband to your standard of LIKE CHRIST? Let's purpose to become our husband's helpmeet by surrendering ALL to God...waiting on God to do the work necessary in our husband's lives...becoming our husbands' friend as they step heavenward...never slipping into the flesh by trying to MAKE our husbands into our idea of what God wants!

The Encouragement of a Help Meet...

This was another one of those biggies that my husband shared with me that was vital for him to be successful! I have to agree. I see those fears that no one else sees...I see those struggles that no one else could ever imagine were there...I feel the pain that is just quietly aching...that is why God gave me that extra dose of encouragement just to help him! Your husbands are no different! Let's encourage them to fulfill their goals. To go where God is leading! Let us be faithful to encourage them with our prayers. Let them know that we have been praying for him! Encourage them with scripture! It is always a blessing to get a copy of the scripture that God has given you to encourage him. Psalm 37 was a special gem while my husband was working for a very immoral boss in Mississippi...It was an encouragement to know just how God sees things and how He works! This is so encouraging for our husbands when they know that we care enough to go to God on their behalf, to seek God's Word of encouragement just for them! It really shows that that their struggles are our struggles! As you see him struggle, write notes of encouragement or even love letters about his strengths that you admire! Let him know that you are with him! Never underestimate the power of hugs! They are always an encouragement!

So, how do you do in this area? Are you praying for your husband's struggles? Are you God's vessel of encouragement for your husband? Do you share special gems from scripture with your husband? Does your husband ever hear what you like about him? What does your husband think of when he thinks of you...she is happy to be my wife, she has faith in me, she needs me, or she would rather do her own thing, she doesn't have to have me, all I am is a paycheck...I can't please her?

The Helpmeet Promotes Her Man...

What is the real difference between the feminist and the Christian Help Meet? I think it is WHO is built up and promoted. The help meet can get her fulfillment in God's design for her life...His purpose. The help meet can forget self and forward her husband. Advance her husband. Contribute to his growth, enlargement, or excellence by knowing that it is really how we are most fulfilled! She values him! She exalts him! She elevates him! She raises him before herself! Which are you busy promoting...yourself? The kids? Or your darling husband? Are you willing to take the back seat as you forward and advance your husband's call? Are you willing to set aside all your own dreams to help him pursue his? Are you ready to change your plans to go along with his? Are you

willing to pour all of your gifts, strengths, wisdom, etc...ALL into pushing him into the front? Are you willing to be a hidden woman?

The Helpmeet Affirms Her Man...

Have you ever-paid attention to men? I think that they all have a great need to have that one person who affirm their manhood...their leadership abilities, their masculinity, their sexuality! Comfort any of their insecurities! Let him be your hero! Let him know that no one else can take his place! Make him firm- steady, fixed, constant, stable, unshaken, not easily moved, solid, not giving way. Establish Him as a leader! To establish is to settle or fix what is wavering, doubtful or weak, to make good! Submission will establish him! Through your submission he will take leadership and will be strong, unwavering, sure, and strong! Affirm him by being loyal to him! Be loyal even when he makes mistakes, when he is facing difficulties, when he is suffering, when he is excited!

How well do you affirm your husband? Does he know that you appreciate him as a man? Does he believe that you cannot live without him? Do you really need him? Are you encouraging his leadership? Are you surrendered to his leadership? Are you loyal to him?

The Inspirational Help Meet...

Harold and I met and began to date in my senior year of high school. We married young only 1-1/2 years after we began dating. I guess that the area of inspiring our husbands to greatness is very important because I can look back and see how much it has meant in our life. Harold did not decide to go into law enforcement until 3 1/2 years after we met. I knew he could do anything. This is what our men need! They need for us to inspire them to absolute greatness! Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines inspire as *"the infusion of ideas or direction."* This definition helps us to see our role very seriously.

We should be encouraging them to have ideas! We should be the one to encourage and embrace his ideas! Have vision for all that God calls him to do! Often this is the little spark that they need to really know that they can do what they dream of doing! How do you know if you are doing OK in this area? Do you believe that your husband is really great? Can God use you to share direction with your husband? Do you encourage your husband to have ideas? Do you lovingly embrace his ideas or beat him down? Have you ever really seen God's Vision for your husband's life? Why not create that spark?

The Challenge of a Help Meet...

In so many marriages the only challenge that a man might get is when he is doing something he believes in and the wife does not like it! Yuck! I am not talking about that being the kind of challenge of a godly help meet! A godly helpmeet can challenge her husband spiritually and mentally! 1 Peter 3:1-2, ***"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the Word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation (manner of life!) of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."*** Yes, this kind of challenging spiritually is not the

nagging, fussing, complaining, whining, bossing that so many women use to BE the Holy Spirit for their husbands! Instead it is becoming godly yourself...allowing him time to spend alone with God with out becoming jealous...and letting GOD deal with any disobedience in your husband's life! The mental challenge comes in as we purpose to know what he does for a living! To know about current events so we can carry on a decent conversation with them! To also know about stimulating ideas! This means staying sharp!

What kind of challenge are you? Do you challenge him to be godly or do you chase him away from God? Do you keep yourself so close to God so he can respect your godliness? Do you know about things he is interested in? Are you stimulating?

The Honor of a Help Meet...

I will never forget the influence of my husband's grandmother who became my best friend until she died. Her marriage relationship was a model of what I believe God wants for us in our homes. She was an honor to her husband. Others would make demands of her...it was Papaw's wishes she always honored in spite of her desire! It may have been actually her fault that these Rushton men are so spoiled because she showered her husband with attention and all these guys think that all women should do the same! I watched her and began to see a model of honor that we could all follow! Create excitement about them! Wrap your day around them! Do special things-bake cookies, etc. to surprise Daddy! Pray for him with your children- for his safety, his courage, his ability to minister to others, for his wisdom in making decisions, for his health, etc. Lift up your husband before others...especially your children and other young women!

Remember Titus 2:3-5? You cannot teach others to honor and love their husbands any better way than by your example! It is an ornament for you to honor him with your words and attitudes and actions. It is SO UGLY for you to tear him down! Remember that honor is not based on performance, but on position! Treat him like you would treat Jesus! Our homes hurt from a lack of honor! Satan chips away at the home and the man when we talk about them or rebel against them-THIS IS A LINE TO NEVER CROSS!

What about the area of honor? Are you honoring your husband as you would Christ? Are his wishes priorities? Do you create an excitement over his homecoming each day? Are you being a good example for your children and other young women?

A Challenge...

I know that this article is a lot of heart surgery but where are you? Are you so busy doing everything else that you can not take the time for your sweetheart? Are you recognizing the need to build that relationship? Well, God is more than willing to do that work in your life! It will take confessing those areas of error, surrendering to God's work and God's will in the life of your husband, and committing anew to become the help meet that God designed you to be!

Evaluating Curriculum...

As you spend your time praying and deciding on curriculum, here are some considerations...

- Is it home-friendly...is it written especially for the home? Is it written by parents or by “professionals?”
- Is it easy to use...do you have to have a teacher’s manual or is the work easy to understand in the book itself?
- Are the lessons short and concise?
- Does it encourage the children to learn on their own? To become interesting in the whole subject... possibly as a profession??
- Would your children choose to study this in their free time?
- Are you giving yourself a balance between the children working independently and alone with you?
- Does this curriculum equip the child to learn on their own or does it make them (and you) dependent upon only this curriculum sequence (except for Math which really needs to be on a sequence!)

The Charlotte Mason Approach To Education

The Basics...

· **Use Whole, Living Books.** Charlotte Mason advocated giving the children a generous selection of the very best books...whole books instead of textbooks with snippets of information on topics. She felt that giving the children ideas through first-hand resources, classics, biographies would enliven and challenge their minds! She used the best literature for reading material instead of graded readers! Miss Mason's goal was to let them learn from the best authors instead of just having a nodding acquaintance with them! In order for busy moms in our day and time to have time to truly enjoy whole books, we must prune the textbooks and activity branches allowing for many hours of enjoyment with real books! You won't be sorry!

· **Substitute Narration, Dictation, and Copywork for the tedious Language workbooks.** This is just the opposite of the modern day mindset, which propagates giving children a formal instruction in Grammar before giving them a thorough background of reading and copying great works. Charlotte Mason advocated reading aloud and then allowing the children to narrate (tell back) the story. This used the all the faculties of the mind as the child "must generalize, classify, infer, judge, visualize, discriminate, labor in one way or another, with that capable mind of his, until the substance of that book is assimilated or rejected, according as he shall determine..." The process of narration challenges the mind to gather, process, and articulate information which is the very process of learning! Copywork is the foundation of all writing! In Charlotte Mason's Schools, the children were responsible for keeping copybooks in which they made entries daily. Families today do much the same with copybooks for all Copywork or copybooks for specific subjects such as Poetry, Science, History, Narrations... With Copywork, the children are learning from the masters of literature all of the basics of writing...spelling, grammar, handwriting, and composition! This allows the teacher to save formal Grammar instruction for older ages (Grades 4-8) and then only teach Grammar orally! Charlotte Mason also used Dictation with her students to increase their attentiveness and writing skills. These methods of Language instruction replaced the Workbooks while increasing the student's love of learning!

· **Steady diet of Ideas.** Inspire with ideas every day! Inspire them to really think. Encourage them to enjoy knowledge by presenting them with ideas. You can do this by putting them in direct contact with great minds in Literature, Art, Music, Philosophy, Science, and History! Charlotte Mason encouraged parents to give their children at least one new idea each day by including all forms of human expression!

· **Large dose of Humanities.** Teach an appreciation of the Humanities...Art, Music, Poetry. This area is often neglected by most approaches although it is vital for a well-