

The Formation of Habit...

“The mother who takes pains to endow her children with good habits secures for herself smooth and easy days; on the other hand, she who lets habits take care of themselves has a weary life of endless friction.” “If we fail to ease life by laying down habits of right thinking and right doing, habits of wrong thinking and wrong doing fix themselves on their own accord.”

Charlotte Mason

We all come into homeschooling bringing our own personality...our beliefs of what school should be like and how children learn best...and of course, these little ones in which God assigns for us to teach. We find immediately that Homeschooling is so much more than just teaching subjects...it requires so much more of us! As I look back at the over the past years of Homeschooling, I find that a large majority of my efforts have not changed much since we began that spring of 1991. I am still battling the to-do's of homemaking...the pull of all the extras out of my home...and even more so, the formation of habit.

The formation of habit is central to what we do in our homeschooling. It is so central that Charlotte Mason, an educator from the late 1800's, wrote the largest portion of her 6 volumes on home education on the formation of habit rather than the teaching of lessons. She said often that Education is an Atmosphere, a Discipline, and a Life. Yes, she felt that Discipline in the home was one-third of what made a complete education!

So many mothers seek for curriculum or schedules to bring structure, order, and even education to the home. Real Structure, order and education all come from the formation of habit. Formation of Habit is not available from any curriculum or any planner or any schedule. Rather, good habits are formed as real education occurs in our home. We have many areas of habit formation that the parent must consider in the education of the child. Consideration must be given to establishing good habits in each area of the child's being...their intellect, their physical life, their religious life, their character, and their will. Yes, a true education affects all areas of the child's life!

Habits of the Intellectual Life...

Most often, we think of their intellectual life as we think of homeschooling. We want for our children to be trained in Attentiveness, Obedience, the Act of Knowing, Fit and Ready Expression, Right Thinking, Right Judging, Accuracy, Excellence, the Good Life. However, we seldom realize the great importance of ideas to the intellectual life. You see every habit in the child first comes by ideas. Miss Mason shares in her book *Parents and Children* the following... *“Every habit has its beginning. The beginning is the idea which comes with a stir and takes possession of us.”* The question is where do they get such ideas? How do we influence their intellectual life with ideas?

First, ideas are chiefly passed from person to person. It may be by the means of a relationship...or a great book...or something that someone may create (clothes, art, music, poetry, and literature...). You probably remember many instances that you were inspired to greatness by a story-or sadly were influenced to compromise your morals by a song or relationship.

We influence the intellectual life of our children as we carefully moderate the ideas in which they come in contact with. It may be guarding the relationships that they develop. It may be in eliminating activities, which do not support a home-centered lifestyle. It may be selecting appropriate literature or other influences. Our jobs as parents are eased, as we are selective about the food we select for the minds of our children. We want for the children to love learning, so we are careful to present them with ideas in the form of great literature...beautiful poetry...fine art...sensational music! We give them *time* to develop relationships with what they are learning whether it is a person from their biographies...or seeing a need to learn to write so that they can produce a product of worth to themselves and others!

Secondly, we find that our choices as parents will influence the ideas that our children internalize about education. I remember growing up in the public schools with the thought that education was someone teaching us in a classroom. I could not see all of life as educational. I could not fit church into my box of “what learning should be” so you can imagine the difficulty with changing my ideas and thus, habits once we began to homeschool. Our children may have never been inside the walls of a school, but they have ideas about learning which influence the way that they learn! We can influence their ideas of what education is by the food we give for their minds, the activities we allow them to participate in, the friends that we allow to influence their lives, and our own philosophy of education. These will make all the difference in the development of their intellectual habits!

Finally, we influence the ideas that our children have about the intellectual life by the lessons that we serve before them. Lessons are a means whereby we may establish habit effectively. The children learn by lessons whether the effort to give their attention is necessary or not... whether their minds and intelligence are respected or not... whether we care more for the test scores or for them and their calling in life... whether it pays to have initiative or whether it pays to sit, soak, and sour! As we train our children in intellectual habits, we will find that learning is really more natural than the models that are set before us in governmental and private schools. We will find the children become self-educated at early ages on a path that is totally individual for them! We will find that our children will be children of purpose!

Physical Habits...

The habits of the physical life are interwoven in all areas of life. A person is judged by their neatness...the order in their life and personal belongings...their standard of excellence. The habits of instilled in their lessons and spirit influence their physical habits. Because of this, children should be able to express their good character through their physical lessons. It may be to demonstrate attentiveness through listening carefully to their read aloud and then physically place their “re-telling” on paper. It may be to demonstrate

their habit of excellence by habitually setting forth to do their Copywork without reminder and doing so with precision, accuracy, and perfect execution. It may be to demonstrate their orderliness by helping to keep the home nice, neat, and orderly!

These habits are essential for the home to function optimally. The outward fruits from a lack of training make life tedious for the mother. A messy home...constant supervision of the children...inattentiveness of the children to their lessons...all require much more stress than taking time to lay down the lines of good habit! The fruits of an orderly, neat, well functioning home are definitely worth the effort!

Religious Habits...

Each and every day in our home begins with quiet times. Each member of our family is required to spend their time in Bible Study, Prayer, and Bible Memorization. This was not always so. For many years, I had to establish these habits of the religious life by time spent every morning in Quiet Time WITH the children. It did not take long until I saw Matthew begin to have his own quiet time. I share this because the most crucial habits to instill in our children are those that bring them closer to the Lord.

Habits such as thought of God, reverent attitudes, sense of duty, regular devotions, reading the Bible, Praise, Prayer, Sabbath Keeping only come from the consistent teaching and the model of the parents. The responsibility lies with the parent to instill these habits from an early age. These habits cannot be left for chance without leaving our children ill equipped to know and follow God.

Habits of Character...

Religious habits are empty and vain if we are not diligent to instill in our children the habits of character that are so necessary for the godly, well-educated child. Character used to be essential. In our society, we often ignore the character of the child and focus on the intellectual attainments of the child. Charlotte Mason shared in her book *Parents and Children* the following insight,

“Disposition, intellect, genius, come pretty much by nature; but character is an achievement, the one practical achievement possible to us for ourselves and for our children; and all real advance in family or individual is along the lines of character. Our great people are great simply by reason of their force of character...let this be borne in mind, whatever ugly quality disfigures the child, he is but as a garden overgrown with weeds; the more prolific the weeds, the more fertile the soul; he has within him every possibility of beauty of life and character. Get rid of the weeds and foster the flowers.”

For every bad habit, there is an opposite good habit. We all desire the wonderful character habits of candour, fortitude, temperance, patience, meekness, courage, generosity, personal service to God, relationship with God, gentleness, kindness...but these character qualities come to be only with care of the parent. Charlotte Mason shared that in order to eliminate bad character and develop the fine character qualities, the parent had to have special treatment as follows...

“The child may be cured in a month if the mother will set herself to the task with both hands and of set purpose; at any rate, the cure may be well begun, and that is half done...Let the month of treatment be a deliciously happy month to him, he living all the time in the sunshine of his mother’s smile. Let him not be left to himself to meditate or carry out ugly pranks. Let him feel himself always under a watchful, loving, and approving, eye. Keep him happily occupied, well amused. All this to break the old custom which is assuredly broken when a certain length of time goes by without its repetition. But one habit drives out another. Lay new lines in the old place. Open avenues of kindness for him. Let him enjoy daily, hourly the pleasure of pleasing. Get him into the way of making little plots for the pleasure of the rest—a plaything of his contriving, a dish of strawberries of his gathering, shadow rabbits to amuse the baby; take him on kind errands to poor neighbors, carrying and giving of his own. For a whole month the child’s whole heart is flowing out in deeds and schemes and thoughts of lovingkindness, and the ingenuity which spent itself in malicious tricks becomes an acquisition to his family when his devices are benevolent.”

If you find a weed in your child’s character, replace it with a flower! Choke out the weeds/defects in character with the graces of fine character!

Habits of the Will...

All of the above is of no real use until we deal with the final area of establishing habit...that of the will. The will shapes the destiny of the person. The will determines the consistency of action of the individual...the heart behind what is done or said or believed or accepted...and the final acceptance of your authority as the parent and ultimately God’s authority as Supreme Ruler in that child’s life. It is by the will that the child can *“turn his thoughts to the things he wants to think of—his lessons, his prayers, his work, and away from things he should not think of.”* (Charlotte Mason in ***Home Education***) It is by the will that the child learns to manage himself with self-government, controlling himself, compelling himself, and overcoming temptations.

The will of the child is very tender. The habits of the will are just as tender to instill. In the area of the will, the wise mother can strengthen her child, thus having fruit in all areas of habit! She strengthens the will with several tools...habits of the will. One such habit is giving the child a sense of conquest over his own inclinations. She can invite the child to cooperate and praise him as he experiences little successes! She can teach him the habit of compelling himself. Charlotte Mason called this habit the highest accomplishment of life. It is certainly so. As he heartily intends and purposes to do something he is bidden to do, he can use his own will to compel himself. This habit in motion is as exhilarating as seeing a child walk on his own...but more so because we know that as the child learns to compel himself to do good or to choose not to do bad, he is able to become self-governed for life! Another habit to instill is that of completion...succeeding at what they set forth to do...finishing what is started. This habit is one that influences every other area of habit! It influences who the child becomes!

The last habit of the will is that of letting God teach the child through his conscience. My key verse for

homeschooling is 1 Timothy 1:5, “*But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*” This verse sums up all of the emphasis of good habit. Without the formation of good habits, the goal of our instruction can never be attained. Our children would never will to do that which is good from pure hearts because they would not have a love for good. They would never learn to be sincere in their faith because they would develop the habit of self-centeredness and selfishness. Their faith would be in *self*. They would never have a good conscience that only comes from total fellowship with God through His Holy Spirit. Our goal is but this one thing to instill habit in our children so that they may have love from pure hearts...have a good conscience...and have a sincere faith. What an awesome goal!

The Importance of Routine...

Homeschools come packaged in all sorts and types. We find that homes all have their own atmosphere...their own discipline...and their own life. What will make for happy homeschool days? My vote goes to Routine!

As we look at different homes, we find that many people use many instruments to establish discipline. In our home, we have used primarily two tools...instruction and routine! You can probably see the need and benefits for instruction but why routine? Routine is the means by which we lay down the tracks of discipline. In our family routines, we take away much of the pain of who does what, when they are to do whatever, and how much they are to do. It has become part of our character to do all that we do with excellence...diligence...and of course, speed! So, what are some ideas for bringing routine into the home? The following thoughts are a hodgepodge of my thoughts on Routine and Form that I have jotted down as I studied this month...

- **When planning routines, priority is given to the most important things.** The most important thing is the *spirit of the person*! We all need our time with God primarily. If nothing else is done each day, why not the quiet times? However, often I myself find the struggle is more for the to-do's than for my relationship with God OR with the children. If we value the person the most, we find that our priority becomes that time to talk, read, relax, and even work together. Yes, there is always more work to do than there is time to do it. We must accept that reality while planning the time that we devote to that work around time with God and each other!
- **Use Lessons to Establish Habit and Discipline.** Lessons are the perfect means to establish habit and discipline in the child. Lessons are perfect time to lay the lines of good habits and correct the harmful habits. Through their lessons, they learn skills, practice godly character, learn that there are "*musts*" in life, and learn to use all of the faculties of their minds.
- **Feel free to alter any given routine!** As we go through life, we find that life is so short. The sunny moments simply must be snatched along the way. Even in Charlotte Mason's schools, she would ring a bell on nice days and set off for an all day expedition! Can we be this spontaneous? Yes, duty calls and responsibilities should be accepted habitually. BUT, all the duty and responsibility is out of balance without the liberty to enjoy life and its spontaneity!
- **Remember that it is not essential to have a developmental program for the child.** Instead of trying to teach each child on his/her own grade level, we all share in life together. We all learn from life together as fellow students. We are constantly establishing good habits, good priorities, and good routines! We use REAL LIFE as the curriculum! Because of this, we can relax

knowing that real life is the perfect teacher. It will be as we go along the way that we will teach the most to our children. If we base what we teach on “grade level,” then we find that our children simply do not thrive and learning becomes artificial! Instead, let’s look at what life can teach us. An example from our life was just this past week. We were in Mississippi for our Homeschooling Seminar. Almost all of our family lives in Mississippi. As we were getting ready to leave from the Rushton’s home to go visit my Daddy, my son was only listening to a conversation between his great-grandmother and I when God brought forth a natural lesson from life. She was commenting on Matthew’s new book *Fearless Warriors*, when I shared with her that his next book was to be on the Great Men and Women of the Civil War including our family. As she said, “Well, you know that both my grandfathers were in the War!” Matthew darted across the room to sit at her feet and glean from her stories of long ago! He was able to jot down two more stories for his book...and where did it come from? LIFE! It is not essential or even recommended to limit your child to what is learned at their grade level! Let your time with them be your curriculum! You will find that the results will influence their routines, priorities in life, and habits for all of life! You will find that they will be able to learn MORE than is possible following a typical scope and sequence! You will find your homeschool more fulfilling while you are juggling less!!

- **Use Home as the Atmosphere for Teaching!** Our homes are a perfect “growing ground” for children. As mothers, we can view our children as our little plants that will have to be nurtured in our homes. We will have to pour into them. We will have to devote ourselves to their constant care. We will have to be the ones to snatch up those weeds (harmful habits, attitudes, and ideas) that will quickly grow to hinder or possibly cut off their growth. We are their caretakers. In being their caretakers, we have to devote all to instructing them at all times. It may mean that for a season, we just stay home and pour into them... but the results are worth it. We will find our homes bearing great fruit through our children!
- **Accept that we are never perfect or there!** It is often so hard to accept our own weaknesses, needs, or limitations. We want to be perfect BEFORE we start teaching our children, yet God’s plan entails walking alongside of one another as fellow students in HIS classroom of life! In our routines, we must operate with what IS possible. We are not perfect, but also our feelings or the circumstances all around us do not sweep us along! We are free to grow and learn together throughout all of life!

A Typical Day at the Rushton's...

Wake up...Quiet times. No one is allowed to interrupt quiet times. Matthew studies on his own in several of his favorite study guides. (*Plants Grown Up* by Doorposts, *Christian Manhood* By Gary Maldaner), Elisabeth listens to the Bible on audiocassette, and I spend time in study and prayer. SOMETIMES I take my prayer walk if the weather permits...judging by my weight this time, you can tell it has been sweltering hot lately!)

Chores... The Children have to do the majority of the housework...kitchen, bathrooms, laundry, feeding animals, cleaning their rooms... This is done EVERY day. We usually can get most under control pretty quickly so we can settle down for our table time. This helps get us going for the day while helping to keep our concentration on our skills not the undone work around the house!

Table time... This is our formal study time for our skills. It is a given" for everyday. It is not altered because we use our table time to establish our routine in our home. The children work on their Bible Study (right now we are studying through the Old Testament with our Greenleaf resources), Copywork (they select their own selections to copy into their notebooks), Math (we are working through *Making Math Meaningful* on each of their grade levels), and Language (Alphaphonics for Elisabeth. She is still struggling with her reading, BUT getting better every day...it is finally clicking! Greek for Matthew. He is still working on his Greek Alphabet which is typical for his age, 11.)

Time with Dad... My husband works 2nd shift, so he wakes up around the time that the children have finished their table time. We schedule our day like this for a reason: Dad is TOO much fun! He used to distract the children from the time he woke up because they much more preferred to be listening to Dad...or helping him with his projects around the house. So, I try to finish their disciplined time by the time he wakes up so they can have the next few hours with him! They may work on building something (garage right now), or fixing something (the story of our life!), or going somewhere (they love to ride with him on his motorcycle...yes, we are Gold Wing people!), or just talking with him! Harold has this time to pour into them just "who" he is. He does not teach them Language or even Algebra...he teaches what is most needful...about himself!

Productive Free Time...We usually all do our own thing in the afternoon after Harold goes to work. This is the time that I work on any writing projects...or paper work...or return any calls...or prepare our next meals. The children spend this time on pursuits that they enjoy. It may be playing, observing nature, reading, working on projects of their own, practicing their instruments, writing, working on the computer...so on. We try to limit what is available in our home to only educational pursuits. Actually even their playtime is narrating what they are learning in their history read alouds!

Dinner...Baths...More Productive Free Time

Bedtime...Read Alouds... This is our best time to read from the Bible, or our school Read Alouds. We are currently reading through the Bible in a year. This time is spent in prayer, narrating from the previous day's reading, reading our new selection, and praying again for each other's requests. We choose our read alouds from a variety of subjects. It may be a classic in literature or a biography or a mission story or a living science book...we swap up so that we read different books together as a family

Well this is a look at our routine...how is yours? Is there a routine to your day? Is there enough margin in each day to allow for ministry as it comes up? To allow for spontaneity? Is there enough time that is unorganized by you so that the children can learn on their own? My prayer is that this issue will encourage you to develop a routine in your home that will give you the peace and fruit that comes only by walking each day in God's plan for your homeschool! Happy Homeschooling!

Schooling or Educating? How to Get Free From School-at-Home

Education can fill the home changing it forever! What excitement as the mother begins to homeschool her children! She sees all of life as a classroom. Suddenly, she looks upon the little annoying bugs a lot different from her days BC (before children). She sees the fun in museums. She places value on all of the books on the shelves of her childhood home. It all begins to make sense at last! There are lessons everywhere!

The problem comes when that same mother tries to explain the learning value of all that she is doing. The stares...the tough questions...the sly remarks are all enough to send her into the closet to hide! Then, there is the problem of habits that have developed in her children just out of her ignorance. It may be that the little ones were in school before she brought them home to this paradise. They were accustomed to learning within a certain wall, in a certain time slot, with certain books that are deemed “school”...all else was out of touch. They began to think that this was real life. The brave mother who brings these children home to educate them finds resistance in little and big ways. This mother must take time to instill new habits of mind and body that bring life.

This is not the only type of mother to begin teaching at home...there are those children who have never left the home physically. Yet, these little ones are trained by outside “ideas” of what learning is. They are conditioned from early years that “school” is fun and that EVERYONE goes to “school.” They find this “great knowledge” everywhere from Wal-mart to Church to Sesame Street to Grandma and Grandpa! These same children are unknowingly trained early to think that “school” is something done to them and they are the great consumer. Thus, regardless of which way a mother comes into teaching her children, she must prepare her home for a lifestyle of learning or the default lifestyle is that lifestyle of School-at-home.

A Good Foundation

All of the above dilemmas that a mother must face when beginning a lifestyle of learning stem from a faulty foundation. This is not surprising when we think of all of the references in Scripture that remind us to be careful which way we go. Why else would God have so many references if we did not need this principle in so many areas of our life, including Home Education?? The verse that come to my mind immediately is found in 2 Timothy 1: 5...

“But the firm foundation of (laid by) God stands sure and unshaken, bearing this seal (inscription): the Lord knows those who are His, and let everyone who names [himself by] the name of the Lord give up all iniquity and stand aloof from it. But in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also [utensils] of wood and earthenware, and some for honorable and noble [use]. (Ignoble means dishonorable, evil, common...Common means average, standard, traditional, familiar, conventional, customary.) Whoever cleanses himself [from what is ignoble and unclean, who separates himself from

contact with contaminating and corrupting influences] will [then himself] be a vessel set apart and useful for honorable and noble purposes, consecrated, and profitable to the Master, fit and ready for any good work.”

I am sure that you want for your children to be consecrated and profitable to the Master, fit and ready for any good work. That is THE call! BUT, in order to do so, we must cleanse ourselves, our homes, and our children from that which is ignoble (standard, common, traditional, average, conventional, and customary) and unclean. We must separate ourselves from the ideas, mindset, and techniques that contaminate and corrupt these little vessels. We must lay a whole new foundation in Christ!

We know that Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone of the Church. As the Cornerstone, all else must line up with Him and be joined in Him or the foundation will not last. The “School” model of our day is not based upon a model from Scripture. It is based on a German model for social engineering. We studied this in college as a “good” thing. But this model is far from “good.” Much of the modern addictions and dysfunctions are caused directly from this teaching model. It’s fruits include the following (plus more, but this is not a book...just a newsletter! ☺☺)...puffed up with knowledge, full of facts that do not relate to each other or the child, knowledge without a heart for what is learned, dependent upon others to teach or dictate time and decisions, non-thinking or think only what is told, consumer mentality rather than independent to produce or do for self, addictive/dependent behaviour, hate solitude, violent, passive, timid in the face of the unexpected, addicted to distraction, indifferent/contemptuous toward the adult world, can’t concentrate on anything for very long, no intimacies (family or studies or real friends), materialistic, desperately dependent to be told anything, can’t lead, can’t learn on their own, don’t like adults, parents, elderly, children, or anyone DIFFERENT from them (put them away out of sight), no individual personality, frustrated, conforms, exasperated, burned out on life! What is so “good” about all of this? Nothing!

Well, we can have a new foundation...On Christ! The Bible gives some wonderful ideas for education that REALLY work. They do not destroy the child...they help the child to flourish. This requires that we catch God’s vision for each child! This also requires a season of re-education and renewal and revival...But that is another point! A new foundation simply requires TIME spent considering what exactly you are doing with each child and where you are going. This sounds like a tall order, but all we must do is obey God and walk in obedience each step of the way. We will have to take some time to study what REAL education is and to become familiar with how to teach skills in a natural way because our minds are conditioned by “school.”

Seek to have a natural, true education because “school” will only squelch, stifle, frustrate, and bind the Holy Spirit from working in your children. You may have to introduce real education slowly into your home, especially if your children are exasperated and bored or if your husband is skeptical. The key to remember is that Real Education requires that you clean off the site and begin with a new foundation in Christ. This is done by introducing real education through real life (DON’T IMITATE THE SCHOOLS!), real study tools (Copywork, Narration, Dictation, Notebooking, Nature Walks, Listening to Great Music, Picture Studies, Reading Whole, Living Books...), and Real Interests (Delight-directed studies on a vast and generous diet of ideas!).

Re-Education...

The most crucial and overlooked aspect of home education is the process within the parents. Because this is commonly overlooked, we find that many homes are aimless and depend on others to tell them which way to go or which books to use. This is one aspect of “school” coming home. The mindset of “schools” is that people do not want to think...they CANNOT make decisions for themselves...and WE (the professionals) know best! I happen to know different. Parents may need to bring the children home and get started on something. They may use a package that may be the answer for during that time of re-education. BUT, the next step is re-education to prepare for training the child in the way he should go. Without this step, the home becomes a “school” and is hindered from having TRUE education until this season of re-education is begun.

Re-education involves looking first to what God says about home-educating and training children. His Goals (1 Timothy 1: 5)...His foundation (2 Timothy 2: 19-21)...Putting away the old and putting on the new (Matthew 9: 16-17)...Choosing God as God of your home (Joshua 24: 14-15)...The fruits of each way (Matthew 7: 13-20)...Abiding in the Vine (John 15: 1-8)...Building on the Rock (Matthew 7: 24-27)...Seeking God first (Matthew 6: 33)...Delight in God (Psalm 37: 4)...The Yoke of Christ (Matthew 11: 28-30)...The Plans of God (Jeremiah 29: 11-14)...Vision (Proverbs 29:18)...The Promise (Isaiah 54: 13-14)...The Process of Maturity (2 Peter 1: 5-6)... Spiritual Gifts (Ephesians 4: 12-15)...The Call (Jeremiah 1: 4-10; Psalm 1)...The Lifestyle of Learning (Deuteronomy 6: 6-9; 7: 6). There are many, many more. Maybe this can get you going! God has much direction in His Word for those who will just SEEK!

The next aspect of re-education is the study of the different methods of education. It is necessary to spend a season praying, reading, asking questions, observing, and thinking! There are blessings as you glean and begin to use what works for you and apply it into your homeschool. Let me give you an example of our homeschool. I am most clearly Charlotte Mason/Lifestyle of Learning in most of what we do. These ideas are based on real education. They work. But, I am not limited to drawing principles and ideas from Charlotte Mason, Marilyn Howshall, Ruth Beechick, Karen Andreola, Catherine Levison, and Penny Gardner for my homeschool just for the sake of relating to an approach.

I find lots of encouragement from dear friends, Harvey and Laurie Bluedorn, Connie Foss, and David and Shirley Quine...who are all a mixture of the Classical and Charlotte Mason Approaches. Their ideas enhance what we do in our home. One recent example is the wisdom that Harvey and Laurie have about studying Greek. Studying Greek may not be your thing, but we felt it to be a necessary study for our son who wants to serve as a missionary. Their work has helped me tremendously as I found little help for Greek anywhere else that could bring help to a simple-minded . Their experience of teaching Greek in the home helped this simple mom to know how to do it in my home! ☺ Again this does not mean that I must implement EVERY aspect of what they teach about their approach. I am free to take what works and leave the rest!

Also, I am forever changed by the conviction of David and Shirley Quine that we should HIGHLY resolve to teach our children based on God’s Word how to think and discern. That we should ground our children in a strong Christian Worldview so that they share truth to our society! This is now one of the heartbeats of our homeschool! The importance of instilling a Christian Worldview is taught by many other philosophers, but the passion was passed on to me by the Quines and I was equipped to do it with their wonderful materials!

Some other things you will see intermingled in our homeschool that are MUSTS come from all over! Unit Studies instilled how to research. Principle Approach has wonderful ideas for Notebooking and History Studies for older children. Lifestyle of Learning brings in the heart of homeschooling...our relationships with God!

Take what works for you! Look at the different approaches. Discern what might work for you and bring it into your home one thing at a time. If there is something unnatural, then feel free to adjust it to work for you or substitute it with an idea of your own. Feel free to implement things that are not in the “books” that you find in your own life to work just for you!

The point to all of this is do not stop at a one-size-fits-all-approach. If I did, then I would be bound to a system. Systems never produce real freedom. We must take ideas instead. The ideas join together to bring about what is right for us! But, we can never know those wonderful ideas until we become re-educated...study education and the various educational models.

School vs. Education...

Even if we clearly understand what the Bible has to say about education and we know all about the different options and ideas for real education that are available for us, we still cannot get “school” out of the home until we come to terms with what “school” is and isn’t.

There is no better person for getting to the root of the deficiencies of “school” than public school teacher, speaker, and author John Taylor Gatto. In his book, *Dumbing Us Down*, he presents the actual lessons that “school” teaches. I believe that they are alarming. Just the thought of what was being taught to me (when my parents unknowingly sent me to school to learn basic skills that would prepare me to learn all of my life) is sickening as it goes against what most parents intend for their dear children. You would do yourself a great service to look up his book or articles on the Internet by him. Until then, these are the real lessons that are taught in every school whether public, private or homeschools...

- **Confusion...**everything is out of context...nothing relates...all is disconnected...everything is designed to conceal the need for meaning...too much is taught...scope and sequences are designed with a lack of coherence and full of internal contradictions...the sequences are crazy, designed to teach you that confusion is your destiny!
- **Class Position...**the children are placed with those of their “like” kind...teaches to lock in with those like their own (social class, age, religion, race, interests...)...teaches envy and contempt for any one different from themselves...teaches to police their own group (peer dependency, tattling).
- **Indifference...**bells interrupt classes and studies teaching the child not to care deeply about anything but to appear that they do...they may get involved but they are made to stop at the bell...teaches that nothing is worth finishing or caring about...no passions or delight in learning.
- **Emotional/Intellectual Dependency...**must wait for the teacher to tell them what to do and IF they can do it...must do the thinking that the professional tells them to think...must show enthusiasm regardless of delight...must be dependent on others...no independence...worth and acceptance is shown by stars/smiley faces/red checks/frowns/grades/report cards...no personal freedom...all attacks against

control are disciplined...individuality is a contradiction...the bottom line is that you must “need” for professionals to do it for you.

- **Provisional Self-esteem...**Self-respect is dependent on expert’s opinion...children are constantly evaluated and judged...they received a cumulative report that dictates the decisions that the child/parent makes about the child or others that is based upon a casual observation of a stranger, self-evaluation is never considered a factor.
- **One Can’t Hide...**No Private Spaces...no private time...privacy is not legitimate...no one can be trusted with their time or to learn on their own.

Who wants this sort of life for themselves, much less for their children? I was “schooled” very well. I came to accept that this was the only way to have a successful child. I thought that my children needed to know all that everyone else knew (plus more! ☺). I was fearful of doing anything different because I was not an expert. The thought even crossed my mind of going back to school to get a “degree” in education. What does this sound like? I was not dependent on God. I was dependent on “school” and “expertise” to do the work in my children.

We just got a good view of what “school” could do, but what about what it cannot do? School, as we know it, cannot train our children in the way that God wants the children to go. He has a distinct, individual plan for each child that cannot be attained by a general scope and sequence. School opposes personal excellence, delight, individuality, independence, life-purpose, relationships, self-evaluation, self-education, self direction, and self-motivation. School as we know it cannot teach real skills for all of life. If the children are to develop real skills, they must have real curriculum to develop those skills. The only real curriculum is from real life, real people, and real books! Any schooling will not only diminish the use of skills but will destroy the education that we do provide. School, as we know it, will never be able to instill a love of learning. The only way a person can develop a love of learning is with time, delight, and a full life! Yes, we must be free from school, as we know it!

Get Rid of Hindrances!

As we get rid of “school” in the home, we can make the home a center for real living. This requires eliminating all hindrances! As unpleasant as it sounds, pruning is in order for even the best of homes! Pruning may include anything that God says must go from time wasters (TV, Telephone, Too Much Going, or EVEN Too Much Computer!) to books (yes, possibly even one of those textbooks!) to activities (Children do not really want “all that you can provide for them in life!”) to lessons (children much prefer solitude to busyness!) To unhealthy relationships (even Christian friends can hinder God’s purposes...any Peters in your life??). OUCH! Somewhere here it will definitely hurt! Just question your situation. What works? What doesn’t? What is really important? Where are you going? Is this going to help you get there? Prune the unnecessary so that you may become a vessel used by God!

Limit all of the distractions of your home. The ideal is to provide a “distraction-free” home so that real learning can take place. One way that this may be done is by limiting organized time to allow more time to explore, experiment, build, discuss, and think! As the child has more time in the home, they will find more interests that are valuable! Then, the decisions between outside activities or various studies will be simpler.

The parent will know which activities are necessary extensions of the home and which studies are necessary for the proper training of each child in their home. This will also aid the pruning process!

Let go of excess baggage. Let's face it, we all come into home education with baggage from our own education. Our baggage may include unreasonable expectations...crutches that keep us dependent on things other than God...and "High Places of Schooling" in our heart that must be broken down and destroyed before we can train our children effectively! Whatever it may be, dare to step out in faith and drop off your baggage at the Cross!

Become Educated Yourself!

If life in education is to come, education must begin in the parents. Without MOM increasing her own education, she will remain bound lifeless in the bondage of her own education and mode of operation which is unfruitful not only for her but also for her children. MOM must become the first student of life and the first student of the Giver of Life!

You guessed it! The first step in becoming educated yourself is to come to God! You do not need to clean up your act before coming to yourself is to come to God! You do not need to clean up your act before coming to Him. Instead, come as you are! This is His specialty...taking all of us as we are and transforming us to become like Christ! As you earnestly seek Him and obey His gentle leading, you will find your self closer than ever! All will come easy and light. Matthew 11: 28-30 in the Amplified Bible beckons,

"Come unto Me, all you labor and are heavy laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest, [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] Take my yoke upon and lean from me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. For My sake is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne."

Run to Jesus! Surrender all to Him today! You will find rest in the midst of those busy days of training your children. You will walk in relief because you will know His way and hear His voice for each step that you are to take! You will find the way much simpler. All will begin to fit!

As you turn to God, the next step in education of moms will be easy. That step is to love your children more than any system. This will come more naturally as you lay aside the systems that so easily entangle. Even a good system is subject to being the "wrong" thing for your child. It may be that you must modify or scrap even the best of ideas. For example, if narration is not working well for your family, YOU are NOT a failure! Your child is NOT a failure! Either modify the technique to work for you and your child or SCRAP it! We have even come up with techniques on our own that were just natural ways to teach things!

We do not always do formal narration...only during seasons of teaching each child the basics of written composition! In the last 1-1 ½ years, most of our narrations have been informal, natural venting in conversations...just plain ole discussions or TALKING!! This does not make narration a bad technique OR our family wrong. Instead, we are using the process for its season and for OUR own purposes! The same thing could be true for Copywork. We use it as a regular discipline for our family from toddlers to adults. Some families toss this discipline in Jr. High. Yes, even Copywork is not a "set-in-stone" requirement for the

perfect home educator! The only requirement is to love the child more than anything...even the available systems, approaches, or ideas! This alone will set you free from school-at-home!

Give to Your Child of YOURSELF!

The main reason for mom to become educated is that we are challenged by God to pour into our children the sum total of what is within ourselves. (Deuteronomy 6: 6-9) This can be rather shallow unless we continue growing, BUT invaluable if we are growing at all times ourselves. This is not to serve up great sermons, lectures, or twaddled-down versions of information to our children. Rather, it is so that we may become fellow students walking through life. It is so that we may find ties of mutual interest developing within our family.

We have much to offer to our children. We may do so during this precious time with them at home. We offer them understanding by our values, approaches, and principles. We offer them our abilities that we naturally show through our skills and talents. We offer them our ideas that we share with them through great discussions along the way. We offer them a part of our heart as we walk with them not only in the natural realm but also in the spiritual realm instilling godliness and righteousness!

The Challenge...

The challenge before us today is to make a commitment to cut out the dead, lifeless branches so that we may bring life into the lives of our children. Become a model yourself as you walk before them. Change your mindset by becoming renewed daily by God's Word. Trade your old system for a new one...one built on Jesus Christ! Fill your mind with Biblical Principles! Impart who you are! All of this by allowing the Holy Spirit to be your guide each step of the way as you bring HIS life into your home!

Preparing Your Home for a Lifestyle of Learning...

Perhaps, I am serving the following ideas in snippet form (I pray not!) because I have been digesting a section in *Wisdom's Way of Learning* for a few months. I say a few months because the truths contained in the section "*Preparing Your Home For a Lifestyle of Learning*" are much too rich to just move on from after a little bit of chewing...they are a full feast!! This is my feeble attempt to "narrate" back to you some of that which I have learned as I have meditated on these thoughts. I will be adding my thoughts and ideas as well. So, pull out your copy and take another look at all of Marilyn's ideas as we go along. It could make a big difference in your home!

Start with a Good Foundation...

Jesus Christ is the starting point! We must begin with Jesus as the starting point in all that we do and keep Him as our focus as we go along the way. The goal for our lives after we are saved is to become conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This only comes as we commune with Him and follow Him along the way. Likewise, our chief goal in training our children is to bring them to Jesus Christ and allow Him to work in their lives bringing them to salvation and to conformity with Him! With this foundation, all else falls into place! Soooo, begin with a good spiritual foundation on Christ!

Another type of foundation is the home! Marilyn speaks in her book about coming home from homeschool. If you are already at home, is the home a school or is it the center for living? If you are considering homeschooling, consider now what type of life you want in your home. Let's de-school the home and make our homes the center for living! This requires limiting involvement outside of the home. We must not be fooled by what society has to offer because the home offers so much more!

Well, the home offers more if we provide a distraction-free environment. If we want a lifestyle of learning in our home, we must wage war against the distractions of life (activities, lessons, busywork, unreasonable expectations, competition with others, socialization, too much to do, too much going, bad attitudes, and time wasters like the TV, telephone, computer, and video games.) The distractions must be eliminated so that more time is available for exploration, experimentation, reading of real books, creativity, delight-directed learning, and ministry! Start with a good foundation and you will go far in preparing your home for a lifestyle of learning!

Create a Learning Atmosphere Through Unbroken Routine...

One of the down-sides of teaching children at home is the constant disruption of routine. Before I make some enemies, real life in the home makes for wonderful lessons of diligence and perseverance. BUT, what about choppy routines that are a result of our own making? If we are so spontaneous that we break for every phone call...if we just jump to go do any and all of the activities offered by our support group...if we cancel our studies to help take grandma to the doctor (3-4 times a week)...or if we spend much of our precious time

on the road going between lessons then, we will find the learning atmosphere of our home hindered greatly! For one thing, we waste much time getting ready, going all about, and settling back into our home. We all become addicted to the going! We have a tough time being "productively content" at home, because we begin to count on the diversions! Prune in this area to experience the awesome fruit of a learning atmosphere!

One thing that I have done is to limit our excursions to one activity per child per year. They may choose what they want as an extra. Matthew chose Boy Scouts. Elisabeth chose Keepers at Home. This is all they do during this season of their lives. No music lessons, no dance lessons, no church youth group activities, no extra events with the support group. This is it!

Another thing that I have done is to limit the amount of going by limiting my weekly mileage. Yes, I am on personal pro-ration! I limit myself to the mileage that I get on one tank of gas! This helps our finances, but also makes the decisions for what is necessary very easy! If the excursion is not worth the mileage, then it is much less likely to be worth the TIME it takes away from discipling my children! It is definitely not worth the hindrance it bestows on the learning process by interrupting the time set aside for immersing ourselves in our projects! Most of all it is not worth the time that it steals between our family.

I have also pruned areas that steal my time with my children such as phone calls, email, and socialization. Those are really more difficult for ME to prune than activities and going! BUT, it pays off with our home life as we have more time for family fun like reading aloud or afternoon tea or baking or Scrapbooking! So yes, much is pruned for this lifestyle of learning in our home!

Recognize and Deal with Boredom...

Boredom is the key indicator that a person does not possess a love of learning. Boredom is actually a fruit of the methods or lifestyle we are pursuing. Marilyn Howshall shares, *"Most people do not realize that the opposite to a love of life and learning is the dreaded "disease" called boredom. It is a disease that artificial lifestyles have produced in our lives. The disease of boredom, like a cancer, will spread and grow, actually producing a death-like dullness of soul in an individual. Boredom works against the vital signs of life and must be aggressively dealt with in order to eradicate this from our families."* She also shares, *"If he has not acquired a love for learning, he will not progress much beyond attaining literacy, which will keep the parents bound to force-feeding the subjects through artificial means."* (*Wisdom's Way of Learning*, p. 243)

Not only is the child affected by boredom, so is the mother. Marilyn shares on the same page, *"with bored children who grumble about "school" work, many moms have no recourse but to make their children learn, and even then wonder how that could be accomplished. This creates a great and unnecessary burden on Mom, which is a primary reason for burnout. When the proper environment is created in the home, it no longer becomes necessary to force children to learn."*

How can we recognize boredom in our home? Look for a dullness of the soul. Is there any passion? Any initiative? Any purpose? Any satisfaction in life? Does the child merely wander from one activity to another? Is the child just unsatisfied with all that life offers him? Is there contention between the siblings (since there is no business to mind of their own, so they mind that of others??)? Is there a constant need for diversion outside of the home?

Uhooo! So, there is boredom...how do you deal with it? Well, the big tall order can be summarized in a plan of action. First, take a look at the fruit of boredom...that disinterest in learning...the lack of initiative...a life without a vision of purpose! Then, reverse those fruits by following the Lord. It may be de-schooling the home so that a love of learning can begin to develop. It may be pruning out the hindrances to a lifestyle of learning. It may be lots of time spent with the Lord asking for a vision of HIS plan for our lives. One thing can be for sure, boredom can never be dealt with until the foundation of the home is based on Christ...and the rebuilding begins by yielding to the Lord's discipline and instruction. Then, HE will show us how to rebuild our homes into a center of true learning, void of boredom!

De-junking...

For the home to become a center of learning, several things must occur. We must "de-junk" the unnecessary. Marilyn Howshall says *"Doing much of a few things will be far more rewarding and fruitful than doing a little of many things."* De-junking is tough because it requires that we evaluate the worth of all that we are doing. Very simply, we must eliminate the extras that are hindering us from moving toward the purpose that God has for our family. De-junking requires the tough work of breaking free of the bondage we experience from the expectations of others whether they are in our family, group of friends, support group, or even church! De-junking requires evaluating what is done for its value and efficiency. Can we (the parents) teach this (a lesson) in the home? Are we looking to others too much to teach the child something that WE could teach? Is this the appropriate season for ---? Will the activity split up the family too much? This evaluation will simplify choices enabling us to get rid of the junk, so that we may focus on the purpose that God has for just for our own family!

Renewing Your Mind...

The sweetest seasons of motherhood to me are those gentle quiet moments sitting at the feet of Jesus in preparation for a new day. I remember one morning in particular. We were still building our home. We had moved in but we were not finished. As matter of fact, we did not have the floor covering on the floor...nor the Central H/A unit working yet...BUT my home was actually my home. I was sitting in an old lawn chair (yes, the furniture was still in storage) by the opened back door (which did not yet have a deck wrapped around to it, so one step and you fell out of the house about 10 feet!) at the beginning of the day with my Bible in my lap. I can still remember the smell of the fresh Spring air...the sounds of the little animals and insects outside busily proclaiming praises to God...the delight of watching a VERY curious squirrel as he watched me and waited for any crumbs that I would pitch out the door, as I usually did that time of day. The externals seem more of a remembrance, but what I really cannot put into words is the renewing of my mind that special morning...it is still a vivid memory today! I was exceptionally weary that day. Of course, we were in the midst of that intense building project of building our very first home of our own. Harold did all the work with his trusty assistant, Matthew. I tried to help but I was going through an ordeal of my own. In the midst of picking out colors for the house, homeschooling, picking up supplies for the next day's work, running a home business, and all the demands of my always very full life, I was weary from the upset of losing our dear Samuel. He was to be born a couple weeks after Elisabeth's birthday that year. I would have been around 5 months pregnant on that day, yet my womb was empty and my heart emptier. I remember that morning pouring my heart out to God about my lack of direction...my confusion...my heartbreak...my bitterness. God so patiently let me go on pouring out the disappointments, fears, and frustrations of that tough time of our lives. I was in deep need of renewal of my mind to what God wanted for us. God stepped up to the challenge that day. There was a gentleness that warmed me in deep comfort. I had met God feeling so

very far away from Him, yet was shown how very close He had been through it all! Not only was there an awesome spiritual moving of comfort, but He illuminated Scripture that was just for me, teaching me of His Lovingkindness that I could never understand until I needed it so desperately. I needed to know of His tender regard for me as His dear child and for my heart's desire to glorify Him in bearing and training children for Him. That tender regard that not only knew my pain but was busily working on my behalf to bring about blessings in the very midst of that pain! I needed a touch of renewal and God touched me in abundance. I had come to Him to begin my day and received His Touch once again! What preparation for my busy day!

Why do I tell you about this tough time that was eased by a simple quiet time with God, His Word, and His curious creation? Because if we are to have a true lifestyle of learning, we must take this time daily to be renewed in our minds! If our minds are not renewed, it is so easy to fall into bad attitudes that are near impossible to rid from the little ones! Also, if our minds are not renewed, it will not take long until there is no more to give in the constant pouring into our children. Another reason for keeping that appointment with God, which relates most to this article, is that when we are without direction, confused, heartbroken, bitter, disappointed, fearful, and frustrated God is more than ABLE to step up to the challenges that we face. He will faithfully show the way each step of the journey. Whether it is a season of deep grief or a season of abundant blessing or just a season of renewing your mind about homeschooling, keep your appointment with God! This will do the work in our minds and hearts that will bring a lifestyle of learning into our homes!

Now to the Children...

Change is eminent and now what about the children? Change will require gentleness and patience on our part as we implement principles that bring a lifestyle of learning into our homes. It is easy to dive in with our own strength and try to conquer a total change all at once. This will lead to a fruit that we certainly do not want...rebellion, burnout, frustration, strife and so on. But, how do we do it? Well, first of all, the easy way is to simply rest in God. Let Him become the Teacher of everyone in the home. A while back, I went to a seminar with my children. In the seminar, the speaker shared about how to see God's purpose in your life. Although this seminar was really for pre-teens and teens, I felt as though it were an appointment between God and myself! On the way home, I shared how God had been working in all of my life all along since that call in my youth. I shared with my children the verses that God had used to direct me along the way. My children really enjoyed seeing what God had shown me about His Calling and His Work all along the way. This did amazing work in the hearts of my little ones. It was not long until God gave my oldest child a vision of his calling...at the age of eight!

I was overwhelmed at the transition that occurred in my home. All the sudden, Matthew had a purpose for learning and he took off pursuing his interests. He seemed to flourish just overnight! It seemed as though all those hours of plodding were finally paying off! I felt a change in me as well. I felt a sudden urgency to disciple each of my children for their specific calling. No longer did I feel a pull toward doing "school" for appearances, because I had too much to do if I were to properly prepare Matthew for his calling AND I did not have a lot of time in which to do it! No longer did I feel pulled by the ties to the world's system of "schooling" or its requirements for a "diploma," because I had a greater calling! If we are to get beyond the superficial to REALLY train our children, we all must somehow communicate to them the awesome calling that God places on each individual! Seek God and allow Him to work in your children!

Renewing Young Minds...Ministering to Young Hearts!

Maybe you are not starting with a child who is already on your side. Maybe your child has come home from "school"...or maybe you are just now getting rid of "school" in your home. I know that your job seems to loom ahead of you. But, you will be blessed by ministering to the heart of your child.

What is in the child's heart? Is it bitter from bad attitudes? The only way to deal with a bad attitude is to uproot it! Uprooting will require respect of the child. Perhaps this is the greatest lesson that we learn from Charlotte Mason. She taught that there are three key motivators for all people. They are Admiration, Faith, and Love. These motivators are focused on the idea that children are worthy of our respect. Check to see if these can melt the heart of your child!

Each child needs to develop the skills necessary to learn. Attitudes can breed from the frustration caused by undeveloped skills. Continue to encourage the children as they work to master new skills. The delight comes as they practice and use those skills...the tough time is that time of learning and establishing new skills! Each child needs reasonable expectations to meet. If we are unrealistic about what we require and expect the child to achieve, we set them up to be failures. In the early years, we must be very patient each step of the way. We must ask God for HIS priority for that season and follow it S-L-O-W-L-Y!! I often say that the purpose of Phonics is just for teaching the mother humility and patience! It takes sooooo long and there are so many ups and downs along the way. Yet, it is when we set reasonable expectations, relax, respect the child, work with them to develop their skills, that we begin to see sweet, tender, and positive attitudes bursting forth!

During this process, a change in thinking must take place also. Just as the mother needs that daily renewal of her mind, so does the child! This can be done along the way during studies or read alouds. During reading, delight in high ideals. Introduce your children to great people through read alouds. But, do not limit your introductions to only "good" people, let this time introduce them to characters who must pay the penalties for lives of sin. This can give them a taste for high ideals!

High ideals are not enough. Children, like all humans, must have affirmation! They must see their purpose and how that what they are doing is working toward that ultimate purpose! Take a look at God's purpose for each child. Renew your minds to see the big picture of the purpose and plan for each person in your family! Let the children see the cohesion between the family purpose and all of the activity choices or choices of studies that are made in the home. Build them up in their Spirit regarding their vocations as "students for life!" You may do this by modeling before them your lifelong studies and pursuits. Speak Spiritual truths that you learn through your life as you go along the way and observe God working in the day to day real life! This is an encouragement to their souls. Just the same, don't forget to interrupt the day for appreciation of their progress...constant hugs...pats on the back for their diligence! There are many, many ways to minister encouragement and to encourage a grasp of the seriousness of their work and their life purpose! Minister to their heart and you will find their minds renewed day by day!

The Education...

One of the first things that people consider about teaching their children is what the children will be studying. As you can discern from the focus of this newsletter, this area is really just a tiny sliver of a real ducation. Yes, we have a set Table Time (includes short lessons of Bible Study, Copywork, Math, and

Language Studies-Phonics/Foreign Languages...although we use different topics to teach these skills, the emphasis is not on subjects but on learning the skills that they may use to further their delight-directed studies!) each day, in which we instill the study disciplines. But this daily discipline is not an end to itself. It is for the purpose of equipping the children with skills that they may use as they pursue their own interests. The skills are necessary, but the personal interests of the child are more so! They need plenty of time and opportunities to get interested in something. Our role is to not to dictate all that the child may learn in his time in our home, it is to make allowances for the child to be introduced to many areas of which he may eventually find an affinity or delight. It is to also make allowances for the child to pursue his own interests with all his heart. The common error for most parents is the need to document what they are learning. This is virtually impossible and will hinder the child from a natural learning process.

The natural learning process requires TIME of taking in and collecting information. It requires research, reading, asking questions, and observing. Then, the process shifts into a time of trying to understand more about what they are learning. They must look up different stories, views, alternatives. They must ask questions. They must discern differences. This phase of learning on any topic may take years before it will naturally flow back into conversation, writing, or teaching. For some topics, it may never flow back in the magnitude that it would with a life-long delight, but we can relax knowing that it will add to the sum total of the individual and his message!

For some children, you may see only one interest for MANY years or for others, you may see lots of different interests of which they do not really rest on any one thing. Either way it is fine! That is why you must also include a generous and well-rounded education through your read alouds (we spend time every evening reading for 1-2 hours in books on a wide-range of topics that I want for my children to formally learn about before they are grown) and real life experiences (beautiful art, music and poetry...time out of doors...and time with others!). To illustrate delight-directed studies plus the influence of my formal studies introduced through read alouds and real life, think of my son. Matthew has two basic passions, the study of the Civil War and the study of Marines. We have not let those delights be the only things that my son studies. If so, we would never find any of his other interests (poetry, art, nature, flight...more to come!). Just this year, he has started a collection of Norman Rockwell art. This topic may or may not become a delight like the other areas, but he is following the model in our home of passionately pursuing areas of interest and using his skills as he pursues those interests! As the home becomes a center for learning, the children will be free to pursue interests naturally to the extent that is necessary for real learning to occur without the hindrance of documenting or trying to artificially cover "subjects!" The interests will be pursued by the delight of the child!

I do want to be sure to insert here that all of life is not always wrapped around our delights. We have some things that simply must be done every day. In the REAL world of the home, we still find hungry pets, dirty laundry, dishes piled in the sink, dirty floors, things that break and smelly blankets. This is one good reason for including the children in work around the home. Plus, if we try to bring "school" into the home without seeing the necessity of including the children in the responsibilities of the home then it is guaranteed that we will be headed on the short road to burn out! Part of training that God can do through the home, is through the means of the daily responsibilities of the home. I used to feel as though I might be breaking child labor laws because of all that we require of our children until the Lord showed me the vital importance of doing the things in life that are not fun, that are yucky, that are day in and day out! These things teach the vital lessons of character and real ministry!

All of the spiritual training, building of relationships, skill work, delight-directed studies, read alouds, real life and family responsibilities come together to bring a full life for the children. A full life that consists of learning at all times and in a variety of natural means! A full life that begins as we prepare our home for a true lifestyle of learning!

So What Now?

To move toward this lifestyle of learning, we must step out on faith. There is really no way that I can put into my own words but in conclusion, I would like to share (as best as I can) the “*Seven Faith Steps Toward a Natural Lifestyle of Learning*” that are shared in depth in *Wisdom’s Way of Learning* (Pp. 257-259).

- **Become Poor in Spirit...**Let go of all your expectations, labor, ideas, and rights to God! Become humble and broken in heart! Learn to follow Him each step of the way.
- **Postpone the Product...** Children need a lifetime to learn, explore and acquire knowledge! Forget trying to "prove" what your children are learning and seek true education!
- **Extend Seasons...**One area of life or study may need more time to mature in the student than another. It depends upon the depth and scope of study. Flexibility is essential! Give the learning process time to germinate!
- **Transfer the Process...**Instead of YOU doing the work of educating your children, allow God to have the primary acting role! Wait on His timing! Rest in His way! Also, allow the child to do the learning. Encourage the child to become personally involved in creating, producing, contributing, caring, and serving their own personal lifestyle of learning! Transfer the process of learning, collecting, studying, and working from your shoulders to God and the child! This will stretch and mature the child at an earlier age! Plus, as you transfer the process and responsibility, you will find peace and rest in yourself!
- **Decrease the Quantity of Content...**Decrease the quantity of material or knowledge that you expect the child to learn and allow the child to be a student of life! Allow the child to begin where he is at and from there deepen and broaden his experience throughout the course of time!
- **Adjust Expectations...**Children ARE learning! They are not there yet! Realize that children cannot go into the depth that we can, yet they are still learning! Appearances are misleading! Even though a child can not or may not need to go into the depth that we might go on a subject, it does not mean that they must spend more time on it or that they have not learned! Learn to accept what is right for each child!
- **Guide and Provide...**Mom’s mindset for the long-term should be to center the child’s pursuits in recording habits, to point the child toward eventual Bible Study with brief and simple Bible-related pursuits, and to provide quiet, long days for the children so that they will have to get serious about being involved in life and so that they may enjoy real life!

This is a tall order! Yet, as we step out on faith to prepare our home for a lifestyle of learning, we will begin to see it all fit together! The spiritual renewal and training, building of relationships, skill work, delight-directed studies, read alouds, real life and family responsibilities come together to bring a full life for the children. A full life that consists of learning at all times and in a variety of natural means! A full life

Time for Tea...Volume Three!

dedicated 100% to God's call and purposes! A full life that changes every aspect of our home into a lifestyle of learning!

A Christmas Tea Party!

*At this time, we will break from our regularly "scheduled study" for a tea party! Actually this has more to do with the study than would meet the eye! Education is a Life. That Life includes much beauty and nurture of the spirit. My favorite way of bringing in the beauty is to relax alone or with my family or friends for the daily ritual of tea. Yes, it is TIME FOR TEA! The following are some recipes that you may want to try during the holidays for your Time for Tea with your little ones or those who visit with you during this special time! Also, you may want to serve some of these goodies during your evening Advent study or while you prepare Christmas Gifts! Some of these goodies would make fantastic gifts! However you may use these ideas, keep CHRIST in your CHRISTmas as the center of all you do!
Now, for the Tea Party...*

Holiday Drinks...

Cranberry Tea...

32 ounce jar cranberry juice
10 cups of water
2 cups sugar
4 sticks cinnamon
1 tbs. whole cloves
1/4 cup lemon juice
1 cup orange juice (diluted)

Combine everything except orange juice in a large Dutch oven. Boil for 10 minutes. Remove spices and add orange juice. Smells great and tastes even better! Can be refrigerated for up to 2 weeks. Great heated in the microwave!

From Emily Barnes Tea Party at Faith Tabernacle in Florence, AL.

Caribbean Tea Mix...

2 cups unsweetened powdered instant tea
2 packages (3 ounces each) orange-pineapple gelatin
1 cup sugar
3/4 teaspoons coconut extract

In a food processor, combine all ingredients. Process until well blended.

Store in an airtight container and give with recipe for Caribbean Tea.

To Serve: Stir 2 level tablespoons tea mix into 6 ounces hot water.

Hot Lemon Tea Mix!

1 cup instant tea
1 cup sweetened lemonade drink mix

1/2 cup brown sugar

1/2 cup finely crushed lemon drops

Place all ingredients in a blender or food processor fitted with a steel blade. Process briefly until ingredients are completely blended. Store in an airtight container and give with recipe for Hot Lemon Tea.

Yields: about 3 cups

To Serve: Add 1 cup boiling water to 1 heaping tablespoon tea mix. Stir until mix dissolves.

Wassail (Quick...In The Coffee Maker!)

2 qt apple cider

Dash of nutmeg

1/2 tsp. whole cloves

1 cinnamon stick

1/4 tsp. salt

1 medium orange cut in wedges with peel
Pour cider into lower part of 12-cup electric coffee maker. Place basket in coffee maker and put all remaining ingredients in basket. Cover and Perk.

Fantastic and Easy!

Wassail (In the Crock Pot)

1 gallon apple cider

1 large can of pineapple juice (unsweetened)

3/4 cup strong tea (herb tea optional)

In a cheese cloth sack put:

1 tbs. whole cloves

1 tbs. whole allspice

2 sticks of cinnamon

Combine and let simmer in your crock-pot for 4-6