

balanced education. By presenting skills alone, we starve the child (and ourselves) of beauty, emotion, and understanding of life! The study of humanities should begin while they are young and forming their personality! They should be given the best, the truly excellent! Betty Carlson in *The Gift of Music* inspired me with her comment, “The more we acquaint ourselves with that which is truly great and beautiful, the more we will dislike and turn away from that which is shallow and ugly.” This quote captures what Charlotte Mason encouraged us to present to the child...that which is great, beautiful, and truly excellent!

· **Short Lessons!** Short lessons will encourage children to develop the habits of attentiveness, and excellence-in quality and neatness- while preventing the contrary habits of dawdling and sloppiness!

· **Lessons until 1:00...Afternoons left for leisure.** Leisure for children means running, climbing, yelling, etc... Handicrafts, practicing musical instruments, chores, visiting lonely neighbors, observing and studying nature, and cooking can also be accomplished! Many families also have business and ministries for their children to be involved in. This does mean NO homework! The children get their work done promptly and correctly eliminating the need for homework and allowing them plenty of time to pursue real interests!

· **No Grades!** Charlotte Mason knew that we are all inspired by admiration, faith, and love so she eliminated the use of artificial stimulants such as prizes, competition, and grades.

· **Three tools for teaching every child:**

Discipline...

Use habit! The most critical part of teaching is the formation of good habits. The responsibility for their habits is ours! Children form either good or bad habits... attentiveness, concentration, truthfulness, self-control, unselfishness, excellence, obedience...OR...restlessness, wandering mind, dulled senses, non-thinking, non-communication, failure, discouragement, disobedience. Self-education...Charlotte Mason believed in equipping the child with the skills needed to be self-educated. This is not the child dependent upon the teacher to gather and pre-digest information for the child. Instead, the child is introduced to the carefully chosen words of the author and then allowed to comment by narration, orally or written, by the age of 6-7! Self-education begins the process of building life-long learners!

Atmosphere...

Charlotte Mason believed that children should be free to learn and grow in an atmosphere of acceptance, value, respect, nurture, serenity, contentment, and stability. The home should be relaxed, stimulating, positive, and enjoyable. Our homes should be inviting, warm, and filled with opportunities to learn!

Life...

True education takes place in REAL LIFE! When we begin to see that all of life is a classroom, we will truly equip our children to become self-educated, life-long learners! In

order to do this we must teach our children how their education relates to real life. Children's minds deteriorate without the stimulus of ideas. The artificial classroom experiences stullify their minds! Charlotte Mason believed Those children will learn to feed their minds on the best intellectual food- literature, Scripture, art, music, history, science, and nature. She believed that they would form their own conclusions without being told what to think!

· **The View of the Child.** Perhaps, there is no greater need than for us to see children as Charlotte Mason saw them. She saw them as persons, real individuals. She respected their minds. She fully believed that they needed to be equipped to THINK and READ on many subjects. She wanted them to be able to reach their own conclusions. She believed that children should be given the Bible, literature, history, art, music, science that is original and straightforward! Miss Mason taught that children needed time to invent episodes, carry on adventures, live heroic lives, lay sieges, build and attack forts...in short, time to be children! She believed that the child should not be rushed, but rather should have plenty of freedom and free time! Perhaps, no other educator has ever really known what a child really needs like Charlotte Mason. As a mother, I believe that Charlotte Mason really knew these precious children that our God made!

A School Day with Charlotte Mason...

1. Teach Skills-reading, writing, math in short lessons at their ability and speed.
2. Picture Studies and Read Aloud time. Read Aloud biographies, classical literature, stories, fables, animal stories, legends, etc...
3. Narrate or draw. (About the pictures studied or read alouds!)
4. Afternoons...Free Time! No homework! Spend Afternoons running, playing, yelling (outside, of course!), climbing trees, having adventures, doing handicrafts, practicing instruments, chores, visiting neighbors or relatives, observing and studying nature, and pursuing interests and hobbies!

Why Use Charlotte's Approach?

There are many reasons that I personally use this approach to teach my children. If for no other reason, Charlotte Mason believed God's Word and used it as the foundation for how she approached children. She knew and loved children. She respected them because she loved and respected God, the Creator of these little ones. Miss Mason saw the home as the basic educational environment, which makes her approach usable in every home! She believed in introducing the children to the vast variety and richness of the world. Miss Mason believed that children should be given the best and that we should expect excellence from them.

Strengths of Charlotte Mason's Approach:

- Strong emphasis on reading whole books!
- Well-rounded focus on excellence in academics (verbal and writing!) and humanities!
- Motivates the child to self-learning!
- All of life is used for a classroom as God intended for it to be...Deut. 6!
- Child-centered instead of teacher-directed!

Contacts for More Information or Curriculum...

Charlotte Mason, *Home Education Series*, 6 Volume Set.

Cindy Rushton, *A Charlotte Mason Primer*, *Time for Tea* (newsletter), *Language Arts...The Easy Way*, *Nature Study...The Easy Way*, *The Never-ending Rushton Reading List*, *Homeschooling...The Easy Way*, Plus MANY workshop tapes on the approach!

Susan Schaeffer Macaulay, *For the Children's Sake*

Catherine Levison, *A Charlotte Mason Education*, *More Charlotte Mason Education*

Clay and Sally Clarkson, *Educating the Wholehearted Child*

Penny Gardner, *Charlotte Mason Study Guide: A Simplified Approach to a "Living" Education*

Elizabeth Wilson, *Books Children Love*

Diane Lopez, *Teaching Children*

Carolyn Hatcher, *Let the Authors Speak: A Guide to Worthy Books Based on Historical Setting*

Compatible Curriculum:

Lifetime Books and Gifts...1-800-377-0390

Cornerstone Curriculum Project...1-972-235-5149

Greenleaf Press...1-800-311-1508

Wholeheart Ministries...1-817-797-2142

Elijah Company...1-615-456-6284

Beautiful Feet Books 1-508-833-8626

Calvert (not from a Christian Worldview)

Sonlight 1-303-730-6292

In His Steps...1-800-583-1336

Digging Into The Bible!

“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” 1 Timothy 4:13

Bible Study and Bible Reading is key to discipleship of your children. Nothing else can give us a deep, eternal love of God! Nothing else can change us to awe and reverence for God! Nothing else can shed light on our path and reveal God’s will in our life! Nothing else can protect and fortify us from Satan’s attacks. Nothing else can gather and destroy things of darkness! Nothing else can go deep into our soul and scrutinize the desires and intentions of our hearts showing them to us as God sees them!

Bible Reading and Bible Study has great power. It affects our obedience as God shows His interest in our lives by speaking personally to us. It changes our walk and our lifestyle. As we become aquatinted with its truths, they reside in our hearts. Being in the Bible through reading and study helps us correctly handle the Word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15) We are shown God’s dealing with people throughout history in spite of their failures, backgrounds, or even their inability’s. As we are in the Bible, we begin to be compelled to share it. We want to pass it on!

I love the wisdom of this quote from *The Duties of Parents* by John C. Ryle, *“He that is well-grounded in it (the Bible) will not generally be found a waverer, and carried about by every wind of new doctrine. Any system of training which does not make a knowledge of Scripture the first thing is unsafe and unsound. Care not so much for their (the children) being mighty in the catechism, as for their being mighty in the Scriptures. This is the training, believe me, that God will honor. See that your children read the Bible reverently. Train them to look on it, not as the word of men, but as it is the truth, the Word of God, written by the Holy Ghost Himself, --all true, all profitable, and able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. See that they read it regularly. Train them to regard it as their soul’s daily food, --as a thing essential to their soul’s daily health. See that they read it all. You need not shrink from bringing any doctrine before them. You need not fancy that the leading doctrines of Christianity are things which children cannot understand. Children understand far more of the Bible than we are apt to suppose. Fill their minds with Scripture. Let the Word dwell in them richly. Give them the Bible, the whole Bible, even while they are young.”* I could not say it any better!

If we want God to work in the lives of our children, then we must do our part in giving them a deep, abiding love for His Word... else they miss the opportunity for God to use them in His fullness! If we want our children to be more than nominal Christians...those who are willing to have high standards and take stands for God...then we must train them up in the Word of God from infancy...else they begin to become religious forsaking a real, vibrant, personal relationship with God Almighty! If we really desire for our children to have a passion for God when they are adults, then we must train them from infancy to go to His Word EACH day for their sustenance and joy...else they become like most

Christians today thinking it is an option to even read God's Word and they be too weak to be able to take a stand for God Almighty!

I remember the first time I ever read *For the Children's Sake* by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay. I came across a passage that she quoted from Charlotte Mason, a 19th century educator and author, that has forever changed my method of teaching children both in my homeschool and in our Bible study/family worship. It is about school lesson books, but it is also very enlightening as we think about teaching the Bible to our children. *"Lesson Books- A child has not begun his education until he has acquired the habit of reading to himself, with interest and pleasure, books fully on a level with his intelligence. I am speaking now of his lesson books- which are all too apt to be written by persons who have never chanced to meet a child. All who know children, know that they do not talk twaddle and do not like it, and prefer that which appeals to their understanding. Their lesson-books should be offer matter for their reading, whether aloud or to themselves: therefore they should be written with literary power. As for the matter of these books, let us remember that children can take in ideas and principles, whether the latter be moral or mechanical, as quickly and clearly as we do ourselves (perhaps more so); but detailed processes, lists, and summaries blunt the edge of the child's delicate mind. Therefore, the selection of their first lesson books is a matter of grave importance, because it rests with these to give children the idea that knowledge is supremely attractive and that reading is delightful. Once the habit of reading his lesson books is set up in a child, his education is not completed, but ensured; he will go on for himself in spite of the obstructions which school too commonly throws his way."* **Home Education** by Charlotte Mason, Page 220

Prior to reading this passage, I had felt in my spirit that my children needed pure scripture in our time of Bible reading and study. I had just fell short of fully trusting God to do the work necessary to help them understand and apply His Word in their lives...OK, I thought that God needed my help! Well, don't think that most of us are not doing the same thing! We think that the children need our little sermons, analogies, explanations... as my mother would say in true Southern terms, *"Our Two-bits!"* Our God and our children do not need for us to get in between them. They will have a lot better relationship if we only put them together and let them work together.

Quick Pointers for Bible Study:

1. Provide the Bible ALONE, not Bible programs and Bible Curriculum!

There is a real temptation to look for the perfect Bible program, guide, curriculum, and storybook. I love what Nancy Campbell said in her magazine *Above Rubies* one month... *"There is really no need to provide programs geared toward young children and youth. What we all need is God's Word, pure and simple because 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.'* (Romans 10:17)" For our children to come to faith in God, we must bring them to Him not to an interpretation of Him, or a cute, flashy curriculum that never gets around to teaching His actual words. I believe that there really is not any better program or curriculum than the Bible itself for us to use in teaching our children.

2. Do not feel as though YOU must have all of the answers yourself!

So many parents never get around to teaching their children the Bible just from pure fear. Fear of what? Fear of not knowing the answers! Fear of not knowing what to teach! Fear of doing the wrong thing! My friends, God is not the author of fear! He will meet you at the point of obedience. Do not worry about the answers, God can answer ALL the questions... just give Him time! Don't know what Bible curriculum to use...use the Bible! It is infallible. It is true. It has all wisdom and power. It is the very heart and soul of God in print! Break free from fear and let God in direct contact with your family!

3. Steer away from Bible Stories, commentaries, and devotionals.

Perhaps, on this topic no one has said it better than Charlotte Mason in her book *Toward A Philosophy of Education*, “*The expressed knowledge attainable by us has its source in the Bible, and perhaps we cannot do a greater indignity to children than to substitute our own or some other benevolent person’s rendering for the fine English, poetic diction, and lucid statement of the Bible.*”

I wholeheartedly agree with Miss Mason. We must not make this mistake in the small amount of time that we have with our children. I would never want someone to give my writing to their children as a substitute for the very words of God. How tragic! Yet, that is what we are doing when we purchase and use Bible stories, commentaries, and devotionals in the place of the Bible. We cannot expect the same results with the writing of men and women that we can have with the very words of God!

Bible Study and Bible Reading will be your key to discipling your children. Give your children that deep, eternal love of God! Give them awe and reverence for God! Give them the light on their path which reveals God’s will in their tender lives! Give them the full armor to protect and fortify them from Satan’s attacks. Give them that Word that goes deep into our souls bringing us directly to God as we are. My challenge is for parents to give their children real scripture, direct contact with God!

The Rushton Bible Reading Plan

- **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 your request!
- **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.

Bible Memorization

“For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Hebrews 4: 12 NIV

Why memorize Scripture??

Perhaps, this is one of the most difficult areas for parents to teach. I believe this is so for a few reasons. First, most parents have not had a background in Bible memory. This makes it very difficult for us to pass on what we do not have as a discipline! I have been in many adult Bible studies and seen the time of Bible memory skipped because NO ONE in the class ever made an effort to learn the assigned scripture. I am just as guilty for not making the effort or taking the time! This brings me to the second reason why most of us do not teach Bible memorization. It is because we simply do not take the time to learn WHY and HOW. In this article, we will take a moment to help you with both of these questions. The final and most important reason is very simply because we, as parents, do not see the powerful benefits of hiding God’s Word in their hearts!

Benefits of Memorizing Scripture:

- To keep your thoughts pure
- To make you more sensitive to sin
- To make you sensitive to the needs of others
- It’s beneficial in fully equipping you for God’s purpose in your life
- It lifts you away from your self-pity by changing your focus from self to God
- Gives you God-confidence in your spiritual warfare
- Helps you know the Word and, in turn God better!
- Gives you a way out of temptation

Times to Work on Bible Memory...

Deuteronomy 6 has the perfect example of WHEN to work on memorizing Scripture

- Before eating your meal
- While walking (or driving!)
- While sitting in your home
- Before bedtime
- First thing in the morning
- As going to sleep

In other words, teach your children how to memorize Scripture at all times...along the way!

Helps for Bible Memorization

- Make a commitment to learn a certain amount of scripture each week.
- 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. My son, Matthew, and I do accountability on Saturday afternoons. We quote our verses to one another...he keeps me challenged because he can quote lots of Scripture verbatim and remembers it forever whereas I struggle to remember mine the next day! We also share what the verse means to us at this time and how God is using it in our lives to teach, rebuke, correct, train in righteousness, and equip us for our purpose in life. We also hold one another accountable for whether we have been faithful in our quiet times, prayer, Bible study and then, we pray for our personal needs and needs of our family. This has challenged me more than anything to be faithful and accountable since I am being sharpened by my son and discipling my treasure at the same time!
- Allow opportunities to quote what they know. The hardest part is learning your verses, the most fun is quoting it, and so make opportunities to quote them! Make it a ticket 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.
- 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. We use index cards to write our verses out because they are small enough to carry with us whether it is sticking it in our Bible or carrying it on a walk or putting it up by the kitchen sink or in the car. We swap index cards when we quote to one another. I find that I learn easier if I write it a few times, so I usually copy the verse on a couple of index cards and I copy it in my journal. I look up all words I am not sure of putting the definitions underneath and even notes of how God speaks to me through the verse. Matthew copies his usually on one index card and in his journal. He usually knows it by then. He is also such an auditory learner that he learns forever just from a few verbal repetitions, the copying for him is just a discipline. For me, I am such a visual learner that I must see it over a period of time. Some children learn best by games. Try it all to find your niche. I share this so that you will be able to work with the different learning modalities in your home.
- Play games...Write out scripture on index cards, one word on each card. Scramble and try to put in order...Write out scripture 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 memorize verses.

Don't know what to memorize?? Try:

...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.

Happy Memorizing!

Family Prayer...

- **Have daily prayer as a family.** Share request and answers to prayer. Keep a family prayer notebook. Great for family history!
- **Pray God's Word over your children.** God is always faithful to His Word, especially when it is prayed over those we love the most!
- **Have a one-to-one accountability time with each child each week to pray together for concerns.**
- **Set up a personal prayer journal for each family member.**
- **Spend time (and a lot time for the rest of your family to spend time) alone in daily prayer.**
- **Correspond with at least one missionary family so you can better know their prayer needs.**
- **Read biographies about missionaries, reformers, preachers, and godly historical characters noting the influence of prayer in their life and work, as well as, the way God answered prayers.**
- **Make a commitment to pray specifically for someone...**
 - ... Family (be sensitive when you may be part of the answer to their prayers!)
 - ...Friends
 - ...People with specific needs...lost, hurting, grieving (God has placed two categories of women on my heart- those who are suffering with the loss of a child and those who are struggling with husbands who are not saved or committed to God. Has God placed in your life a specific ministry of prayer...Just look around!)
- **Do a topical study on prayer.** Look up...Why pray? What difference does it make if God is sovereign? Different postures of prayer? The great prayers in the Bible? God's promises to those who pray? How God answered prayers in the Bible? What are the common elements of prayers?

How to's of Family Worship:

- **Begin in prayer.** Prayer changes the spirit of the home to one of reverence. Prayer opens hearts to hear the Holy Spirit!
- **Sing Songs of Worship.** I do not sing well, but my children love to sing worship songs and hymns in harmony. I figure that if they will sing loud enough that it will drown me out! Sometimes we sing along with tapes, sometimes we sing Acapella. Also, you may want to make up a family hymnal. We have collected praise songs we like and hymns that we have copied from hymnals into our own family hymnal-not fancy just a few pages of our favorites!
- **Scripture reading.** You have many options from Bible Stories, to using a devotional, to reading topically (character studies or subject studies), to just reading chronologically through the Word. WHATEVER you do, make it a time of using THE BIBLE!
- **Narration of passage and/or discussion of the passage.** Narration is simply the retelling of what has been read. Let your children retell in their own words what the text is about and then discuss as a family. It will probably shock you when you see how much your little ones can glean from the Bible!
- **Quote scripture that is being memorized!** The hard part of Bible memory is learning the passage. The fun part is quoting the Scripture so make that a part of your family altar!
- **Pray for family concerns.** You may want to begin a prayer notebook for your family. Just put the date, the request, and leave a space to fill in the date it was answered and how it was answered. This will be a wonderful history of God's provision and concern for your family!

Pointers for Family Worship...

1. Time of day does not matter...just be consistent and regular!
2. You do not have to know everything about the Bible to have family worship. One of the greatest things about family worship is that you are able to teach your children HOW to find the things that they are interested in!
3. You can set your family worship up however is best for your family. A formal worship, a bedtime affair (this is how we do it!), a worship over a meal, etc...
4. For families without a Christian father, keep in mind that mothers can greatly influence their children (and even their husband) by beginning a time of family worship! It can begin as simple as briefly reading aloud from Scripture and saying bedtime prayers. Just watch and see how God blesses!

Bible Study Resources Just for Your Family

Greenleaf Press Old Testament Guide

Plants Grown Up

For Instruction in Righteousness

Read and Grow Picture Bible

The Early Reader's Bible

The Narrated Bible

The One-year Bible

Christian Manhood

Christian Character

Line Upon Line: Genesis and Line Upon Line: John by Precept Ministries

The Advent Foretold

Bible Study Guide for All Ages

God's Priceless Woman (Great for your young ladies!)

Holiday Resources for Bible Study

Christ in Easter: A Family Celebration of Holy Week by Chuck Swindoll,

Billy Graham, Max Lucado, and Joni Eareckson Tada

Preparing for Easter by James L. Evans

Family Celebrations at Easter by Ann Hibbard

Family Celebrations by Ann Hibbard

Let's Make a Jesse Tree by Darcy James (PERFECT for your daily Christmas devotions!)

The Advent Foretold by Wanda Sanseri (A great study during Christmas!)

Christ in Christmas: A Family Advent Celebration

by James Dobson, Chuck Swindoll, James Montgomery Boice, and R.C. Sproul

Family Celebrations at Christmas by Ann Hibbard

Great Helps for Bible Memory:

Memlok

Plants Grown Up

Well-Versed Kids

Bible Memory Association (Awana Clubs)

Hide God's Word in Young Hearts by Joan Kosmachuk

Creating Bible Journals...

For a moment, I would like to share one of my greatest secrets for encouraging my reluctant writers. Yes, as much as my little ones have developed a love for writing, they had that much of a distaste for even holding a pencil a few years ago! My secret is the use of journals!

In our home, discipleship is the #1 priority. If nothing else is done each day, we consider a day a success if we have further instilled the disciplines of a consistent Christian walk. Likewise, God has sent blessings immeasurable as we have been faithful to encourage our children to their daily quiet time...to seek God EACH day...and to keep a record of that walk with God!

This is a “given” with our family...we are fully convicted about equipping our children fully for their walk with God and we are fully convinced of the worth of keeping journals/notebooks! These are the basis for educating our children. I have shared about WHY we teach children the Bible...do you wonder where I get the conviction for journals? In Scripture, we see that God instructs us over and over to REMEMBER what He teaches us...to REMEMBER the wonders that He has done in our lives! God instructed His people to WRITE down in a book His work among them, His Words spoken to them...warnings and promises!

We have two types of journals that we keep. We keep Journals for our Bible Study and Student Journals (Copybooks). The Student Journals are a whole different article! Our Bible Journals are very personal and are not evaluated as schoolwork.

The Notebook...

Our Bible Journals are simply 5-subject spiral bound (9 1/2 in. X 6 in.) Notebooks. You could use a small 3-ring binder if you prefer. We prefer the spiral bound because they already have the dividers and sections petitioned off and they are more economical.

We divide our notebooks into the following sections:

1. Sunday Morning Worship Notes
2. Sunday Evening Worship Notes
3. Wednesday Evening Worship Notes
4. Quiet Time Notes
5. Prayer Lists and Memory Verse Lists

We began at an early age discipling our children to take notes in Church. It began as they drew pictures or copied words in their “journals.” This built the discipline and now they take notes on their own in the church services and Bible Studies. During Church, Matthew (10) does not always keep up with the complete outlines, but he does keep up

with key thoughts and scripture references. He has been doing this since he was 7 but not like he does today.

At home, we began our journals by using Copywork. The children would copy passages of Scripture into their notebooks. This developed the discipline for them to keep their own personal Bible Journals. The children keep their insights and thoughts jotted down as they study through their quiet times. They also copy verses that are memorized into their notebooks. This is great for review and to encourage them as they look back and see ALL the wonderful verses that they have hidden in their heart!

Quiet Time...

Every morning my children are required to begin the day with their quiet time. Elisabeth is not able to do her own daily Bible reading or keep a journal as extensively as Matthew is. She spends her quiet time in prayer (Isn't that just what young ladies need most to learn...to be prayer warriors?) and her journal is filled with sketches and smaller gems of scripture that she has copied. I think that it is great for a seven-year-old and I look forward to seeing her journals as she gets older!

Matthew spends his quiet time jotting down thoughts, insights, and copying special scriptures that he wants to commit to memory...yes, he learns 10 times as much as old mom does! He has been copying larger amounts of scripture during his quiet time into his school journal too like Psalm 1, Psalm 23, Matthew 5, The Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. I give him freedom to copy his own gems and I have seen great benefits in his "school skills" as a result. ...Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all of these things shall be added unto you? Yes, God blesses our faithfulness!

Because there are often so many things to remember in our prayers we have adopted a systematic plan for prayer. We were encouraged a few years ago by our church to have a program set up to pray. We did use their program for several years but now we have gotten really simple in our way of remembering requests. We have a list in the back of our notebook of needs that we are concerned about praying for. It is so neat to be able to check off the answered prayers. On those days that we have a request that seems too BIG to our little heavy hearts, we can just go back and see all the answers that God has provided! Another bonus...we have a great history of God's work in our lives!

On the last 20 pages or so of the notebook, we keep a list of Bible verses we are committing to memory. As we memorize them, we check them off but still have them in the list for review. Each week, we have a time of accountability when we quote our verses and share highlights from our quiet times. This is what keeps our notebook alive and purposeful. It is amazing to see prayers being answered, to share insights from quiet times and services, and to actually see our growth as Christians as we walk together.

If you want real challenge to learn Scripture or to do your quiet time, just try being accountable to your children. My children are so consistent. They learn Scripture forever! I am so challenged by their faithfulness! Also, I find that Matthew has a strong

gift of “gently” confronting me about my spirit. The other day, I was having a perfectly awful, terrible, no good, very bad day...get the point? Matthew, with his sweet spirit asked me if maybe my day would not have been smoother if I had been faithful to my quiet time that morning? Well, needless to say, I feel challenged to walk close to God and iron is certainly sharpened iron!

Last year I saw the benefits of keeping journals as my son wrote his first essay. It was excellent and very imaginative. I was not surprised whenever I thought of all the mentors he has had through all of his Copywork and reading! This year during our Christmas break he wrote a book on one of his favorite topics, The History of the Marines. His book is fantastic!

I remember how concerned I was when MY son hated writing...my love! I wondered how to capture his love for writing. It was through Journaling! My prayer is that you will open the door to Journaling in your home and have all of the rewards that we have had in our home.

Happy Journaling!

Language Arts

The EASY Way!

Reprinted from *Homeschool Digest*

We took a pretty scary step a few years ago with our home schooling. I guess that it was mostly scary because I was throwing away my crutches to walk for the first time on my own. We decided at that time to try to use a natural approach to Language Arts. In doing this we eliminated all of our textbooks in favor of a few tried and true approaches for creating young writers!

Since we scrapped our textbooks I have had lots of questions about exactly how to do Language Arts. I know that I only have limited space...so I will briefly explain how to teach Language Arts without a formal curriculum. For those of you wanting to do your own thing...this is how. For those of you wanting to stick to your tried and true curriculum, these ideas will be a lot of help for you too!

Read Alouds...

The core of our curriculum comes from the library. We have found that our children learn much faster and remember what they have learned much longer if we read real books on the subject. This does not mean that you do have to read EVERY book on the topic. Just a few well-chosen books will do. If there is enough interest, you can turn the children loose and they can pursue the topic deeper.

I find that my children have excelled at reading since we have let them swap in their readers for real books of heroes and heroines...real books by people who are passionate about the subject...real books by people who really know the subject they write on...real books which let the children decide what THEY deem is important to glean! As we switched to using read-alouds for our core curriculum, I saw my children come alive with a voracious appetite for reading for knowledge!

You may say, "How do you choose what they read?" 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 *Books Children Love*, *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.

If you really want some great ideas for which books that you do not want to miss, check out home school catalogs. Most of the home school 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! My favorite catalogs are Greenleaf, Elijah Company, Whole Heart Ministries, and Lifetime. Check those out and you are sure to find some great book suggestions.

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. As I have told them what we were studying, they have even bought the books that I was drooling over o books that I did not know about on a topic. What I love about them is that it really saves me money as well as my valuable time!

Do not 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!

Narration...

Now you may say, "That is great, but how do you do tests...grades???" Well, Narration is the key to being sure that your children are learning from read-alouds. Narration is simply telling back what the book or story is about. In Narrating, the child is able to naturally relate back the information that they deemed as important. No need for tests because you hear them tell back what they learned. You will know that they understand what has been read if they are able to put it into their very own words to tell you.

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! 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!

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 even were learning vocabulary without the dictionary... grammar without a 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, you just simply read a book to them, let them re-tell the story and that is it. For more formal Narration, you can begin by taking dictation as the child retells the story to you. I usually re-copy the Narration neatly and assign the children to copy the narration into their copybooks. This year, after 3 years of Copywork, I am training my fifth grader to write his own Narrations into his notebook...I will give you ideas on that as they develop!

Copywork...

Copywork is another way that I teach Language Arts. We do Copywork the easy way too. With Copywork, my children simply copy a selection each day into their Copybooks. Their Copybooks are simply 3-ring binders with loose-leaf paper. We found a few years ago that it helped to use plastic sleeves 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!

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. I still do this for Elisabeth most of the time. Now, my children choose their own Copywork. They choose from narrations of books we read aloud, favorite passages of scripture, favorite poems and quotes, or neat facts that they run across and just want to keep in their special Copybook. I do want to note that their Copybook is their own collection 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 always 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 use *Learning Grammar through Writing* as a basic text to look up our questions.

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! This has been a great encouragement as they have learned to do their nicest work, plus they have the incentive that their copybooks are their very own special treasures to take pride in!

In using Copywork, I have found that we have eliminated much of the busy work as we have eliminated dry workbooks, spelling and vocabulary tests, and even the silly assignments that give children a bad taste for writing. This past year when Matthew wrote his first essay, I became convinced that this old method was just as sure and true as it was hundreds of years ago!

Dictation...

Dictation is an area 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 home school.

Just begin to use Dictation by allowing your children to become familiar with one or two lines...you may want to use a Bible verse. Let them study over the spelling and punctuation until they feel that they KNOW it. Then, you review the selection pointing out spelling that looks confusing, punctuation marks (explaining why they are there!), and noting how they must 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! Give them the copy and let them check it themselves correcting any errors! That is all there is to it!

What Do You Think?

Teaching our children should be easy. Teaching our children should not cost a fortune. Teaching our children should remain as natural as possible. All of these ideas for implementing Language Arts are an easy, cost-free, natural approach to teaching Language Arts. May it help you as you diligently teach your little treasures!

Happy Home Schooling!

Writing... A Process of Our Lord!

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Looking back over the last few years, I can see the writing of Jesus in my life. He has busily set forth as an Author writing into my life His beauty and overflowing love. Hard as it is, He has also had to use His Finishing pen on me too. He has had to correct, erase, and delete. He has spent much time and effort deleting, refining, adapting, and bringing me into conformity to the standard—Christ! He has had to take away what is not necessary and what does not make sense in my life story!

It is not only through the sweet work as “my Author” that Jesus makes me into His Work, but also through that often tough work of “Finishing,” that He is able to bring my life to completion and beauty so that I am ready for Him to present me to the public. Yes. He is ever at work in the business of creating a beautiful work in our lives! He is ever at the business of writing and editing in our lives so that one-day we are ready for His great finale!

As creations of the Creator, we also have this part of His character. We are given the ability to be inspired to create! I used to feel guilty for my desire to create...no more! That desire is given by God. It is by His inspiration. We all have that same gift within us. It may be with wood, clothe, food, paint, instrument or pen...we all have that deep gifting to create beauty for our Lord!

As creations of our Creator, we are given the ability to take resources and make a beautiful product. We take the little words in our language, mix them together to offer others encouragement, inspiration, and knowledge. That gift can only come from the Lord! He is the one who takes that bit of our personality to add a twist of beauty to simple words.

As we spend time with the True Author of our faith, we have much to offer to others just by using our own spiritual gifts. It is then that those little words come together to make a beautiful product offering hope for the hopeless, truth for the searching, compassion for the hurting, wisdom for the foolish, love for the unloved, and faith for the faithless! This is truly a beautiful product!

Bringing these thoughts into the area of writing, our area of focus in this newsletter, let’s look at the creating of writing! I remember the day that I cried out to the Lord and asked Him “How can I know what I am to write for you?” There was a gentle reply that spoke to my soul. He said that I would have words to speak and hope to share only as I

spent time with Him. Yes, if I wanted to have words that meant anything to my culture, I would have to sit at the feet of Jesus! I would have to know Him!

As the years have gone by, I have found this to be the greatest truth in my life! As I glean from Him and His Word, I find that I have an overflow through my pen! That same encouragement that carries me through my days, is the same encouragement that others need through the monotony and sorrows of life. On the other hand, as I neglect my time with God, my well of thoughts and wisdom dries up!

This will be the same for you and your children. Great writing will not be accomplished by learning all the rules you can stuff into the heads of your little ones! Great writing will not even come really from writing every day. Great writing will come from spending your days with the Great Writer of our Lives. Great writing comes as He fills your soul with so much that it simply must spill out!

We see a picture of this in the story of Mary and Martha. Remember how Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus while Martha was busy doing all she was “supposed” to do to make preparations? What was better? The clutter or the still, receptive heart? Seeking Perfection or Excellence? The Busywork or Sitting at the Feet of the Saviour? We all know Jesus’ words at Martha’s request to get Mary up and busy doing things the her way (the world’s way) ***“Martha, Martha thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”***

Yes, Mary did choose what was needful to be faithful to Jesus...she sat at His feet! When hard times hit a little later, she was not the one to crack under the pressure. She did not doubt her Saviour. She was able to wait upon Him in faith while her dear sister succumbed to the pressures that inevitably arise from life!

In writing, we find many similarities. As we sit at the feet of Jesus, we find our cares and troubles melting away. We find that which is most needful in our lives from the eternal perspective. We learn to choose the good part. This is all absolutely essential if we are to write for the glory of God. This is the cornerstone to creating for the glory of God.

May I challenge you this day to commit to sitting at the feet of the Author and Finisher of our faith? May I challenge you to seek more than parts of speech and perfect spelling...rather to seek the message for our hungry society? May I challenge you to disciple your children to sit at the feet of Jesus so they may find His message for the hard times that they will face? May I challenge you to deeply impress on your little ones the passion to write for the glory of God for our faithless society?

The challenge is out. What will you do? Writing is more than words on the paper. If our children are to show the image of our Creator, then they must be writing the message of our Creator. If our children are to know the message of our Creator, they must first sit at the feet of our Creator. My prayer for you is for each and every family to accept the

call to look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith...to seek to sit at His feet...and to learn from Him the message that you and your children are to bear!

Binderized! Using Notebooking in the Homeschool...

For any of you who **know** me, this article was inevitable! Each year, our family spends more money on three-ring notebooks and page protectors than we spend on curriculum! I doubt we will ever have **enough**...much less **too many** binders in our homeschool! If you are not Binderized (yes, a word coined by me!), you are missing a key learning tool in the home! BUT, I will not let you miss this bug biting at your heels either!

This is a hodgepodge of my thoughts on Notebooking simply for the sake of room in this packed newsletter. I pray that this helps you to learn a little more about Notebooking in the Homeschool!

Advantages of Binderizing

- ◇ When using binders, all of life can be used fully for curriculum. You are able to use any subject or any topic as the subject of the notebook. This instills a love of learning because the child is able to develop a relationship with the material at hand. All of their life is fair game for use in a binder because the material is not dictated to the child. The child learns that all of life is a classroom and a subject in which their skills can be used practically to preserve thoughts and information that they collect. The child can develop a passion for the topic and use the notebook to keep the overflow!
- ◇ Notebooks are adaptable for every style of learning. Any child can be captured by their interests! Even the busiest child will love using their skills to collect information on their favorite topic. Every learner flourishes when studying areas of delight regardless of their learning style.
- ◇ Notebooking reflects interests, individuality and strengths of each child. The child may be more artistic...using natural inclinations in their notebook. The child may be more literary...using skills in a fun way. The child may be more interested in collecting (memorabilia, pictures, and nature specimens) but need a place to keep their collections. These interests and strengths can be nurtured (instead of wasted or allowed to lay dormant!) with the use of notebooks!
- ◇ Notebooking develops a habit of writing and recording from childhood. They learn how to draw out of themselves thoughts, ideas, and information. They learn how to record that information into a valuable product. This habit does more to instill a love of learning and a love of writing than mounds of information poured into the child could ever do! Notebooking prepares the child for more serious study and research that are necessary in the latter years of life.
- ◇ Notebooking encourages self-government. The child learns to govern himself. They learn the value of setting their own standards for their work...excellence, neatness,