

get to it. The children are doing a wonderful job and now my tendonitis is almost completely healed but they still do their part of the team work. Thus, I have taken on the project of sewing the girls (6 of them!) matching dresses because all I could do for 2 months is sew! Isn't the Lord good?! We all have grown to love and appreciate each other through this. *(Editor: Ok, ok! I am NOW coveting tendonitis!!!! NOT!)*

Have you read the book *Me, Obey Him* Elizabeth Rice Handford? *(Editor: Yes! I LOVE that book! Of course, you must know that a FRIEND gave it to me! Ha! Hummmm! Small but mighty book!)* I believe some women desire to obey their husbands but don't know how to or how to ask and in some cases, they choose not to. In Elizabeth's book, she uses God's Word to present the reason for our subjection and shows how the husband/wife relationship is the foundation for a happy and godly home. This is a must for those women who desire God's perfect plan for their life. This is not negative but she shares the blessings, the joys, and privileges of being a godly wife.

I listen to Elisabeth Elliot every week day on the radio. She is a wonderful mentor. She is wise, witty, and encourages stay at home moms and homeschoolers. The greatest thing I enjoy about her is she reminds us how simple God is. He asks us to obey and leave the rest up to Him! What a life challenge! *(Editor: I love this Debby! This is sooo true no matter the area of our life! It is as we bring every area under subjection to God, trust Him, and follow in absolute faith that we are able to have true simplicity... freedom... ease... and blessed rest! Yes, the all of the other details are easy when He does it for us!)* She often refers to a poem by Amy Carmichael, ***In Acceptance Lieth Peace***. The title says it all. If we accept what God sends our way, we will have peace. Just obeying His Word and accepting life's circumstances is enough to keep me busy for the rest of my life!

In Acceptance Lieth Peace By Amy Carmichael

He said, "I will forget the dying faces;
The empty places,
They shall be filled again.
O voices moaning deep within me, cease."
But vain the word; vain, vain:
Not in forgetting lieth peace.

He said, "I will crowd action upon action,
The strife of faction
Shall stir me and sustain;
O tears that drown the fire of manhood cease."
But vain the word; vain, vain:
Not in endeavor lieth peace.

He said, "I will withdraw me and be quiet,
Why meddle in life's riot?
Shut be my door to pain.
Desire, thou dost befool me, thou shalt cease."
But vain the word; vain, vain:
Not in aloofness lieth peace.

He said, "I will submit, I am defeated.
God hath depleted
My life of its rich gain.
O futile murmurings, why will ye not cease?"
But vain the word; vain, vain:
Not in submission lieth peace.

He said, "I will accept the breaking sorrow
Which God to-morrow
Will to His Son explain."
Then did the turmoil deep within him cease.
Not vain the word, not vain:
For in acceptance lieth peace.

I didn't intend for this letter to become a book. I've been wanting to write you for months!

Did your husband get his promotion? My husband is the K-9 trainer for Chattanooga. The end of this past March were the USPCA Field Trials for K-9 in Chattanooga. He met an officer that knew your husband. (I don't remember the name). When you come to Chattanooga, my husband would love to meet yours. *(Editor: We will be there July 24-26th and again the last week of August! OHH! I hope we can get them together!)* There are not many fellow Christian officers that are living for the Lord.

I shared your article with my husband and he enjoyed what he heard (It's good reinforcement for me). Today in family devotions, he went over Romans 13: 1-7. Barry's dad shared this with him when he became a Policeman. *(Editor: This verse is sooo special to me too! I remember the first time I ran across it...It was the morning that Harold went to test for the position as a State Trooper. One of 7000...that made us feel REAL small until we found this passage! Yes, God DOES establish our authorities into their position! There are some wonderful men in law enforcement serving quietly in our troubled society! I KNOW what a sacrifice it is to live a godly life IN law enforcement! I am thankful for your faithfulness! OH, we MUST get them together to support one another!)* Our husband's are ministers of God for good. This portion of Scripture encourages Barry as he deals with many thankless people. He doesn't take his job lightly. *(Amen!! Oh, I praise God for you and Barry!)*

As your husband does, Barry also works extra jobs and long hours to meet our needs as a family. He always encourages me to simplify school and make it more enjoyable. This has been a BIG learning process for me. You have been very helpful at reinforcing these goals. I appreciate your gift of sharing and encouraging.

Barry has the children lay a track for Benny (the police dog) so Benny can get better at tracking. *(Editor: I LOVE this! Your family sounds JUST like mine! My husband FOREVER has convinced our children that NOT just anyone can have the PRIVILEGE of washing, waxing, and vacuuming out "an Alabama State Trooper Car!" I just scratch my head and then die laughing as they BEG to do more!!! Now that Matthew is older, he LOVES to help his dad clean the machine guns and other weapons after S.W.A.T. training. He is always GLUED to every word that Harold says! They would simply LOVE a police dog!)* Just last week Benny tracked down a "bad guy" into a thick wooded area that without the dog the Police would not have found him! I enjoyed watching the children's faces when their daddy told them how well Benny did and let them know he did such a good job because of them! *(Editor: HOW SWEET!)*

Barry helps with their schooling (the sit down part) when he can but I believe it just comes more natural for him to do the hands-on learning.

I appreciate your comments on spiritual adultery. Our children sing in church. We were encouraged to start a children's choir, so we did. During my pregnancy with Kay, our 8 month old, we had to quit because I could not be up that long. The choir was only 2 others and our children. When the "children's choir" sang, I noticed some were more excited than when our children sang alone. It bothered me that the children's choir was considered more of a "ministry." We worship together and do as much as possible together. In order to do a children's choir, I had to prepare at home and go to the church early. But when I work with the children at home, it is at our leisure and less stressful. Now, when our children sing it is a ministry from our home to others at church, doctor's offices and in homes. I feel the pull you do that if it is not done in or for the church it is not a ministry. We desire that our love for each other and for God in the home and everyday show forth in what we do in the church and for others. I believe it takes a while to wean ourselves from this thinking. We are learning that Barry is my ministry and the children are our ministry together. We are a unit, a team, and we depend on each other. Some may label this as selfish, sad to say. But it is not so. I bake goodies for those in need, at a loss, or as an encouragement. The children make cards for them. We teach our children to love and be aware of those in need. Hopefully soon we will be visiting with widows one day each month. We plan on the children singing, quoting Scriptures, making cards, and maybe doing a little acting. I'm so excited to do this as a family ministry. We just love these ladies! *(Editor Note: I LOVE this! I can almost SEE your gorgeous children singing! Surely God IS so glorified so glorified as they sing praises to Him!)*

In one of your **Time for Tea**, you mentioned a lady sent you some herb combination to help women get pregnant. Would you mind sharing it with me? The Lord has opened many doors for me to help and encourage ladies through their pregnancies and childrearing and I would love to have that information. I pray that the Lord will bless your family with another little one. *(Editor Note: I am going to have to take more time to share some of what we are learning in this area. I have been so excited! I have been using Natural Progesterone cream from days 17 until I start my new cycle. I begin on this day JUST in case I ovulate later than is usual. I feel so much better that it is hard to imagine what I would have done without God's direction and provision in this area. I am also taking a good Prenatal Vitamin from Nature Sunshine. It has more of the vitamins and minerals that a Mother/child need during pregnancy. I combine that with Vitamin E and a Vitamin B complex that includes Folic Acid. I expect to begin taking some other herbs recommended by Shonda Parker in her book **Naturally Healthy Pregnancy** this coming month. She recommends several plans, which depend upon your actual problem with your health. I have taken her suggestions and researched in every book that I have (are you surprised??) to come up with a plan that will be best for my needs. Since I have been having trouble in several areas here are some of my choices...*

Difficulty producing a good egg...*Vitex Agnus-Castus (also called Chasteberry) This works like Clomid for those needing a little help with the release of Luteinizing Hormone (Necessary for the egg to develop well). Red Raspberry is great too!*

Difficulty keeping pregnancy in the early weeks of pregnancy...*NATURAL PROGESTERONE CREAM! I could SHOUT from the roof tops about this awesome find! It has all kinds of benefits...BUT that would be an article! This is just a miracle from God!*

Healing Ovaries and normalizing hormones...*False Unicorn; Natural Progesterone Cream. Also, one of the best helps is lots of rest and good nutrition!*

PMS!...*My two KEY helpers are Progesterone Cream and Siberian Ginseng. They both help to sooth my nerves and give me ENERGY!!!!!! hehe! For almost debilitating PMS, check to be sure that Copper and Zinc are balanced properly. A Copper excess without Zinc to balance it out can contribute to difficulty in handling*

stress. Since I also get TIRED during that time of the month, I have found that Magnesium/Calcium along with Progesterone Cream help to reduce the symptoms of Chronic Fatigue!

I will STOP NOW! I hope this helps! Oh, you can call Shonda to order her book or for information on her Herbal Study Course at 1-888-herbs-101.)

I will end with an encouraging verse for us housewives to remember as we change diapers, clean, cook, sew, and offer our love and kind words... ***“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”*** Matthew 25:40 We would love to meet ALL of you! Love, Barry, Debby, Kyle, Kari, Kiersten, Katie, Karla, Kelsey, and Kay Violet (We are working toward K-9?) (Editor: I LOVE IT!?)

From the Rushtons...

Debby, I am soooo blessed by your letter! Thanks for letting us share it! MANY blessings! I have such a delight in all the letters that I receive! PLEASE feel free to share your heart and your family with us! Also, please note if it is ok for us to include it in the newsletter too! Blessings, Cindy

Dear Cindy,

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!!! I just received my order of your wonderful, inspiring books! I read through ***LAEW*** and am excited and inspired to begin implementing it with my sons. God has been really pricking my heart to use the Bible more as our basis of study, and He has shown me so many ways to integrate it into everything we do. Your book has been a great help in this endeavor. I will begin using Scripture Copybooks right away!

When I was in college as a new Christian, I kept a journal of verses that ministered to me. I still have it, and these are the Scriptures that God uses so often to minister to me even 20+ years later. I don't know why I didn't think of it before. But it is a confirmation that God is at work directing our schooling and I am soooo excited!!!

Now for my question(s)... My 10 yr. old ds has very poor small motor skills. He seems to be showing improvement this year in many areas, including penmanship, but he is behind in the Language Arts department. He still has trouble with capitalization and punctuation, despite all the "curriculum" we have used to correct this problem. He has just as of this year discovered the joy of reading, which is sooooo exciting to us as we are all bookaholics! Is it your expert (Editor...HAHA! This is more like a MOMMY Opinion...ha!) opinion that Copywork will correct this? We have not really done this much yet. Also, how do I know what is the right amount of Copywork to require from him? And when to increase the amount?

He has had good success with writing, but most of it has been narrated to me and I have typed it for him. He has written reports about various things and books about things he is interested in. (Very basic, with drawings.) I have not had him do too much handwriting, because of his frustration with his lack of skill there, however, this may contribute to his poor penmanship. How will I know what is enough to challenge him without frustrating him? When should I have him write and how often? Or is it better to just stay with Copywork for a while? When I saw your Matthew's work, I realized I have far to go. Joshua is very bright and creative. He has lots of great stories inside that I want to get out on paper. Your help is greatly appreciated!!!!

I also have a 6 year old. (My Matthew!!!) I assume we have him copy his name and names of family members, simple Bible verses and single sentences from his stories. We write emails to Grandma & Grandpa, which he narrates, as well as narrating from stories we read together. Am I on the right track here?

I also have a 14 year old who is a capable writer, (not from anything in particular that I have done, he is a voracious reader, which I think has a great deal to do with it!) Should he do Copywork, too? Should he narrate books he is reading? (His SAT prep book requires reading one book a week in addition to what he will be reading for Literature.) Is there some format he should use to do this? His Literature requires critical thinking essays written 2-3 times a week pertaining to the books/poetry he is required to read. Is this a good idea? Or should he be doing more deep formula writing?

As you can see, I have a lot of questions!!! But I know this is what the Lord has led me to do and there is nothing more exciting than following Him!!!! Thank you for being God's vessel and letting Him flow through! Blessings to the whole Rushton Family!!! Because of Jesus... Robyn Holcomb

PS... I am now digging in to the Nature Study books and am anxious to help the boys learn more about their wonderful Creator by learning about His creation!!! Thanks again for everything!!!!

From the Rushtons...

Hi Robin! You sure are a big encouragement! Thanks for your note! Let me go back to the beginning...I have to agree that the Bible is the *perfect* base for all of our studies. Just a few months back, I was pleasantly surprised as Elisabeth read her first chapter from the Bible. It was the first passage of ANYTHING that she had read. She did a beautiful job! I was in tears as I realized that truly the Bible is the *perfect* beginning reader. Sure! You will find difficulties in reading the odd names...even adults have difficulty in that area. However, many of the other words are basic words that need practice over and over again to attain literacy. In the meantime, we were learning more about our Awesome God! Perfect textbook!

I was challenged by an article by Connie Foss, the editor of *Good Life and Good Literature*. In the article, she shared about how the kings were trained to administer law...through Copywork! I was soooo excited! I began to hunt for the passage. Sure enough, this was how they learned the law and hid the law in their hearts. The passage is found in Exodus 17: 18-20...

“And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: (Isn’t God sooo specific?!) And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: (Another big benefit! It trains character while educating in law! This reminds me of our Notebooks that we maintain!) That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.”

Can you imagine the difference in just our own culture if this were the training of young leaders? The benefits never end! Yes, the Word of God makes a perfect base for the education we provide for our children!

Isn’t it neat that you have the treasure of your Scripture Journal from your college days?? I love that! I was working with Mary the other day on some projects here at home when I shared with her some of my old “BINDERS” filled with timeless treasures from my teen years until today! Actually you will giggle as much as Mary did...I was sitting there reading over some of my thoughts and ideas when I realized how rich our ideas really are! That is one benefit of journaling our ideas and thoughts. We tend to think that we have little to write or share...journaling brings out those deep thoughts. There is nothing like capturing the depths of our hearts on paper. It serves as an encouragement toward godliness while rebuking the foolishness of our hearts as well! Without having our thoughts in writing, they would be lost! As Mary and I poured through my early collections, we found many of those journal entries and collections that were the foundation of what we do today in our marriage...family...and ministry! NEAT!

This is no different for our children. There is such a focus on “product” (or LOTS of products) in most approaches/curriculum that the process toward an excellent product is rushed or worse yet, eliminated! This need not be so. Children need to have time to develop before they will have anything to share “on paper.” The early years of training children need to be spent focusing on three areas...

...Creating an **ATMOSPHERE** in the home that is full of real, vital learning experiences so the children have plenty of opportunities to learn!

...Establishing **DISCIPLINES** necessary for the children to be ABLE to learn. (Good Learning Habits...Godly Character...Skills to Learn)

...Instilling a **LIFESTYLE** of Real Learning at all times!

A void in any of these areas leaves a hole in the education of the child. Let me explain...A child can have a home filled with excellent opportunities and resources for learning...yet without personal discipline and the disciplines of lessons/routines/learned skills/practice, the child is crippled from being able to utilize to the fullest all that is available around him. Without a realistic lifestyle of learning (which **MUST** come from parental model first), the child does not see the importance of all that surrounds him. Now, say that the parents have the **LIFESTYLE** down, but they fail to instill the disciplines necessary to learn. The child is just as crippled. It will not take long until the child gets frustrated with his or her inabilities and loses interest in learning. They will never be able to fully use all the wonderful resources around them. Yes, all of these aspects of real education must be present if our children are to be prepared to learn.

Back to your question about writing...if we are to encourage our children to become great writers, we must give them a full life! They will need much input before there can be great output via pen/paper! Input comes by great literature...lots of experiences with great people (starting with your own family!)...and plenty of time to study, observe and experiment in areas of deep interest!

You asked about whether Copywork would improve common problems found with young writers such as punctuation...spelling...motor skills... penmanship... so on! **YES!** If you were here with me you would **KNOW** my enthusiasm by my voice! **YES! YES! YES!** We were **EXACTLY** where you are in the beginning years. Matthew could write down answers in blanks beautifully...but he was resistant to any other form of writing **AND** his spelling, penmanship, punctuation, and communication skills were extremely poor. **NOW**, I know he was only 7 then...this is **VERY** characteristic of that age, but I was more concerned with his heart for writing than his skills. I could see a resistance that was more troubling than his inabilities! His heart just was not in his work or in learning at all! Because of this, we decided to try to implement some of those models of teaching Language Arts from long ago that I had gleaned from the Bible, old literature, and the writings of authors like Charlotte Mason and Ruth Beechick. **IT WORKED!** The rest is history...well Language Arts in a real and **EASY** way!

Start out small. Read each day. Try to have a set time for Family Reading **AND** time for your young readers to read to you. Reading will help remediate many of the common problems for young writers...

- ◇ **Not knowing what to write about**—They have many avenues opened up to them through literature. They will have experiences in the lives of great people that will give them an understanding of different people from different walks of life **AND** the wisdom from the rich experiences of others. As they read, they will have so much poured in that eventually it *has* to pour forth. They will have the blessing of those writers feeding their minds so that they grow. That growth just naturally pours into the lives of others!
- ◇ **Spelling, Punctuation, Grammar, so on**—Great Literature is the perfect teacher of Language Arts. The common method of teaching children to write usually confuses children as it gives them many answers (some of which are incorrect) to choose from. We have found that our children were more confused by

the options...not understanding what was wanted of them. They could easily speak or write properly in the beginning, but the continued use of error was instilling error or doubt about the proper use. This has been easily remediated through continued Reading and Copywork. This reminds me of the way that bankers are trained to spot counterfeit money. It is not through study of the process of making counterfeit money or through experiencing the counterfeit...it is through only handling the authentic, REAL money. They become so familiar with the REAL thing that they easily spot the counterfeit. This has been our testimony of the benefits of giving our children constant contact with REAL Literature. They know what great writing is supposed to be like. All they have to do is remember those wonderful models as they create their own work.

- ◇ **Motivation**—I have been amazed by the inspiration that comes as my children read a great book! They are inspired to live a noble life...to continue in spite of any difficulties...to see life from an eternal perspective (knowing this situation is only part of the whole story!)...and mostly to share what *they know!* Just last night, Matthew received a book from Chuck Buck...the owner/founder of Buck Knives. As a young knife collector/business owner, he was inspired by the thoughtfulness of Chuck Buck. One thing that made a lasting impression upon Matthew was that Mr. Buck wrote an autograph especially for Matthew encouraging him as a young Christian. This gift brought immediate inspiration to Matthew to continue writing and learning about things he was interested in...seeing a book on knives in the future?? ha! Literature serves to motivate writers to share their passion and wisdom!

All you have to do is begin to work in bit by bit different things that will help encourage your young writer while you establish the disciplines in your home. As I shared in my book, this can come by many different means. Anything from Reading Whole Books to Narrating about those books to Notebooking to Scrapbooking to Journaling to Research to Article Writing can help encourage your children to write each day. It does not have to be the same means...just daily lessons! You can let your imagination go with *any* idea that would be a fun and easy way for them to learn the basics of writing!

After read alouds, the first daily discipline that we added to our daily read alouds were daily lessons of Copywork. I did this for many reasons but the greatest reason was to instill the discipline of writing EVERY day! Professional writers are taught that this is one of the most crucial disciplines to develop if one wants to write well. Therefore, I feel that if we want for our children to develop their skills of writing, they need this daily habit. This is one of the key elements that I feel has helped our children to find enjoyment in writing. The more one writes, the more ease one can find in writing.

Writing can become laborious for a writer if it consists of original writing every day. For this reason, you find many of the greatest writers with wonderful journals filled with Copywork and quotes and outlines of their favorite writers! This works with our children too! They do not have to sit at a desk staring with a mind more blank than their sheet of white paper just to learn to write!! They can sit down to a lesson taught by their favorite writers! It may be the poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson...but that poetry can teach spelling... punctuation... grammar... dynamics of great poetry...all while taking the child into places far away or lives long ago!! Your child may become the student of Beatrix Potter, learning those Language Arts skills while being inspired by wonderful vocabulary...fun adventures...and of course, timeless art!

This discipline alone has brought more success for our children than any other aspect of homeschooling. Our children have now been able to “imitate” the styles of their favorite authors giving it the twist of their own personality. This made creative writing and book writing effortless for my children. BUT...it did start out small!

Speaking of starting out small...How to know how much is enough??? Regardless of the age, Copywork is a skill that must be learned. It may appear at first to be too easy or too simple to the onlooker...but, give it a try yourself! I still find myself messing up as I copy a great quote. Since I require that our children print

nicely without errors. I found that regardless of the age, it was better to begin with less and move into more. Why? First, because children need to experience success. This instills the habit of excellence. This habit is crucial if we are to teach our children that they CAN do it! Secondly, children need to develop the habit of perfect execution. Much of the sloppy, half-hearted work that is common for children is the result of poor habits or too much work too early rather than motor skills. Schools and school-texts rush children through their work with little regard for excellence. Assignments require too much of children. Sure they CAN do it...but in the process they are developing bad habits which affect their writing for life.

We have tried to use topics of deep interest and delight to practice those basic writing skills. By doing so, we find that the children do not really realize that they are learning the dynamics of writing. Instead, we find the process of teaching writing to be easy and very natural. The children are encouraged to love learning. They have a real reason for writing. Plus, they know how to learn about any topic of interest and share what they learn with others. It all makes sense!

It is not an overnight process from reluctant writer to enthusiastic author! For many children, the first year or so of beginning this new way of study is very difficult. They are learning what is expected of them each day. They learn a new way of thinking...well, actually they have to learn how to think too! They also have to learn how to observe details in writing if they are to become the student of another writer. This is a learned skill that simply takes time and lots of time!

How do you know when to increase the amount of work? At first, I gaged the amount of Copywork upon several factors...too messy or too many errors, need less or need to take time with their work...taking too long, need to shorten or work on the habit of prompt completion—beware of dawdling!...finishing quickly, time to give a little more until you see more effort put into the work...not having a heart for the work, either too young and still struggling with mechanics or needs to begin to select work based upon their own interests.

As you can see, I have shared that many of the problems are not really physical, but more based on the need to develop habits, which support the developing writer. These habits are essential as we prepare our children to write for God's glory. Those delicate moments we spend training our children in the skills needed to write are the perfect training ground for Language AND character! Isn't God so neat?

Back to your letter...six year olds love to copy things! They are so enthusiastic! I love their sweet spirits! The perfect Copywork for younger children ranging in age from 2-7 years are just simple things like you mentioned...their names and the names of their relatives, Bible Verses, neat quotes, titles to their illustrations, etc. You will probably find that your younger writers will be ready to choose their own Copywork and to develop their own Notebooks/Books much earlier than those children who are introduced to these ideas at an older age. I have noticed that Matthew and now Elisabeth are both able to write beyond their age level. Even their Copywork is usually beyond that of many adults! They have a heart for their work and a vision of how important their work is for God's Kingdom.

Many parents of older children simply cannot believe that their older child should start at the beginning as a 4th grader or a 5 year old. I think it is because of the mindset that age or grade level denotes superiority of some sort. This is simply not true. Learning skills is process not an inborn ability.

I attended a workshop with Barry Stebbing as the instructor about a week ago. Mr. Stebbing was such an excellent teacher (His resources are just exactly what I have been looking for to help me teach Art in an easy manner! Check them out!). One of the things that he taught during the week was that "Artists are made, not born." I have never heard this! I had always thought that anyone could write if they read widely and wrote on a topic of delight! Yes, writers are made, not born! I realized this anew as I, as artistically challenged as they can come, learned some techniques AND actually painted a sunflower! I was proud of my work...but you have to know that even the little 4 and 5 year olds in the class were able to paint a sunflower! Sure, you could see some fine motor skill differences and even some differences in the understanding of color...but we all were able to learn from the simple techniques.

This is a beautiful picture of writing. Sure, use the same simple techniques. They are not too dumbed down for teenagers if they are working for parents and professional writers because some things just work!

You were asking about your 14 year old...I guess that you can imagine that he is WAY ahead in the area of writing just because you have instilled a love of reading! You can't stop a child from learning and becoming a great thinker once they come to enjoy reading for delight and pleasure! He also sounds well on his way with a good understanding of basic writing. I would recommend taking some ideas from professional writers...

- ◇ **Write every day!** Little by little each day! As I have shared, this establishes the habit of writing that is crucial to great writers.
- ◇ **Give a good variation of types of writing.** Alternate between projects just as a professional writer does! I gave some ideas in *Language Arts...The Easy Way* for different models of writing that teach the skills with low pressure and great ease. If you are ready for some more models to vary the writing exercises each day, then give your children assignments such as essays, research projects and papers, critical essay writing, article writing, book reviews, more advanced notebooking, journaling, so on! Let your OR your child's imagination go!
- ◇ **Encourage your child to study and write on areas of deep interest!** In college, we were able to choose our own studies based upon our "major." That was "supposed" to be based upon our life work. Why wait until college to let your children pursue some of these interests? They will be more interested in their studies AND they will be able to discern areas of their own expertise BEFORE they get to College or into their career! Just give them lots of time to pursue those areas of study!

Well, you asked some simple questions...but there was no simple answer! I hope that this helps somewhat as you continue to encourage your budding writers! Keep us posted! Love, Cindy

Education is an Atmosphere

Homeschooling...just what makes homeschooling really HOME-schooling? Is it the books we use? Mom teaching the children at home? Desks lined up in rows in our schoolroom? No, I am afraid not. Rather, homeschooling becomes HOME-schooling as our home atmosphere becomes an atmosphere of real learning. Our home atmosphere can do much to enable a child to learn or it can do much to hinder our children from learning. In Ephesians 6: 4 we are commanded, ***“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*** We heed this command as we make our home atmosphere one that the children thrive...as we bring the children to the Lord for him to teach them HIS way. Our homes will become learning homes as we seek to nurture, train, discipline, counsel, and admonish our children. This atmosphere of the home will become an instrument of education.

We find that there are many instruments, which contribute to a real, living education. Charlotte Mason, an educator of the late 19th Century in England, knew that all children may not have all of the best opportunities or situations in which to learn. She knew that children came with all sorts of bends, manners, and personality types. But, she knew that no matter the differences, if three tools were present in education of children that they would succeed in becoming educated. She says, *“Seeing that we are limited by the respect due to the personality of children, we can allow ourselves but three educational instruments—the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit, and the presentation of ideas. Our motto is, ‘Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life.’ When we say that education is an atmosphere, we do not mean that a child should be isolated in what may be called a ‘child environment’ specially adapted and prepared, but that we should take into account the educational value of his natural home atmosphere both as regards persons and things and should let him live freely among his proper conditions. It stultifies a child to bring down his world to the ‘child’s’ level.”* So, which ingredients are required for the atmosphere that is conducive to learning? Let's take a look at a few...

The View of the Child...

The foundation of homeschooling begins with a Worldview about the child. The Christian Worldview does much to enhance the children's atmosphere of learning. The child in the Christian home is accepted just as he or she is...not dependent upon their behavior, or personality or achievements. They do not have to become like anyone else or fulfill the childhood dreams that their parents were unable to fulfill in their own childhood. They can be just exactly who God made them to be. This is seen as we tailor the lessons to their areas of delight...as we seek out what God wants for that particular child...as we direct them in their individual bent or purpose. The Amplified Bible has a beautiful version of Proverbs 22:6, ***“Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.”*** The atmosphere of the HOME-school is one that trains each child with respect for where **God** wants that child to go and with consideration of the giftings that are already within the child.

In a Christian home, the child is not looked upon as a mere child. Rather, the child is viewed as an individual with giftings and ideas that are valuable. In a family looking at children from a Christian Worldview, the child is not looked upon as an inconvenience. Rather, the child is an integral part of the family and its ministry in the world. The child belongs! The child's ideas and strengths are valued as

essential to make the family everything that God wants for it to be. In a Christian home with a vision of what God has designed the family to be, you will find children who are challenged intellectually and spiritually by their fellow students...their siblings and *their parents!* There are bonds of mutual interests that continue for all of life. There is an abiding atmosphere of friendship, creativity, and camaraderie. The godly home accepts the child without cruel judgments that would break the child's heart, yet with the balance of teaching the child the standards of our Holy God! The Christian family is a haven for the child as he flourishes in the security of God's specially designed atmosphere of learning...the home!

A Liberal Education...

By the term Liberal Education, we are not talking about an education at the White House here! Hehe! We are talking about an education that is with a vast variety and with many options! So often, we find that children are being crippled by the ideas that are in the minds of their educators. We may even find ourselves battling with that old Scope and Sequence rather than trusting in faith that our children will be fully equipped for their calling by simply seeking God and HIS way first! Charlotte Mason said *"Parents make tremendous sacrifices to that goddess who presides over Education."* Yes, we do...we still do! We fear that if we give our children a liberal education, that they will not be able to make the scores on the SAT tests...or get into a great college...or have all the "holes" filled! We sacrifice much in the name of education including our atmosphere of our home. But as we seek God first and HIS righteousness, we find that all these things are added to us...success in homeschooling AND an atmosphere of real learning!

An atmosphere that is conducive to learning will be one in which the children are given a vast variety of opportunities to develop a relationship with all the many areas of learning available. That atmosphere will not value the study of Chemistry over the study of Baking...or the study of Physics over the study of Auto Mechanics...or the study of Math over the study of God's Creation. The atmosphere that will be most conducive to real learning will be one that values *all* of the knowledge that is available for the children and serves it readily to the little ones.

A Growing Ground for Children...

Charlotte Mason shared in her book *Home Education*, *"The home schoolroom ought to be the best growing-ground for them (the children). And doubtless it would be so, were the mother at liberty to devote herself to the instruction of her children; but this she is seldom free to do."* Miss Mason further shares that mothers are not free to do so because of the pull to put the children into schools or to hire governess', but I believe that we struggle in different areas.

Often, our homes are not atmospheres of learning because of our fast pace. We may feel that our children should be taught at home, but often we show a doublemindedness as we cart them off to lessons that *"we cannot provide for them ourselves."* We also allow interruptions such as the dominating phone...or rush of the to-do's...or even the preoccupation with covering a textbook...to inhibit our atmosphere of learning. We hinder any real instruction by making the hours of schooling long and monotonous. Finally, we also hinder the children by making too much of their time organized instead of free to pursue interests on their own.

The home schoolroom ought to be a growing ground for the children. They ought to have *time every day* in abundance to find and digest great ideas! Since ideas are the food for the mind, we can agree with Charlotte Mason as she said, *"It is not too much to say that a morning in which a child receives no new idea*

is a morning wasted, however closely the little student has been kept at his books.” Doing “school-at-home” does not assure that our children are given ideas. We can only be assured that our children are presented with ideas as we give them healthy doses of ideas from great books written with literary power and plenty of access with great men and women in our world today! We can test all that we are doing by four tests that Miss Mason had for children's lessons... “...*the children's lessons should provide material for their mental growth, should exercise the several powers of their minds, should furnish them with fruitful ideas, and should afford them knowledge, the kind that the child may recall as a man with profit and pleasure.*”

So, what growing ground are we furnishing in our home? Does our home have an atmosphere, which challenges our children to become lifetime learners? Does our home stimulate the children to learn at all times? Does our home nurture our children to learn with delight rather than according to the old scope and sequence? Is our home supporting our children emotionally by providing our children with an atmosphere of total acceptance, respect and value of the children? Is the home atmosphere serene, calm, contented, stable, relaxed, positive, enjoyable, warm and inviting? Is our home a physical atmosphere of learning...Lots of Bible/Bible Verses, Print Rich, Computer, Great Art, Beautiful Music, Poetry rather than TV, Video Games, Outside Going and Lessons??

Queen Victoria once said, “*The greatest Maxim of all is that children should be brought up as simply and in as domestic a way as possible, and that they should be as much as possible with their parents, and learn to place the greatest confidence in them in all things.*” Yes, our homes should be the growing ground for our children to grow into Godly Men and Women. We can only achieve that goal by striving to have an atmosphere of learning that is domestic and full of opportunities to learn from ideas within the home.

Time for Play...

One area of atmosphere that Charlotte Mason stressed heavily is that of play. She spent pages 42-95 in her book *Home Education* just discussing the need for play for the child. She believed so much in the need to give children plenty of time for play that she set up her school day to finish formal lessons early in the day. She was able to do so by teaching them short, effective lessons, which could be completed in the morning hours so that the children would have the afternoons left to play and pursue other interests. By this, she insured children a completely well-rounded atmosphere of learning. She knew that in order for children to thrive and delight in learning, they would have to be able to have balance in all areas of life...academics, service, ministry, and of course, play!

Our children need plenty of time to play. They need to have those long days outside of making mud pies...climbing trees...making tree-houses...playing cops and robbers...laying sieges...watching nature...climbing mountains...swimming...nursing and “mothering” animals...building...having adventures! Outdoor play is a crucial element of a real, living education.

Susan Schaeffer Macaulay in her book *For the Children's Sake* says, “*Their minds are unfed, their imaginations unused, their bodies unexercised, their thoughts unexpressed, and unheard.*” She shared that this problem was a consideration with Charlotte Mason as “*she respected the children's minds so highly, she provided a truly liberal education for them at a very young age. She arranged for broad curriculum. However, she knew that if attention was to be given fully, the child should have it contained in a length of time appropriate for them. Then, they could turn their attention from mind-work to enjoying nature, art, play, handcrafts, and physical activity. She believed firmly that they should have free time at home, in*

ordinary surroundings; so her schools never gave homework.” Mrs.. Macaulay recommended simplifying the lifestyle of the family to support and encourage play. Some of her “factors” which encourage play are... keeping the lifestyle “home-based,” giving plenty of space...setting the children outside to play...freedom to make messes and noise... plenty of access to raw materials...and plenty of TIME!

We can simplify our lifestyle in these many ways but in order to have an atmosphere of real, natural learning we must also eliminate hindrances to play. One of the greatest hindrances to play is competition with long, monotonous school hours. Institute the short lessons and eliminate homework and simplify requirements each day to enable plenty of time to play. Another hindrance is the competition with Outside Lessons and Extracurricular Activities. These hinder us by taking our families out of the home away from the slow, quiet atmosphere so conducive to learning. They split us up physically and mentally as we find our families and mind all going in so many directions. Limit the number of involvements by truly seeking out only those activities that work toward developing your child toward their God-given calling. Just as all of these above hindrances are organized activities, another hindrance to play is too much organized time. If our daily schedule is filled with organized time for the children, we will find their spirits wilting and their minds becoming dull. Trust your children with their time. Give them plenty of free time after table time and chores to direct as they please. As we plan out and organize every minute of their day, we find that we are not giving them the essential time to become bored enough to exercise creativity or to pursue any interests! This time is essential if we are to find our children choosing to learn and play rather than going to time wasters like the Television or Video Games for entertainment.

So, simplify so that you can challenge the minds of your little ones. Simplify so that your little ones can have time to use that wonderful imagination that God blessed them with. Simplify so that your little ones have time to exercise their bodies! Simplify so that your little ones will have time for their thoughts to be expressed and heard! Simplify so your little ones have the balance of play!

Relationships and Real Life...

The first thing that God taught us as we began this pilgrimage of homeschooling was the importance of relationships. I knew immediately that homeschooling was going to serve to bring our family together...to unify us. Through homeschooling I was able to develop a closer relationship with my children. We could learn together...ask questions together...search out answers together. It was exactly the delight that God wanted for me to experience in my journey as a mother. Through homeschooling, we found that our children could be best friends for life. They could explore together...giggle together...have adventures in “lands far away”...grow up with mutual interests! They could have a relationship that God had designed for siblings. Through homeschooling my husband could be in authority over all the areas of our children's lives. He could be a vital part of teaching the children instead of a weekend daddy once in a while when their days out of school and his off days met up. He could listen to the stories of their childhood and experience a touch from his own childhood once again.

The atmosphere in the home is dependent upon these relationships. It is within the home that we can offer stability, security, love, forgiveness, and satisfying relationships. It is within the home that we find an atmosphere of relationship with others that lasts through it all...come what may!

The home is real life at all times. Children need this reality check that they get every morning as they get out of bed. There is not a stifled environment of desks in a row and artificial learning for a time. Teaching is

not separate from all the areas of life... spiritual... practical. Rather, all of life is educational! The Spiritual is brought into the world under the direction of the parents. The family can pursue a distinctly Christian education together that is real life!

The home atmosphere is the best atmosphere for exposing the children to all sorts of ideas...Christian and worldly. They can read, know and listen to people with all sorts of ideas and beliefs while sitting securely at the knee of their parents. They can hear the answers that their parents offer to those different from them. They can enjoy what is good while seeing what is wrong. They can explore the riches of life without any “holy hedges!” The comforts of their relationships within the family allow for exposure to all of life...art, music, books, activities...all from a Christian Worldview.

The Learning Atmosphere...

The ingredients above are what make the homeschool a HOME-school. It is that mixture of friendliness, purpose, and relaxation that draws us to learn. It is that satisfying life of learning in the midst of the cares of life. HOME-schooling is viewing the child different from the common view of our culture. It is being able to trust our little ones to continue learning at all times. It is enjoying the fruit of relationships! The HOME-school is a balance of structure and freedom...contentment and curiosity... serenity and excitement! It is learning without competition or fear! It is pleasure with the individual level of achievement. It is a place of ideas, play, relationships, and learning at all times.

The challenge today is for you to really treasure your HOME-school. Treasure the times that are fleeting by. Treasure the little delights of childhood! See those little ones like God sees them! See them as a blessing sent from God! Enjoy the little things with them. Slow down to become a fellow student with them! Insist on an Atmosphere of REAL learning at all times! Enjoy the atmosphere of HOME-SWEET-HOME-school! Happy HOME-schooling!

Homemaking On Top Huckleberry Hill...

Homemaking...The word Homemaking brings back many fond memories of my childhood home. I can almost smell the homemade goodies that mom labored daily to make. I can almost feel the crisp, clean sheets from those Monday washings. Thinking back brings me sweet memories of my home-sweet-home mom!

I began homeschooling much like many of you. I had spent 6 years of marriage modeling after my dear mother. She always had the laundry out on the line, the entire house cleaned, lunch cooking, and dinner laid out all before 7:00 AM! You can imagine my difficulties the first year of homeschooling as I tried to keep up this pace in my home. I did it! I was wore out... frustrated... and KNEW there must be a change! I prayed about my concerns and as usual the Lord gave His direction...His Plan. It would be to manage my home well but not at the expense of developing relationships with my husband and children or at the expense of homeschooling these treasures. Let me share some tips today that I have learned over the last few years that make homemaking a delight...

- **Semi-Annual Cleanout...**One thing that you can do today to get a handle on homemaking in your homeschool is to stop what you are doing and do a big clean out! Yes, I am saying stop all that you are doing now...as you begin your new school year. Stop and spend some time this week cleaning out and organizing. It will make all the difference in the world in the atmosphere of the home. Also, take a break in the Spring to do a real good cleanout. This helps me to keep overall order...even if our home is "lived in." I was going to title this article, *What I Have Done on Summer Vacation...* because we have been cleaning out all of our home the last part of our Summer Vacation. It is so nice to have those papers in binders...those books organized on the shelf...those closets...well, we are still working! hehe! A semi-annual cleanout will help you to get all in order so that your family can only maintain order...this gives you a peace of mind so you can relax and enjoy teaching (and PLAYING!)
- **Morning Chore Time...**After you have your home in order for the new year, all that will be needed is maintenance. We maintain our home by requiring a morning chore time. When the children were all young, I used to set myself a timer of one hour to clean and do chores. I would set the children's timer for 10-15 minutes and call for a clutter drill. (When they were real little I would have clutter drills at different times of the day so we kept their things straightened.) They would have to pick up everything they could before the buzzer went off. Usually all was done in about 5 minutes. If the work did not get done, I waited until the next day to do it. This worked well to keep our home from becoming a distraction from the important job of discipling our children. Plus, it trained our entire family in the habit of doing their part in cleaning the house quickly. Now that my children are trained, the bulk of the housework is done by them during their morning chore time. Our chore time is first thing after our Quiet times. Everyone just

gets busy doing their part...Elisabeth (almost 8) gets the laundry going, cleans the bathroom as needed, puts away any dishes, washes any dirty dishes, helps to feed the chickens and animals, cleans her room, vacuums, and helps with any other chores that need to be done...Matthew takes care of feeding and caring for his dog, helps with the laundry that needs folding or putting away, dusts, straightens the kitchen and helps Elisabeth with the dishes, maintains the vehicles, helps Dad with any repairs or outside chores, and cleans his room. With them pitching in, all gets done efficiently so we can take care of the important things...family life!

- **Standard of Excellence not Perfection...**You can imagine from my childhood that I came into homemaking with a pretty high standard. Actually it was called Perfectionism! I struggled so long with comparing my home to my mother's home...my children's assistance with that of older children. ..in doing so, I was setting myself up for failure! God does not want for us to compare ourselves. If we do, we find ourselves comparing our lives to lives of our mothers who tucked the children off in school and COULD have a clean house because NO ONE WAS THERE! If we do, we find ourselves patting ourselves on the back when we have our homes nicer than "so-and-so." Our standards are not to be based on those around us...but on what brings glory and honor to God. We cannot all have a *Better Homes and Gardens* home, but we can have a standard of excellence. What we do can be eternal not for today! We can focus more on the people than what we have. We can offer hospitality. These are truly the Excellent!

- **Bulk Cooking...**One thing that I learned after that first year of homeschooling was to cook in bulk. The first years of homeschooling I had a home business of sewing for the public. I would sew one day, cook one day. On the sewing days, we would have leftovers from my cooking day. It was a nice balance which enabled me to operate a successful sewing business while homeschooling and homemaking! From this, I developed a habit of cooking in bulk that has continued till today. It is easy to just buy double ingredients...usually it is cheaper! I just double my recipes and freeze the extra dish. Yesterday, I had the "fruit" of my labors as we had Lasagna already prepared last week that only needed to be popped in the oven and served with our fresh bread. You can be prepared at all times for those dropping in if you freeze a variety of foods as you cook them! Bulk Cooking redeems the time so you can stay busy with the important things in life...relationships!

- **Eliminating the Distractors...**I tend to battle with two primary distracters in my life...the Telephone and Too Much Going! These tend to take the joy out of homeschooling and homemaking! I have waged war on these two enemies! For our telephone enemy, I have set a goal to start my day earlier. I turn the phone off...yes, the ringer is off and there is no answering machine to nag at me either! I only turn the phone on when it is a good time to talk. This has helped me a lot because I find that no matter how much I tell others about our best times, they inevitably call right as we are all snuggled up with a great book...or just as I am in the midst of a great quiet-time! The "going" monster is not so easily maintained without much effort! Because of this, I try to utilize my going time wisely by doing drill work along the way...narrating along the way...or praising God in song as a family along the way! I have tried to limit feeding this monster by doing all my errands on the days that I am already in town. If I need something in between times out, I just give my husband a list or page him with my needs. He helps me to keep this

monster under control!

- **Do Something Every Day...**I read in a book by Emilie Barnes a while back that if we take one little job a day that we can keep up our homes better. I have implemented this into my home. I may just straighten one drawer...or the vanity...or a pile of papers..but, this helps to keep the home manageable without requiring me to be a slave to homemaking to-do's!
- **Set Up Learning Areas...**I remember the motto of the mother of one of my best friends, "A place for everything and everything in its place." She was a real Proverbs 31 woman! She maintained her home beautifully and still had time to be a gracious wife of a U.S. Senator. As I began to homeschool, I saw the "stuff" take over! This motto of Mrs. Pickering became my motto. We set up learning areas that could be the "place" for our learning tools. We set up a children's library...game area...computer area...dress up bin...Nature Shelf...video area...so on. This has helped me to maintain a semblance of sanity amidst all the "stuff" stuffed into our little cottage!
- **Slow Pace...**The biggest enemy of a relaxed home atmosphere is the fast pace...the hurry! It is key to remember that everything has its season! Plus, remember that you can delegate! You can delegate many of the chores to the children...you can let others take their turns with the church responsibilities...you can do without that extra class or lesson! Genesis 33: 13-14 in the Amplified Bible says, *"...You know, my lord, that the children are tender and delicate and need gentle care, and the flocks and herds with you are of concern to me; for it the men should overdrive them for a single day, the whole of the flocks would die. Let my Lord, I pray you, pass over before this servant; and I will lead on slowly, governed by [consideration for] the livestock that set the pace before me and the endurance of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."* In this passage, Jacob (God's Man, God's Way) is met by Esau (the world, the world's way). Esau wants Jacob to go along with him...in that fast pace! Jacob sets an example before us of considering the slow pace...the true needs of our children! Our children would prefer a calm, easy-going mom to the fast paced mom who provides all the "essential" opportunities! Trade in that pace for a slow, relaxed atmosphere...you won't regret it!
- **Don't Forget Ministry...**One of the greatest means that we have for influencing our world for Christ is through our homes! Are you surprised? Well, think about those who have influenced you the most...How many ministered to you from their home? I treasure the lessons I learned about God's Design for me as a wife and mother while sitting at the feet of Mamaw! I saw true submission modeled before me. I saw a love of homemaking. I even learned to sew at her knee! It was sitting in her kitchen that God confirmed His call for me to write! All of the characteristics of the Proverbs 31 woman were modeled perfectly before me from the precious home of Mamaw. Much of who I am has been instilled through her quiet ministry...yes, the ministry within the home does reap fruit! You can minister to the world through cooking...card-making... sewing...crafts...just by using those practical skills faithfully to teach and minister to others. You can fully utilize the spiritual gifts of everyone in your family. These gifts are a wonderful opportunity to minister to one another and to those who come into your home. Using gifts through practical service from your home-base is the perfect training ground for your little

disciples!

- **Take Time for the Beautiful...**All of these tips are designed for one purpose...to give you ideas which will help you to have time for the Beautiful! It may be more time for reading aloud...time to snuggle up with beautiful poetry...time for a long walk observing God's nature...time to take a long-hot bath and relax to Classical Music...or Time for Tea! Homemaking in the Homeschool can be simplified to give you time for the things God designed to nourish you...The Beautiful and those treasured relationships! Blessings!

Great Resources for Homeschooling Homemakers...

Sue Gregg Cookbooks...This year I bought these wonderful resources ONE AT A TIME! I can't imagine how I made it without them! One resource that taught me the most about nutrition and how to cook from scratch is Sue Gregg's *15 Minute Meal Planner*. With these treasures you will find fresh ideas that are nutritious!

First Place Favorites...This cookbook is published by First Place...a weight management program. The recipes may be low-cal but they are all mouth watering! I am enjoying using them for my family since they are healthy and delicious for them and low-cal for me!

Taste Of Home Magazine...This magazine is a treasure. It is reasonable by subscription or at the newstand...plus, it is full of recipes that really work! A must!

Hearth and Home...This book by Karey Swan is a treat. It is jam-packed full of great recipes FROM SCRATCH! Plus, it has wonderful ideas which encourage you to be the homemaker you desire to be!

Dinners in the Freezer...Homeschooling Mom, Jill Bond has shared in this book tips and practical suggestions for meal planning and preparation which help you to put meals in the freezer so you can enjoy your time with your treasures!

Make A Mix Cookbook...I bought this treasure at Books-A-Million. It has recipes galore for mixes that you are probably buying at HIGH cost in the grocery store. This book saved me double its cost within a couple months! Get you one!

Happy Homemaking!

Unschooling and Charlotte Mason

Dear Cindy,

We have been looking into the Charlotte Mason Approach with much interest. We are interested in teaching our children by delight and with a natural approach but we feel that children need structure and discipline if they are to be prepared for adulthood. Can you possibly address how you approach these concerns? Is Charlotte Mason's method a form of Unschooling or am I seeing it clearly? I plan to get her books for Christmas. I know that you have read much of her writing and used her approach with your children. Your insights could help me as I choose what will work for my family. Could you share about what is the Charlotte Mason Approach and what is Unschooling? Thanks for taking the time to address these concerns!

Just Wondering...

These are excellent questions and really perfect for this issue of the newsletter! This issue is devoted to the Topic of *Education is a Discipline*. Really this question should have been a lead article because it seems to be an area of confusion for many looking into the Charlotte Mason Homeschool. I will use your questions as part of my outline for sharing about Unschooling and the Charlotte Mason Approach. Keep in mind as I do, that with any approach, you may want to keep what works well with your family while eliminating what would not. Both approaches have wonderful ideas. If we are to develop our own philosophy of education, we must take what works for us and use it in training our treasures! Thanks for asking! Keep those great questions coming! Love, Cindy

How are Unschooling and Charlotte Mason Similar??

The Goals...

We find that there are some basic similarities in the goals of the two approaches. The primary goal of Unschooling is to develop a self-motivated, natural learner. As you look at Charlotte Mason's Approach, you find that the goal is for each student to become self-educated so that they can have a lifelong lifestyle of learning. Charlotte Mason never used artificial motivators such as prizes, stickers, grades or awards. She used three motivators, which encourage self-motivation. They are Admiration, Faith, and Love. She knew that if we respected the child, the child would be motivated to pursue a lifestyle of learning. Just as the Unschooling Approach wants for the child to learn naturally, we find that Miss Mason's ideas helped to instill a natural approach to teaching the student and in turn a natural approach for learning. The child would grow up with an education that was an atmosphere, a discipline and a life. This education would instill in the child a lifestyle of learning at all times, in all circumstances, instead of in a tiny compartment that we commonly call school. Yes, this is certainly natural...the way that God intends!

The Methodology...

There are many differences and likenesses between the methodology of the Unschooling and Charlotte Mason Approaches. Let's look at the similarities for now. Both approaches seek to get away from the typical "school-at-home" procedures and mentality by instilling more of a lifestyle of learning in the home-life. Both believe that children need to enjoy "real life" so that they can truly love learning naturally. Among all of the many approaches available for the homeschooler, both of these approaches stand out for not using grades or tests to determine ability or knowledge gained. In both approaches, you will see a strong emphasis in letting the child alone to think...be curious...discover...test...and of course, play! In the Unschooling Approach, the child is provided with access to readable books that focus on real people and their daily lives...Charlotte Mason called these Real, Living Books. Both approaches gave the children plenty of access to materials to use in creating their own creations. Both approaches believe in getting the children in direct contact with real people from different walks of life. Unlike public schools, this is not limited to those their own age. As matter of fact, time is set aside in the Junior High and High School years for the children to have time to apprentice under adults for work experience. You will find differences in how much the Unschooling parent may feel that they are to influence their children. You may see some parents who feel that any influence, instruction or correction would infringe upon the child or some parents who give their children freedom to pursue interests with parental support and guidance. With Charlotte Mason's parents you will find more similarities with the later.

Not all Unschoolers will have unstructured lessons for academics, many have structured table time much like that of the Charlotte Mason families. These academics will be more based on interests and delight of the child than upon discipline and habit as with the Charlotte Mason home. With both approaches you will find strong relationships between the parent and child. This is because parents include their children in "their" lives instead of setting up an atmosphere that is child-centered and heavily focused on "school in the home." As the children observe the parents in their daily lives, they learn "who" the parent is and "what" the parent knows. This enriches the education of the child just through parent/child interaction. This also teaches the children to see life as educational and full of knowledge to soak up everywhere!

The Differences...

With so many similarities, what could possibly be any difference in the two?? Let's begin by looking at a quote from John Holt, the father of the Unschooling Approach from his book *Teach Your Own*, "*What children need is not new and better curricula but access to more of the real world; plenty of time and space to think over their experiences, and to use fantasy and play to make meaning of them; and advice, road maps, guidebooks, to make it easier for them to get where **they want to go (not where we think they ought to go), and to find out what they want to find out.***" Of course, Charlotte Mason would agree with Mr. Holt's view that children do not need new and better curricula. She felt that they should be given the riches that are in print...real ideas! In fact, she shared in her book *School Education* the following thoughts...

“Our aim in Education is to give a Full Life... We owe it to them to initiate an immense number of interests... Life should be all living, and not merely a tedious passing of time; not all doing or all feeling or all thinking--the strain would be too great--but, all living; that is to say, we should be in touch wherever we go, whatever we hear, whatever we see, with some manner of vital interest. We cannot give the children these interests; we prefer that they should never say they have learned botany, conchology, geology, or astronomy. The question is not,--how much does the youth know? When he has finished his education--but how much does he care? And about how many orders of things does he care? In fact, how large is the room, in which he finds his feet set? And, therefore, how full is the life he has before him? I know you may bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. What I complain of is that we do not bring our horse to the water. We give him miserable little text-books, mere compendiums of facts, which he is to learn off and say and produce at an examination; or we give him various knowledge in the form of warm diluents, prepared by his teacher with perhaps some grains of living thought to the gallon. And all the time we have books, books teeming with ideas from the minds of thinkers upon every subject to which we can wish to introduce children.”

Both Mr. Holt and Miss Mason agree wholeheartedly about real books. The discrepancy between the two is in the involvement of the teacher. The question for the parent is whether children really should get to go where they want to go with their education...find out only what they want to find out...OR do they need parental guidance and training?? Although Charlotte Mason set forth the goal of the child becoming self-educated in young adulthood, she set forth in the early years to instill the discipline similar to that instructed in the Scripture. I am sure that you all recall many of these challenging verses from Scripture, which challenge us to be **totally** involved in the education of our children...

Colossians 3: 20, ***“Children, obey (comply with the commands, orders, or instructions, to do that which is commanded or required, and to forbear doing that which is prohibited, to yield to the impulse, power and operation of, submit.) your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.”***

Proverbs 22: 15, ***“Foolishness is bound in the heart of the child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”***

Proverbs 13: 24, ***“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (promptly).”***

Proverbs 29: 15-18, ***“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame...Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight to thy soul. Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”***

Proverbs 23: 13-15, ***“Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.”***

Proverbs 19: 18, ***“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”***

Proverbs 22:6 (KJV), “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*” I like the Amplified Bible’s version of this verse, “*Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.*”

There are a few words that keep appearing throughout Scripture, that let us know that the parents are not to let the child alone until they are well trained. IF we do, we stand in disobedience to all that God requires of us. Let’s look at a few of these words and their definitions from *Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*...

Train...The word train literally means to educate; to teach; to form by instruction or practice; to bring up; to draw from act of persuasion; to entice; to allure; to exercise; to discipline; to teach and form by practice; to break, to tame and accustom; to lead; to direct; to form to a proper shape by growth, lopping, or pruning. Training actually refers to a process, regular method, or course. It is the act or process of drawing or educating.

Correction...Bringing back from error or deviation to a just standard as to truth; rectitude, justice or propriety: as the correction of opinions or manners; retrenchment of fault or errors; amendment; to rectify; to cure faults; punishment; discipline; chastisement; that which corrects; whatever tends to correct the moral conduct and bring back from error or sin; abatement of noxious qualities.

Chasten...To correct by punishment; to punish; to inflict pain for the purpose of reclaiming an offender; as to chasten a son with a rod. To afflict by other means. To purify from errors or faults.

Rod...An instrument of punishment or correction; chastisement; discipline; power; authority; support; in Scripture a staff or wand, instrument for threshing.

Foolish(ness)...Void of Understanding or sound judgment; weak in intellect; unwise; imprudent; acting without judgment or discretion in particular things; marked with folly; silly; vain; trifling; ridiculous; despicable; wicked, sinful; acting without regard to the divine law and glory, or to one’s own eternal happiness; proceeding from depravity; absurd; sinful.

If we are to set our children on the path that God wants them to go, it will have to be us, *the parents*, training them. Training them entails taking a good look at their individual giftings and bents. It is educating, instructing, disciplining, and even correcting them in the consideration of shaping and directing them toward their calling. It is more than merely educating them and totally different than letting them alone. It is proactive by the parent. The parent trains the child to use his/her gifts rather than trying to fill them up or squelch them as artificial education so often does. The parent sets forth to develop that which is within each child with an education that is designed individually around each specific child. The parent spends time with God and their particular child to learn of God’s vision for that child’s life...then; they wrap all they do around helping each child prepare for their call from God.

Training children according to Scripture entails the parent evaluating how the child spends his/her time at home... whether the child is bored and idle or productive and busy with their hands and minds... whether the quality of what is done is acceptable or not...whether the child has the ability and skill to learn on their own...whether the child not only knows how to learn but loves to learn... whether the child has a passion for/relationship with something... whether the child has an idea of God's plan for their lives. The parent is responsible for setting before the child an environment that provides availability of many options or areas of interest for learning. The parent is to encourage an inner motivation for learning as they train the child in godly character. The goal is for the child to mature into an education that is conceived by the child with the parent as a guide... but that maturity is not immediate. It is after careful discipline of the parent.

Just as Scripture sets forth a plan for training children, so did Charlotte. Her motto was that "*Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life.*" In her schools and home-schools, the home was an atmosphere of discipline and routine. She spent much of her writing explaining the importance of establishing good habits (another article in this issue!). She said, "*Habit, in the hands of the mother, is as his wheel to the potter, his knife to the carver-the instrument by means which she turns out the design she has already conceived in her brain.*" "*The child must not be left to his human nature...Wherefore, it is much the parent's duty to educate his child into moral strength and purpose and intellectual activity as it is to feed him and clothe him.*" "*It rests with parents and teachers to lay down lines of habit on which the life of the child may run henceforth with little jolting or miscarriage, and may advance the right direction with the minimum of effort.*" Miss Mason felt that as parents lay down the lines of habit, we ease life not only for ourselves but also for our children. This philosophy totally agrees with Scripture but is totally opposite of the philosophy of John Holt.

Mr. Holt wrote a rather controversial book entitled *Escape from Childhood: The Needs and Rights of Children*. In his book, he details how that children should have certain rights that all adults have. Some of these "rights" should be...

- To be legally responsible for their own lives and acts.
- To work...for money!
- To travel, live away from home, to choose to make one's own home, and to choose their own guardians.
- To do anything that an adult can legally do.
- To use drugs.
- To learn naturally...to not be "warped" or "destroyed" by training.
- To control one's own learning.
- To control their own private sex lives.

He says in his book, "*I urge that the law grant and guarantee to the young the freedom that it now grants to adults to make certain kinds of choices, do certain kinds of things, and accept certain kinds of responsibilities.*" And what if the parents were to not believe in a law such as this? He continues, "*This means in turn that the law will take action against anyone who interferes with young people's rights to do such things.*"

How would Charlotte Mason feel about things such as this?? Well, she dedicates the first two chapters of her book *School Education* to the topic of Docility and Authority in the School and Home. She shares about Mr. Herbert Spencer, an educator with like-beliefs of Mr. Holt, who influenced much of the current American system that concerns so many Christian parents today. She shares the following...

“But, says Mr. Spencer, in effect, every man finds his own final authority in his own reason. This philosopher has the courage of his convictions; he perceives...that the enthronement of the human reason is the dethronement of Almighty God. From the dethronement of the divine, follows the dethronement of all human authority, whether it be of kings and their deputies over nations, or of parents over their families. Every act of authority is, we are taught (by these false teachers, editor!), an infringement of the rights of man or of child. Children are to be brought up from the first self-directed, doing that which is right in their own eyes, governed by the reason which is to be trained by experience of right and wrong, in the choosing of the right course. Life has its penalties for those who transgress the laws of reason, and the child should be permitted to learn these laws through the intervention of these penalties. But ‘thou shalt’ and ‘thou shalt not’ are to be eliminated from the vocabulary of parents. So complete and detailed is Mr. Spencer’s scheme for the emancipation of children from rule, that he objects to the study of languages on the ground that the rules of grammar are a transgression of liberty.”

Miss Mason continues to share that parents do not see the underlying goal of this philosopher... *“To eliminate the idea of authority from the universe, that he repudiates the authority of parents because it is a link in the chain which binds the universe to God. For it is indeed true that none of us has a right to exercise authority, in things great or small, except as we are, and acknowledge ourselves to be, deputed by the one Supreme and Ultimate Authority.”* She further states her stand on the subject of rights and authority, *“When we take up this volume on education, small as it is, easy reading as it is, we must bear in mind that we have put ourselves under the lead of a philosopher who overlooks nothing, who regards the least important things from the standpoint of their final issue, and who would not have the little child do as he is bid least he should learn, as a man, to obey that authority, other than himself, which we believe to be Divine.”*

I would only pray that this could be said of me as well. As we study anyone’s philosophy of education, we must realize that their Worldview, basic belief structure, inevitably influences their goals and methodology. We saw above that both approaches had similar goals and many aspects that were similar, but where the rubber meets the road...that of relationships with God and others, we find that Mr. Holt does not fully agree with Charlotte Mason on the training of children. Because of this, I feel that the two approaches are VERY different from one another.

As to your concerns about structure and routine, we will fully explore more of Miss Mason’s ideas in this issue. I hope that this answers some of your questions as to the basic similarities and differences of Unschooling and Charlotte Mason’s Approach. Thanks for your questions! Love, Cindy