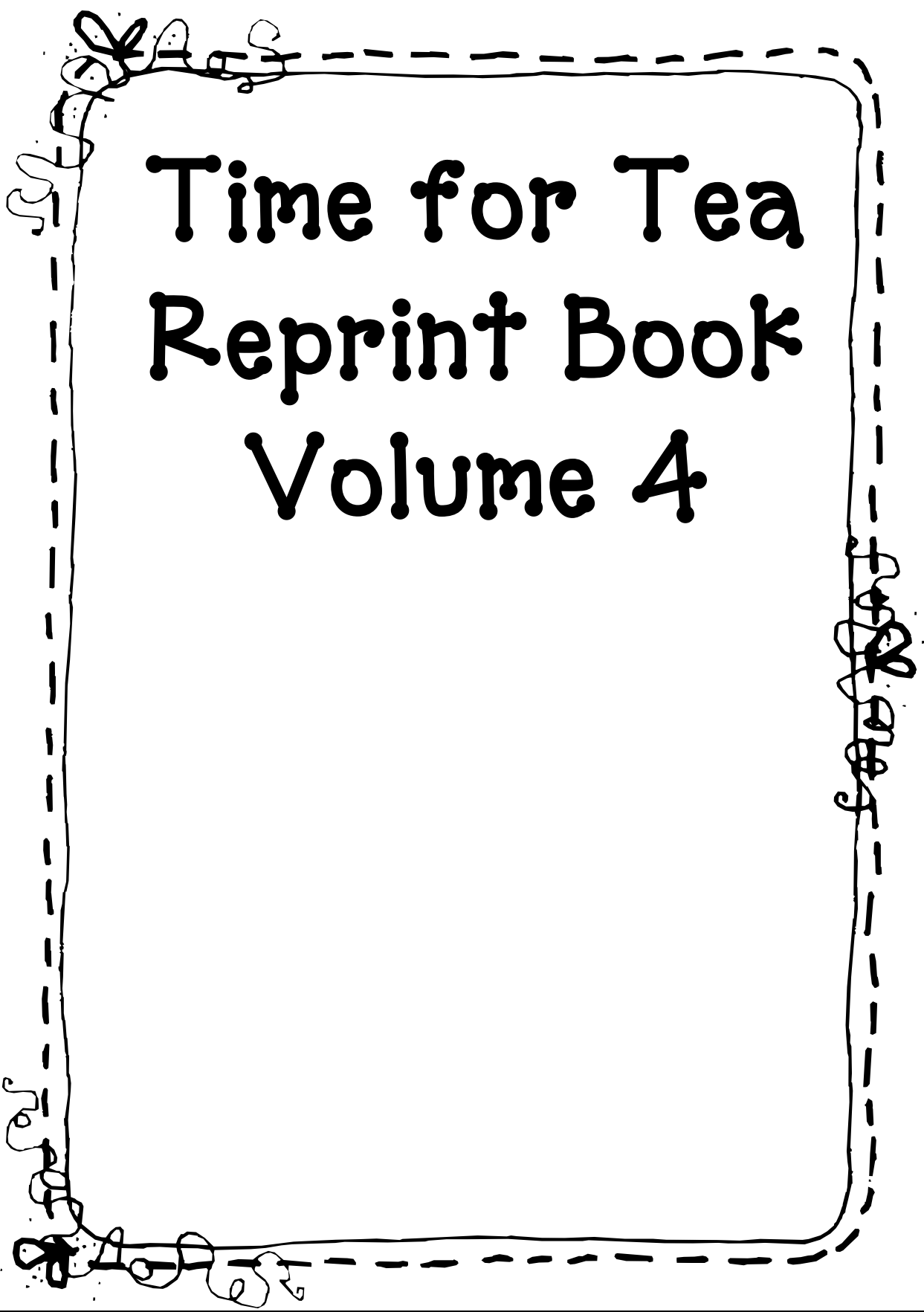


Time for Tea
Reprint Book of
Articles From
Volume 4



By Cindy Rushton



**Time for Tea
Reprint Book
Volume 4**

Time for Tea

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Our Email Discussion List...

Time for Tea Online!

We welcome you to the parlor where it's always teatime - the sideboard is full of fresh pastry, the candles are lit to compliment the fire on the hearth and the hostess sits ready to pour. There is beautiful music from the CD player, original art upon the brocaded walls, fresh flowers upon each tea table. Sit down in a comfortable chair, relax a few minutes in your busy day, and chat with other Charlotte Mason families. Your hostess is the Cindy Rushton, noted Author and Editor of the popular magazine **Time For Tea**.

Conversation, companionship, and encouragement are the topics here. Questions on homeschooling with a lifestyle of learning are welcome at any time. You will also find us discussing articles from the magazine, or other beautiful thoughts - poetry, art, music, recipes and handiwork. We even plan to talk about how we apply the philosophy of Charlotte Mason to enrich our lives. Come join us for this little treat in each day...our Time for Tea!

To subscribe simply see our links at our website: www.cindyrushton.com

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Time for Tea

Why is this magazine called *Time for Tea*???

We began *Time for Tea* as a “long-distance” mom-to-mom time of mentoring and sharing. Little did we know that God would use this simple little periodical to reach to the utter ends of the earth!

God has made us with a need for companionship... friendship... mentoring. There is NO greater means than TEA! But, this is not a magazine about tea (well, not always!) Tea is the PERFECT concrete illustration of abstract thoughts. EVEN God uses practical, everyday items to teach us great truths. Not to mention, God uses the means of companionship, friendship and mentoring to minister encouragement and biblical teaching. This is what we are here for!

Our prayer is that you will begin to see a glimpse of how special you are to the Lord. He loves you so very dearly. We also pray that you will find a friendship through the miles. A friendship that God can use to inspire you to keep on, on those days you are weary and worn, troubled and perplexed, broken and hurting. A friendship that will encourage you to always see WHO you are in Christ and keep on reading toward the prize set before us!

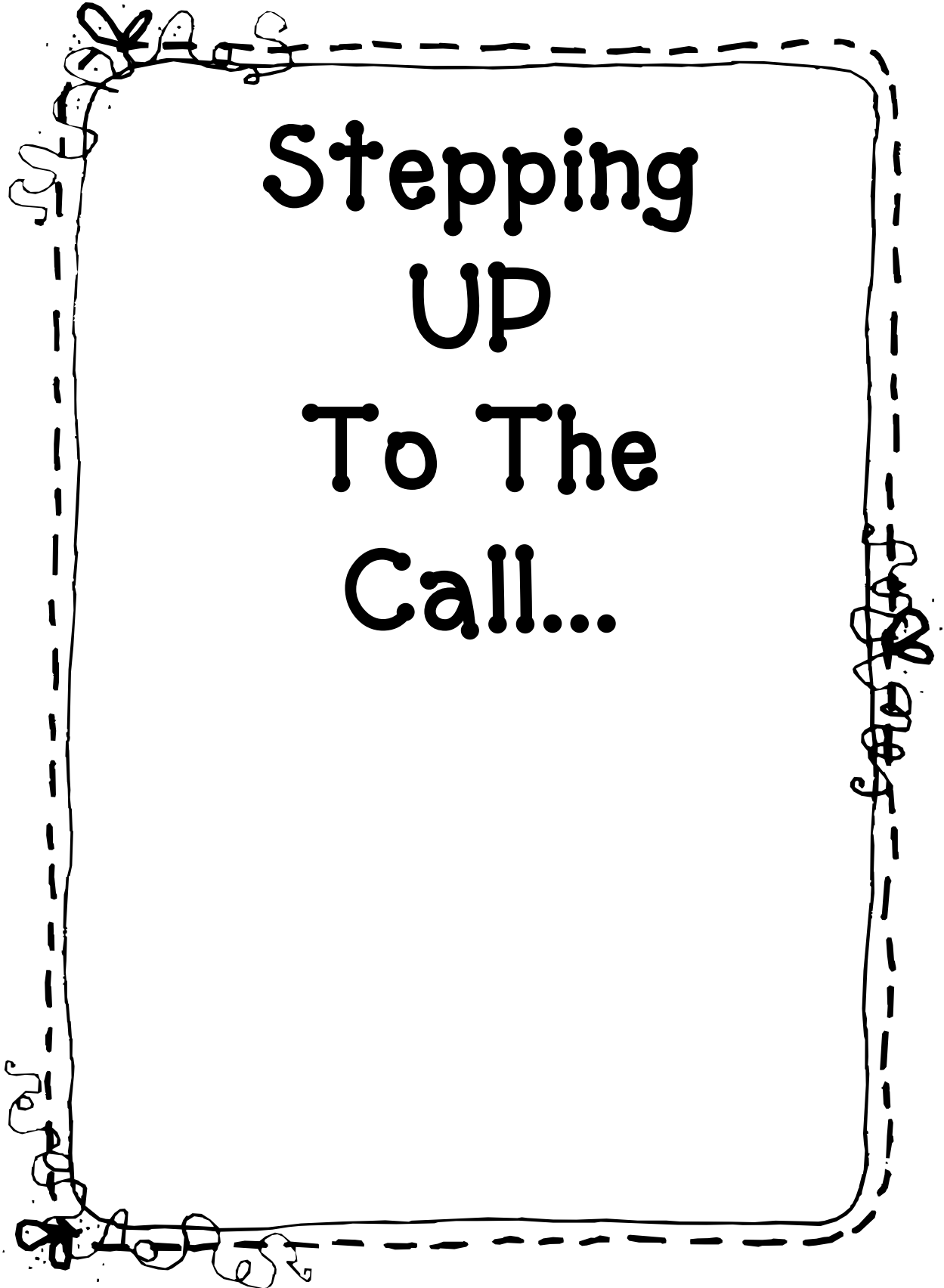
You are a vessel that God can use mightily. God planned from the foundation of the world to use YOU as a woman of immense influence. Yes, we each and every one can be used by our loving Heavenly Father, just as we are! He says in 2 Timothy 2: 20-21 (Amplified Bible)... **“But the firm foundation of (laid 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 vessels of gold and silver, but also [utensils] of wood and earthenware, and some for honorable and noble [use] and some for menial and ignoble [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.”**

God wants for us to become vessels that HE can use! NOT because we are perfect...NOT because we have certain qualifications... NOT because we have any certain abilities...BUT because it is through marred vessels such as us that HE can be most glorified! Remember 2 Corinthians 4: 7? **“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be OF GOD and NOT OF US!”**

Our prayer is that you will see JUST this truth in the pages of *Time for Tea*. We are all earthen vessels that often question our abilities and our capabilities, but God doesn't. He counts us as treasures that He CAN use!

As you snuggle up for yet another issue of *Time for Tea*, our prayer is that the Father FILL you, until your **“cup runneth over.”** I have no idea what your need is as you open the pages of this issue, but my prayer is that He will FILL you with comfort... abiding love... mercy... inspiration... joy... grace... ideas that overflow into all areas of your life...and deep encouragement for your awesome calling.

Go now to the Father with your cup...let Him cleanse...let Him repair any cracks, rough edges, or chips...and let Him pour into you. Let Him fill you until you can declare with great joy, just like David, that today YOUR **“cup runneth over!”** For truly, it is once again, *Time for Tea!*



Time for Pruning??

By Cindy Rushton

Fall! There is a nip in the air! Color is everywhere! I simply LOVE Fall on Huckleberry Hill! Every day I wake up to a completely new yard. It is glorious! Really the last thing on my mind as I enjoy the splendor is gardening. Yet, this is the time to begin work for next year. I have just recently pulled out my *Ortho Guides* to gardening, herbs, and pruning. I realized anew the deep truths that God reveals to us in His creation. Perhaps, there is none more challenging than His truths about pruning.

Ever feel tired, weary, pulled in too many directions, cumbered under a heavy load?? In the midst of those feelings have YOU ever tried to prune for yourself only to find that you pruned the wrong area or just couldn't snip some areas dear to you? Truth be told, this is exactly where many of us find ourselves. For this reason, let's dig deep into the truths of pruning. Let's look at this tool that our Gardener must use...why pruning is necessary...and how we can expect pruning to come into our lives.

Why Prune?

This past Spring, I was beginning my herb garden. My best resources were those paperback books by *Ortho*. My friends can probably remember the moment I found the book on *Pruning*. I sat back in utter awe at the lessons that could be applied to our Spiritual lives from this very practical aspect of gardening! I think they have gotten more tickled at me because they have watched our Gardener snip "branches" from my life through the years shaping me and my life more and more for His calling. They know the struggles that I face as very dear areas are snipped bit by bit!

One of the greatest lessons in my life seems to keep coming back to me time and time again from John 15...**I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth** (prune, remove what is offensive, cleanse, purify by separating and carrying off whatever is impure, to clarify) **it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the Word, which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples. As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.**

God's pruning, however gentle and kind, was and continues to be very difficult! Often I feel the shears, saws, and pruners at work without understanding the purpose. Often I feel off course. Yet, as I came to KNOW this passage as *my* own Word from God, I find that God is just working in my life to bring forth more fruit for His Glory! You see, pruning in the spiritual sense is much like pruning in the physical sense. All for a purpose!

To Increase Flowers and Fruit...

Left alone any plant (or person) will not bear fruit most effectively. Most trees tend to grow out of control without pruning. Branches tend to become heavy. Lots of fruit may be produced, yet without pruning, the fruit is without flavor or sweetness! A friend of mine illustrated this to me with her orchard. The first year they did not prune back their trees. The trees produced fruit, yet the fruit was smaller and very bland. The next year, they pruned back heavily...to almost nothing. This apparent “slaughtering” of the tree was just exactly what was needed for good fruit! The fruit after pruning was much larger and very flavorful! Not only was there a greater yield, there was better fruit!

As I look at my life, there have been many times that I have found my branches full of fruit. Good fruit. Fruit nonetheless. However, what was there happened to be small... insignificant... and sadly unflavorful! There were times that I thought it so restricting for God to prune out areas of my life. It seemed that everything was a loud, resounding, “NO!” If that were not enough, there were times that I felt pruned enough only to find that the next season, there was more pruning to be done. Just at the point of feeling that I could not be cut back any further, I began to taste the fruit in its abundance! Excellent fruit! Sweet, sweet fruit!

Looking at the art of pruning, we find that the Gardener must prune different trees in different ways. Some trees are not even bearing fruit. Those trees are first pruned to open up the center of the tree to sunlight...SONlight! Other trees are full of branches that need pruning, but the Gardener is not able to prune them back heavily because the tree could not survive the pain. The Gardener will usually prune those limbs that are entirely overgrown and ineffective, cutting some completely off, cutting some shorter, and leaving still others until the next season when more pruning can be done without damaging the tree. Yet, other trees are heavily pruned...so, heavily pruned that little remains of them in the dead of the winter!

Find yourself somewhere in here? You can trust your Gardener! He knows what is best for YOU! He is VERY aware of how you handle pruning and how you grow. He will not prune so harshly that you cannot go on to produce fruit. His plan is for your fruitfulness! When He is cutting off branches of activities, branches of things, branches of relationships, branches of works... rest in His perfect plan for the next season of your life!

To Direct Plant Growth...

This does not mean that we are not willful, and pardon the pun, “bent” on going our own way. Trees do this too! They are living and do not always grow the way their gardener plans for them to grow. This is another reason for pruning.

We live on a gorgeous 5-acre lot full of trees of all sizes, shapes and varieties. There are times that our trees grow so close together that limbs begin to rub against each other causing a wound in each tree so that fruit becomes sparse and both run the risk of disease and insect infestation. There are times that branches get in the way of passers-by proving to be a nuisance rather than the delight that they are intended to be. We have found that even Roses have a tendency to grow toward the center instead of toward the outside—causing black spot and mildew.

Pruning remedies each of these problems in growth. When those limbs begin to rub to the point of injury, we can take a good look to see which tree has overgrown, gotten out of shape, and in short, strayed from its purpose. We can snip up those limbs increasing productivity and health of both trees! When those branches and vines, which are cute and exciting as young branches and vines, tend to take

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over...we can gently cut back their reach and keep them in their place. For those plants that have a tendency to take in nutrients, grow inward, and yet not branch out to fulfill their purpose, we can prune them so that they too can grow in the direction that we want for them to grow...outward for others!

Our Master Gardener does the same thing with us. There are no duplicate ministries. All of us are needed to do OUR OWN part in the body. Truly, things really do get sore and rotten as we grow out of bounds in our own way. I remember a few years ago when the Lord began to deal with me about my sin of “stealing.” Oh, it was not as obvious as you might think. You see, it was not shoplifting or embezzlement, or cheating to get money or things. It was stealing the *calling* of others. You see, I have always been more than willing to do all that I could do for others and for the Lord. I delighted in serving Him with all my heart. The problems came as I found myself producing very little fruit. The little fruit that I did bear was difficult to bear. I found myself parched, stressed, and pushed constantly. Sure, I was “helping” others in their ministries... “serving” in my church all that I could... “doing” all I could to help everyone I found in need.

My husband was used as one tool in the hand of my Gardener, to snip some of these areas. He shared with me one day that although I had a “good” heart, that there were things that God wanted for JUST ME to do that I was not going to be able to do unless I stopped taking care of everyone else’s ministry. It was through his sweet correction that I saw my sin of stealing! Ohhh, you must know that I had rationalized it as “*Someone HAD to do it...*” and “*I am doing work for God.*” But, here at this point I had to answer for MY OWN call, that *one thing that is needful*. The *one thing that only* I could do!

It is easy to stretch ourselves beyond OUR GARDEN...you know, move that fence so that the land lines move into another’s garden. God had never intended for me to be a mere worker in the garden of others or for me to take over the gardens of all of the unfaithful. His intention was for me to help Harold subdue our OWN garden. Moving back home and pulling back those fences to their proper place so we could tend THIS garden brought much more glory and honor to the Lord AND more abundant fruit! Oh, and those I stole from...they are now producing fruit...the Kingdom of God is truly a Body that functions best when all parts are working in *their own* role!

For this reason, you will find our Gardener busily directing growth. Not just to be sure that His precious plants are growing outward and producing fruit, but so that they will not injure or overtake other plants/trees!

To Control Size...

This continues the thoughts of the last point! The Gardener usually prunes annually. This annual pruning keeps plants at their optimum size. You have probably seen a shrub that spreads so widely that it becomes sparse in its center. This is exactly what happens when we spread ourselves thin! It is hard to recognize that we have not grown properly...that our center is empty and void, regardless of the growth and health outwardly! We barely notice the “bare spots” closest to us! This is where our Gardener must prune! His plan is for us to stay our optimum size so that we are healthy and producing our best fruit right where we are!

He knows our tendencies to be like those shrubs that grow and grow into the way of passers by. He knows that we are much like those trees that tend to crowd fences. He knows that left untended, we may become like those pesty vines that simply take over! This is the reason that He is WITH US constantly monitoring our growth. He does not want for us to become like those little vines, “*Possibly it’s a rampant vine that looked pretty when it was young and small, but now seems determined to take over your yard. Often we don’t pay attention to a particular plant until it is obvious something must be done*”

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to restrict its size. One day you look out your window and instead of seeing a snow-capped mountains in the distance, you notice that a too-tall holly obstructs your view.” (Ortho’s All About Pruning)

It is such a great comfort to know that our Gardener will not allow for us to dominate or overgrow to this point. He is so faithful to stick to His vision for our growth and productivity!

Yes, I did say “His vision.” He has a call for each of us. This call is accompanied by His vision for all that we can become! This reminds me of the evergreens. You see a Gardener cannot simply plant an evergreen and plan to prune later if it goes astray while it is growing and maturing. The evergreen in its maturity is *constant* in all seasons. Growth from an evergreen does not come from old wood. For this reason, they must be shaped and controlled while young. When they grow older, they are much more difficult to prune!

Our Gardener has this vision and knows just when to prune for optimal growth and productivity. We can truly trust His work in our lives!

To Increase Vigor...

I am writing about vigor in the middle of Fall, when all of us are getting ready for those quiet moments by the fire with tea and great books. Yes! Vigor! Yawn, are you tired too?

One of the purposes of pruning, regular pruning, is to keep the trees vigorous and healthy. As a tree is pruned, growth of new branches, which produce more flowers and fruit is encouraged. New branches are essential to help the tree resist disease and insects. Thinning out a tree opens up the tree to sunlight (SON-light) and air which helps it grow better and resist diseases that come from improper circulation.

You can probably apply this to your life. I find myself weary and tired at times, much too often. There is nothing as invigorating as cutting back what I am doing to have time to bask in Prayer and Feeding of God’s Word...just basking in HIS Light! Usually this is all it takes to find that joy, contentment, peace circulating again. Those new branches that grow back offer so much for our vitality. They help to keep us protected and healthy. God will bring new branches in our lives to help keep us fresh and dependent upon His nourishment.

To Repair and Prevent Damage...

Storms of Life are inevitable. They come to all. We had two major storms on our land in the last couple of years. It was in the midst of these storms that I realized the necessity of healthy trees. Splintered branches snapped in the beginning of the storm thrusting dangerously about. Unhealthy trees were not prepared to meet the challenge of the winds all about them and they snapped under the pressure! The ramifications of the storm lasted much longer than the storm itself. Once gorgeous, productive trees became diseased and overtaken by insects! The lesson was learned quickly that pruning was necessary after the storms of life. Prompt and proper removal of damaged limbs helps to protect the tree by closing the wounds.

This is just as vital in our spiritual lives! Storms will come...the best preparation is spiritual health! Making sure that there are no dead, diseased, or dying branches BEFORE the storm. I know that my tendency is to hold on to branches that need life...need healing...and need cutting away! Want to test my character? Change ALWAYS throws me for a loop! There is something in me that desires constancy and predictability. This same “something” is the very thing that hinders me from being ready for the storms that come my way. The result is sometimes painful as those branches are ripped away and flung

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all about in the midst of the storm. How much better the prompt, proper cuts are from pruning! I may not like pruning when the Master begins, but in the midst of life's storms, I find myself better prepared for whatever comes my way. I also find myself more able to provide shelter for others in the midst of the storm. For this reason, we must submit to the Gardener as soon as there is one hint of a branch that is not productive in our life.

Pruning...

So, where do you find yourself? Are you bearing too much? Spreading yourself thin? Does God need to prune back some of your branches so that you can produce a greater, bigger fruit? So your load will be lighter and more focus can go to nourishing a sweeter, more abundant fruit?

Are you overgrowing your boundaries? Finding yourself rubbing others so harshly that it is causing disease of the "heart" and "soul" for them and you? Is this perhaps the time to pull back in and let God clarify His individual plan just FOR YOU?

Are you just the opposite? Pulling in to God so much that what you are learning is souring, rotting because you are only learning it for yourself and to "know" more about God? Is it perhaps time for God to cut away some of the branches to bring His light to you?

Do you see a storm looming overhead? Are you ready? Are you spiritually healthy NOW? Ready for any storm that could come? Are you still damaged from the last storm? Are you finding those "insects" of bitterness, envy, hatred and anger eating you up?

A Challenge...

These truths are so awesome! Did you find yourself? Your Homeschool? Your ministry? Your children? The challenge is to humbly submit to those pruning shears. Embrace this work of your caring Gardener! Stand strong! When you desire greater fruit, humbly go to your Gardener for another pruning! When you feel the most devastating pruning...*know* that God has much in store for you!

**These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you,
and that your joy might be full. John 15: 11**

Daily Manna

By Cindy Rushton

Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His Word. But Martha was cumbered about (distracted with) much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. Luke 10: 38-42

Does this passage remind you of the typical homeschooling mother? Open to the Lord. Right in touch with Jesus. In the home busy serving. Going to Jesus with the struggles that inevitably come with complete devotion to the call of womanhood.

Of all of the many wonderful things we may do in life, there is no greater call than that call of serving God in our homes. I do not struggle with temptations to go my own way...be my own person...have riches or fame...or get away from the “drudgery” of womanhood for that illusive life out in the world. No. My struggles seem to mount as I try to serve those so dear to me with all that I have...my whole heart, soul, and mind.

My problem arises not out of selfishness of my heart...but often from the selflessness of wanting from the very depths of my heart to be completely sold out to God. The funny thing is that in this passage, I find Martha to be kindred. Her error was one that I make over and over and OVER again. Yes, bound in the plans...preparations...serving. Bound and anxious. Bound and troubled. Bound and empty in the midst of the demands.

Oh, it is not that I do not desire those precious moments sitting at the feet of my blessed Saviour. It is not that I do not snatch every single moment available all along the way. Nor is it that I do not know the sustenance for my very soul that is quenched as I draw closer to my dear Lord. It is just that as a wife and mother there are so many things vying for the attention... priority... and commitment that much too often I find my days full of Martha “things.” Often, I find my very soul hungry and parched...in deep need of the *one thing* that is *needful...that good part...that shall not be taken away...my daily manna!*

Daily Manna is not an option. We find in the book of Exodus that God provided His people with a daily provision intended to quench their hunger. They were not any different from Martha...OR us! When they found themselves in the midst of their journey, they murmured and complained at the apparent lack of provision and care of God. In the midst of their anxiety and complaints, we find that God's answer was the same...that timeless answer for the hunger of the soul...daily manna!

Our days are going to be filled with the constant demands of serving others. Our journey will be long as we lead our little grumblers on into God's land of promise. Our lives will be full of the Martha things. Yet, we must draw near to the Lord right in the midst of the flurry all around us. Our ministry as godly women is too important to neglect this feeding of our soul...this drawing forth of our Lord's strength and power...this step-by-step guidance through His perfect plan for our lives. Yes, we have a call to sit at the feet of Jesus to take time for what is needful--the good part--that which cannot be taken

away.

So how do we do it? Is there a 3-step plan? I am afraid that it is just not that simple. Or maybe it is. Going back to Exodus, God gives His rules for manna. Let's look at them quickly to get some ideas for preparing for the greatest of priorities...our daily manna from God!

How to's for MANNA...

If the Israelites were to receive their daily provision, they had to trust God for the amount they needed every single day. This required faith! This required a continual dependence upon the Lord. This required a daily time of gathering from His abundant provision.

Manna is to be 1st gathered for self THEN the number of persons in YOUR tent! I love this picture. For one thing, this is the very opposite of our natural inclinations. We would naturally gather for the world...then of course for those near and dear to us if we had a little extra (reminds me of times I have baked goodies for others only to let my family eat the cookies or muffins that broke or looked funny!)... then we would take the last bit...if there were any left over. This is the typical pattern that we see modeled by so many Christians. Instead, here in Scripture, we see a picture of how God sustained His people. This picture offers us a picture of the correct order of service and evangelism.

First, we take care of our own relationship with the Lord. No one will want that which we do not KNOW firsthand. However, the passion that comes from moments sitting at the feet of Jesus is contagious. Those within our home will KNOW it. Just as we find in 1 Peter 3 that the way to "win" our men is through our manner of life...so, this is the key to leading all of those in our tent to the Lord. Our holiness will first change OUR life...then those closest to us...then the world around us!

Manna is to be gathered and used EACH Day! We cannot live off of our manna from yesterday OR save it for another day! Manna is a perfect picture of our need to go to God for His *daily* feeding of our soul. The provision was given to all of God's children every single day. They were free to take all they desired. The problems developed as some tried to store away for another day. I have been JUST like this in my spiritual walk. Let's face it. There are days that God's Word is so very special to us. You know, those mountain top experiences where God's Word is truly the fulfilling manna that our soul craves? We want to cleave to those experiences and live off of that feeding for days or years, rather than go out and gather from the new daily provision. The unique thing is that God knows our tendency. He has set forth guidelines that offer true fulfillment. It only takes coming into His presence each and every day for His provision for our soul.

Finally, since manna melts in the heat, we must gather more when we find ourselves in the heat of trials! Have you noticed how parched and hungry you are in the midst of extreme heat? In the midst of our spiritual trials, we find the temperature climbing and with that rise in temperature, we find the need for more of God's Word. It is His Word that sustains the battle weary soldier. In the heat of the battle, the greatest need is MORE of the Word because His Words provide all the weary soul needs.

Mary OR Martha???

So, how about you? Do you find yourself to be more like Martha or Mary? Do you buckle under the pressures or are you already sitting at the feet of Jesus? Take time each and every day to lift your heart before the Lord. Make your time with God a priority...planned into each and every day...NOT set at your first free or quiet moment! Look at your day...be creative...make your quiet time fit into your day! Stay faithful.

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Be reasonable with your expectations. If you are a busy mom with little ones, expect hindrances and obstacles because you have an enemy who wants to defeat you. What better way to render you ineffective than to keep you so busy with preparations...so preoccupied with serving that you cannot sit at the feet of Jesus? This need not happen. Recognize the value of feeding your soul. If there is one thing that will make you a better mother, it is taking the time necessary to feed your soul. This can be in the very midst of your little ones running and playing around you. This can be seized all throughout the day. The value to your home is incalculable!

My dear friend, one thing is needful. What will be said of your choice? Is it the good part? That which shall not be taken away? My prayer is that your choice will be that daily manna!

Fill Your Cup with Vision!

By Cindy Rushton

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Proverbs 29: 18

A while back, I was studying through this passage as it grabbed me! You probably know how the Bible does that when there is a truth that is meant JUST for you. It would be through meditation on this passage that God would show me HOW vital vision was for my personal life, family life, Homeschool, and ministry.

Look at the passage again...**“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”** No vision=people perish.

Perish is an awful strong word. My immediate thoughts were not strong enough. As I looked up perish in my trusty old *Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary*, I soon began to find many areas of my life flash before me that were in *need* of vision.

What do I mean? How can you know if we are in need of vision? We will know that we are without vision if we find ourselves: losing life... dying... withering... decaying... wasting away... coming to nothing... failing entirely... becoming wasted or useless... becoming injured or tormented ... or sentenced to endless misery.

Want to know what this looks like in real life?? Let's take a look in Genesis at a man you are probably familiar with. Settle in. We are going home with Lot and his family...a family without vision.

What Does A Family WITHOUT Vision Look Like??

You remember Lot...the nephew of Abraham. Abraham brought Lot along as he stepped out on the journey of faith toward the “Promised Land.” We enter into Lot's life for this article during a struggle between Lot's herdsmen and Abraham's herdsmen. The land was not able to bear both families dwelling together, so there was an inevitable division.

“And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen.; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.”

In this entire passage, there are many things that indicate that Lot was a man without vision. How can we tell??? Let's look at some warning signs from his life...

Lot...A Man without Vision

- ⇒ **There was strife in his household and all around him.** If there is one tell-tale sign that will help us to spot a man or woman without vision, it is the presence of strife. The NIV version of Proverbs 29:18 says, **“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint.”** There is no greater culprit in our lives that breeds strife any faster than a lack of restraint. Think of the difference in our homes if we were to stick to our calling and do ONLY that **“one thing which is needful?”** Think of the difference in our churches if we were to peacefully minister ONLY in what WE ARE SUPPOSED to do instead of taking on the load of all that we judge to be doing inferior work (which is usually just work not done OUR WAY or in OUR TIMING!). Think of the difference in support groups if we were to all do our part instead of whining, grumbling, and complaining about someone else not doing what WE might just be called to do ourselves. Yes, just think of the restraint that each of us would have in all areas of our lives that would leave us time for that ministry that God has in store for us and us alone! Think of all of the strife that we could forfeit if we just stayed faithful to the call for our lives. Restraint is the fruit of the life for those who know exactly where God wants for them to go, exactly what God has called them to do, and who accept the call to do the BEST instead of all of the good things that come their way.
- ⇒ **He did not consult God for direction.** (Gen. 13) In this passage, we see that one thing is missing in the life of Lot. As he encounters major life decisions, he took the full weight of the decision upon himself without ever considering that God had anything to say about which way he went or which direction he took his family. He took what he thought looked good. He chose for himself instead of looking for God’s will and God’s direction! As the story goes on, we see that there was much heartache that God would have spared him from, IF he had only asked!
- ⇒ **He moved toward the filth of the world ALL for worldly gain...it looked like the PLACE to go!** (Gen. 13:12-13) In Scripture we read that Lot **“lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents TOWARD Sodom.”** Not only did Lot step out on his own without a vision or even looking to see if God had anything to say about his decisions, but he moved INTO the center of perversion, filth! (Gen. 14:12) We have a choice as well. Either holiness or perversion. Either fruitfulness or barrenness. Either a life of commitment or a life of aimlessness. As we step away from God’s best (even for what LOOKS GOOD) for our lives, we find ourselves slipping down a slippery bank into the mire of the world.
- ⇒ **God could no longer give him direction.** (Gen. 18: 23-33) Imagine for a moment the condition in which we find Lot in as we come to Genesis 18...God could not send him the warning of his great peril. God went to Abraham to get an intercessor for Lot’s family. Woe to any Christian in this state! God’s best is for each of us to have a personal relationship DIRECTLY with Him. He does not want for us to have an intercessor for our family. He does not want for us to look to anyone else for direction and help BUT Him. Wherever we are...whatever we have done, we can go to Him. We CAN know God’s will, step-by-step! 1 John 2: 27, **“But as for you, the anointing (the sacred appointment, the unction) which you received from Him abides [permanently] in you; [so] then you have no need that anyone should instruct you. But just as His anointing teaches you concerning everything and is true and is no falsehood, so you must abide in (live in, never depart from) Him [being rooted in Him, knit to Him], just as [His anointing] has taught you [to do].”** God’s best is a direct, personal relationship WITH YOU. He wants for each of us to look to Him and listen to Him each step of the way. An intercessor or a guide would be second best.
- ⇒ **His entire home (and influence) was affected by his foolishness.** He became a man **“sitting in the gates.”** He held a position of authority among the perverse, wicked city of Sodom!! (Gen. 19:1)

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Psalm 1 warns that the godly **“WALKETH not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor STANDETH in the way of the sinners, nor SITTETH in the seat of the scornful...the way of the ungodly shall perish.”** Yep! That word again...perish! Here we see that Lot SAT in the gates of Sodom. It did not take very long until the morals of Sodom became his morals...the people of Sodom became his friends...and the lifestyle of Sodom became his lifestyle. This definitely affected his home. He was in a place that HE did not even belong. Yet, he made this place the home and atmosphere that he would bring up his children. He not only sacrificed his morals, but he was willing to sacrifice the morals of his wife and innocent children! (Gen. 19:14) He lost his influence on his sons-in-law. In fact, they thought he was joking as he stepped forth to lead them Biblically! Even his daughters became corrupt, later tricking Lot into sleeping with them so they could conceive children. The effects of sin do not only affect our lives, but even more tragically, those we love. They pay dearly!

- ⇒ **He was hesitant to follow the Lord EVEN though it was the only way!** (Gen. 19:16) Lot did not trust God for even ONE step...EVEN when it was obvious that this was the way he was to go. Why? Well, my guess is that he did not really want to leave the filth behind. Yes, it was the last hour and destruction was imminent! But, he was not accustomed to following the Lord and this took a giant leap of faith! He was like so many of us. How could God have direction...answers...a plan...and provision for us???
- ⇒ **He did not want to go “all the way.”** Imagine this scenario in your life...you know you have got to get out...danger is imminent...actually, destruction is moments away...how FAR would you go with God? Lot only went just barely far enough to get away from destruction. (Gen. 19: 16-29) He wanted to stop at the small place instead of going all the way to the mountaintop with God! The mountaintop was just TOO FAR for him to go with his family! Note that a man without vision is a man of small places! A man without vision doesn't go all the way for the Lord! A man without vision misses the greatest blessings because the greatest blessings come as we step heavenward. Very few have gone before us. The path is NOT clear. But as we get to the mountaintop, we have blessings untold straight from the hand of God! But...it takes going all the way in faith!
- ⇒ **His wife looked back!** (Gen. 19:26) Ever moved? Missed where you moved from? Do you ever miss those days gone by? One of the greatest temptations we each face is to LOOK BACK! You know...wish for the past...beat yourself up over the past...drag up past wrongs that might hinder your husband OR yourself? This does nothing more than turn us into a woman like Lot's wife, a PILLAR OF SALT—BITTER and not USABLE! Isn't ironic that in going to the small place, it was easier for her to look back? Looking back makes it all look glamorous. It makes the sins seem to not look too bad. As we walk away from the intensity of how bad it was, it is easy to forget little things that WERE hard! Lot did his wife a great disservice by not going on to the mountaintop where they could see how good God really is. By going to a small place, it was easier to look back with regrets instead of seeing things from FAR ABOVE the situation! We all have a tendency to become bitter just as Lot's wife LITERALLY did! As she turned back, she turned to a pillar of salt. Looking back can lead us to become bitter (Isn't God so funny?? I think He has a great sense of humor! Can't you just SEE this event with God saying, “You, my dear, want to be bitter? Well, you *will be* a pillar of salt!”). Looking back makes us just like Lot's wife--unable to be used. You can not use a hard pillar of salt—too much and too hard! God has an exciting journey for each of us. We must encourage our husbands to step forth to the call as men of vision, moving toward the mountaintop. We must not look back, but look forward to all that God has in store for us!
- ⇒ **NOW...on to the mountaintop!** But, too late! This scared Lot, he decided to go on to that mountain! (Gen.19: 30-38) Often, if God can ever get US out of the way, our husbands will get going for the Lord. But, in this story, it is too late. The ramifications of sin affected generations to

come. After the loss of his wife, Lot was ready to finally listen to the Lord. But it was too late! He had lost his influence. He had lost his wife. He had lost his children to immorality. Lot had LOST HIS CHANCE!

Without Vision

You know the end of the story of Lot. But, the end to our story is still to be written! Vision is necessary. When we get God's vision, everything changes! Things work out. We are able to acknowledge Him in our success—we know that it is really HIS SUCCESS! Worship becomes central to our life. We see eternal things-- godliness, order, testimony, godly family, service for God, building the kingdom. We find step-by-step direction. We have NEW, ABUNDANT power because we abide in Christ and HE flows through us! We have MORE fruit. We begin to have a NEW YOKE. We have JOY. We have REST!

Without vision we, like Lot, will get allured by the world...accept anything we can get...accept the advice and lifestyle of the world. Without vision, we will get your eyes off of God's best and we will miss God's purpose for us! Unless we have a vision for what God wants, He may have to attain what He has set aside for us through someone else.

So, throw out all that hinders worship and service of God! Choose who we will serve (Joshua 24: 14-21). Have a vision for the righteousness of future generations! Then, we will not find ourselves in the peril that Lot found himself and his family engulfed in. We will always have the best. If we are involved in what God is involved in, then God will provide each and every step of the way!

Soooo, How???

So, how can we KNOW God's vision for your family??? There are three easy steps defined in Romans 12: 1-2. Let's look at them from the perspective of discipling our children through our homes and Homeschools...

“I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]. Romans 12: 1-2 (AB)

3 Steps Toward KNOWING God's Vision for YOUR Family

- ✕ **Present ourselves to God as a complete, living sacrifice....** meaning that all we have and all we do must be completely yielded, dedicated, and committed to Him and His Way each and every day! This means *all* that we are: our plans... ambitions... ideas...methods... techniques... fears... concerns... all must be presented to God as a living sacrifice. Think back to the story of Abraham. Remember how God asked him to sacrifice his best, his Isaac, as an act of worship? You may think that to be an odd requirement, but God cannot allow us to have anything that becomes more precious to us than worshipping Him. Abraham obediently took Isaac up to the mountain. I believe that Abraham knew that his heart was committed completely to God, but this was the test to see just how committed he really was. God asked him to present his best as his sacrifice, his Isaac. Here, we find

that if we are desiring to know the good, acceptable, perfect will of God for ourselves or our children, we must first obediently present ourselves as a complete, living sacrifice. There may be things in our lives that must be burnt up as a sacrifice for God's best OR we may find that what we brought to sacrifice before the Lord was acceptable in His sight and can return home with us. However, the key is not in what God does with our sacrifice, it is in our heart coming before Him DAILY, presenting ourselves and all that we have before His throne.

- ✘ **Forsake the world's standards, the world's ways, and the world's bondage...** meaning that as we search for God's standards, God's Way, and we find God's freedom. There is great freedom in God's design for womanhood and family life. Only in God's design will we find direction for the path our children are to walk upon!
- ✘ **Be transformed by the daily renewal of your mind...** meaning that if we want a changed life, it begins as we sit at the feet of Jesus. As we daily immerse ourselves in His Word, we will begin to be transformed. We will soon have different priorities... different beliefs... different ambitions... and soon, we will be able to prove what is good, acceptable, and perfectly in the will of God. If we never experience this transformation, we will always find ourselves burdened under a yoke of bondage. We will always find ourselves looking in all the wrong places for direction, approval, meaning, purpose, and rest!

So, Are You Ready???

So, are you ready? Vision will simplify ALL in our life! Vision is essential for taking us toward the mark that God has set for us! Vision will help us to know why we are homeschooling and WHAT our motivation is behind our efforts. Vision will help us to find a central focus for all that we teach. It will restrain all—extracurricular activities, studies, and even home life!

As God shows us His **“good and acceptable and perfect will,”** we will even know WHAT to teach and HOW to teach it! This truly makes all of our decisions easier! Not to mention, vision constrains us from doing too much, which we are all prone to do! But that is not all. If we constantly seek for God's perfect plan each step of the way, we will even be kept from doing the “right” things at the wrong time or in the wrong way!

So, is it worth it all?? Think of YOUR story that lies before you...about to be written! Is it a story of success or failure? Worship or depravity? Eternal things or temporal things? Godliness or Filth? Order or chaos? Good testimony or shame? A godly family or wickedness right before your eyes? Work for the Lord or a waste of time?

We need not fear going to the mountaintop! God will not leave us at any time! He is there each step of the way! As we listen to His gentle, quiet voice, we will find step-by-step direction. We will have new and abundant power. We will have more fruit. We will have a new, easy yoke. We will have indescribable joy. We will have rest along the way!

So, think of the generations that will come after us. Are they worth it? Will you step out to trust the Lord? What will be their inheritance? Will you step up to the call?

“And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear; and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.” Isaiah 54: 13-14

Focused: A Story and a Song

By Lilias Trotter

*This WONDERFUL devotional is a reprint from the writings of Lilias Trotter. I found this jewel in the appendix of a biography about Lilias Trotter, **A Passion for the Impossible** by Miriam Huffman Rockness. If you are looking for an inspirational book FOR YOU, this is a tremendous choice. Lilias was a contemporary of Charlotte Mason, Hannah Whithall Smith, John Ruskin, Dwight L. Moody, Fanny Crosby... Her work has gone on to influence Elisabeth Elliot and Patricia St. John. Words do not express what this woman's writing has impressed upon my soul (of course, you will know SOON). As you read this devotional, you will be introduced to the heart of a woman who truly focused on the Lord as she walked that narrow way in every area of her life. Be blessed!*

It was in a little wood in early morning. The sun was climbing behind the steep cliff in the east, and its light was flooding nearer and nearer and then making pools among the trees. Suddenly, from a dark corner of purple brown stems and tawny moss, there shone out a great golden star. It was just a dandelion, and half-withered—but it was full face to the sun, and had caught into its heart all the glory it could hold, and was shining so radiantly that the dew that lay on it still made a perfect aureole round its head. And it seemed to talk, standing there—to talk about the possibility of making the very best of these lives of ours.

For if the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon our hearts, there is an ocean of grace and love and power lying all around us, an ocean to which all earthly light is but a drop, and it is ready to transfigure us, as the sunshine transfigured the dandelion, and on the same condition—that we stand full face to God.

Gathered up, *focused* lives, intent on one aim—Christ—these are the lives on which God can concentrate blessedness. It is “all for all” by a law as unvarying as any law that governs the material universe.

We see the principle shadowed in the trend of science; the telephone and the wireless in the realm of sound, the use of radium and the ultra violet rays in the realm of light. All these work by gathering into focus currents and waves that, dispersed, cannot serve us. In every branch of learning and workmanship the tendency of these days is to specialize—to take up one point and follow it to the uttermost.

And Satan knows well the power of concentration; if a soul is likely to get under the sway of inspiration, “this one thing I do,” he will turn all his energies to bring in side-interests that will shatter the gathering intensity.

And they lie all around, these interests. Never has it been so easy to live in half a dozen good harmless worlds at once—art, music, social science, games, motoring, the following of some profession, and so on. And between them we run the risk of drifting about, the “good” hiding the “best” even more effectually than it could be hidden by downright frivolity with its smothered heart-ache at its own emptiness.

It is easy to find out whether our lives are focused, and if so, where the focus lies. Where do our thoughts settle when consciousness comes back in the morning? Where do they swing back when the

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pressure is off during the day? Does this test not give the clue? Then dare to have it out with God—and after all, that is the shortest way. Dare to lay bare your whole life and being before Him, and ask Him to show you the fact that unfocussed, good and useful as it may seem, it will prove to have failed of its purpose.

What does this focusing mean? Study the matter and you will see that it means two things—gathering in all that can be gathered, and letting the rest drop. The working of any lens—microscope, telescope, camera—will show you this. The lens of your own eye, in the room where you are sitting, as clearly as any other. Look at the window bars, and the beyond is only a shadow; look through at the distance, and it is the bars that turn into ghosts. You have to choose which you will fix your gaze upon and let the other go.

Are we ready for a cleavage to be wrought through the whole range of our lives, like the division long ago at the taking of Jericho, the division between the things that could be passed through the fire of consecration into “the treasury of the Lord,” and the things that, unable to “bide the fire,” must be destroyed? All aims, all ambitions, all desires, all pursuits—shall we dare to drop them if they cannot be gathered sharply and clearly into the focus of “this one thing I do”?

Will it not make life narrow, this focusing? In a sense, it will—just as the mountain path grows narrower, for it matters more and more, the higher we go, where we set our feet—but there is always, as it narrows, a wider and wider outlook, and purer, clearer air. Narrow as Christ’s life was narrow, this is our aim; narrow as regards self-seeking, broad as the love of God to all around. Is there anything to fear in that?

And in the narrowing and focusing, the channel will be prepared for God’s power—like the stream hemmed between the rock-beds, that wells up in a spring—like the burning glass that gathers the rays into an intensity that will kindle fire. It is worth while to let God see what He can do with these lives of ours, when, “to live is Christ.”

How do we bring these things to a focus in the world of optics? Not by looking at the things to be dropped, but by looking at the one point that is to be brought out.

Turn full your soul’s vision to Jesus, and look and look at Him, and a strange dimness will come over all that is apart from Him, and the Divine “attrait” by which God’s saints are made, even in this 20th century, will lay hold of you. For “He is worthy” to have all there is to be had in the heart that He has died to win.

*Hath not each heart a passion and a dream,
Each some companionship for ever sweet,
And each in saddest skies some silver gleam,
And each some passing joy, too fair and fleet,
And each a staff and stay, though frail it prove,
And each a face he fain would ever see?
And what have I? An endless stream of love,
A rapture, and a glory, and a calm,
A life that is an everlasting Psalm,
All, O Beloved, in Thee.*

-Tersteegen

Come Home...It's Time for Tea!

By Cindy Rushton

There is an instant fervor generated in each and every one of us. Matthew heads into the kitchen to get the water going...Elisabeth heads to the refrigerator to pull out some snacks...I grab the covers and a great book...It is TIME FOR TEA for the Rushtons!

One of the most treasured moments of our day is the daily ritual of tea! Ohhh, don't let your mind get to thinking this to be an article about china... silver... linens... or great etiquette! We *are* still talking about *my family*! Tea in the Rushton home is more a glorified snack and "cuddle-cuddle" time! The most treasured part of all are those precious memories from the moments spent together over tea!

You see, it has been during our time for tea that we have gone to far away lands...soothed our spirits with the gentle flow of the Classical music delicately filling the air...giggled at the funny escapades of our favorite characters...and snuggled-in memories that will one day be part of our treasure chest from these soon fleeting moments. Our time for tea has been more than a time to bring beauty into our homeschool, it has become our time to build memories...develop OUR own traditions...and fill-us-up as we develop our hearts, souls, and minds!

OUR Own Time for Tea...

So, what does this precious time look like? How do we fit this time of day into our busy life? Well, come on in...it is time for tea!

For our family, I found a constant battle as I found so many distractions to our typical family time. There were constant phone calls...friends dropping by...never the same day to day family life because of constant interruptions...the list could go on and on! I found that we needed a more consistent time to read, study, and cuddle. A time that was *just ours*!

The best time for this was at the end of our busy day. With my husband working as an Alabama State Trooper, we found ourselves up until very late hours. Those last few hours before he came in seemed perfect. They were not likely to be times for calls, errands, or drop-by guests. They were the easiest to preserve for our special time whether we were on the road traveling or cuddling on our sofa or snuggled in my bed for a nice-long read aloud! Those moments were the perfect ones!

Great Literature...

The still, quiet spirit of our home was only the first part of this special ritual. Great books were musts! My children love to read. We have a library just for them filled with books that they can choose during their free time. They cover a wide-range of studies just by using whole, living books full of ideas and great information. For our Teatime, I did not want a repeat of those books. Instead, I wanted life-changing literature. Because of this heartbeat, I am extremely selective to choose the very best books for this special time. I ask myself, "*If these were the last moments that I had with my children, would this be the memory that I want for them to carry with them?*" "*Is this book capable of teaching those life-lessons that they need to carry them through life?*" This limits my choices to those books that are absolute MUSTS for my children. Those books that all well-educated children should dine upon. Those

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books that feed the spirit...challenge the soul...and encourage us to keep on persevering through it all!

I have been amazed at the way the Lord has led us by His Spirit to each book that He has wanted for us to read as a family. From *The Hiding Place* to *Basket of Flowers* to *The Elsie Series* to *Hedge of Thorns* to *Passion and Purity* to great poetry to Christmas stories to a multitude of biographies...God has had specific direction for us right when we needed to know His next choice!

Once I know which book we will read next, I usually hunt for a nice, large print edition, if at all possible. These are wonderful for helping us take turns. My son used to be so intimidated by small print in books. The large print editions are easier for him to read comfortably from. They also make great texts for Copywork lessons. I saw the advantage to the large print as we read from Corrie Ten Boom's *The Hiding Place*. There were so many wonderful quotes that I felt were important for the children to copy into their copybooks. While we read aloud, I simply marked them with a highlighter. On those mornings that the children were drawing blanks for Copywork ideas, all they had to do was open that book to find a plethora of excellent choices! I found that to be helpful for my writing and speaking as well because I could easily find those great thoughts that had been planted in my mind while we read!

We usually take turns reading. This is the perfect way to help beginning readers ease into reading aloud for others. Their work can be so mundane if they practice with readers or insignificant reading lessons. A great book invites children to read with expression. When I would notice them tiring out, (you probably know that time because that is when they get REAL monotone...AKA boring!!) I would join in and read for a little while. That usually brightened up the pace so that when they would begin again, they would sound expressive and enthusiastic. Now, I absolutely LOVE to listen to them read aloud. It is neat to hear them stress those words that I would stress...or pause as I would pause! What a treasure!

Well, that is only part of the treasure! One thing that I love about this precious time with my children is that I find out just what they think, feel, and believe. We have tremendous discussions almost nightly about great ideas. I remember this being a goal for my children as they matured into adulthood. I never dreamed that I could have this blessing with little children! It is during these quaint moments of reading while sipping our tea, that I get a peek into their heart! I see their heart's desires...their struggles in their character...the depths that God's Word has worked in their lives...and their instant choices when faced with adversity (through the pages of the books). I can also help them trouble-shoot making decisions that may prevent them from irreparable errors later in their lives! Yes, those are the gifts that come with serving up great literature to our children.

Sitting at the Feet of God...

Above I mentioned books that God has led us to read with our children, but I intentionally failed to mention our nightly read aloud that we continue every single day of every single year. As we wrap up our time of reading great literature, we turn our focus to the greatest of all literature...God's Word. This same spirit of discussion and sharing continues into this time of reading with my children. Of all the moments I spend with my children, I must admit these never cease to be my most treasured!

Although I absolutely LOVE to dig and devour God's Word, I keep this time with my children very simple and easy. There are times that we have hunted for details to help us understand a passage, but I really try to limit this time over tea to *reading* through the Bible (we try to keep our intense Bible Study to our morning table time), *sharing* our favorite verses, and *praying* together for concerns on our hearts. We pick somewhere to begin reading...read a bit every day...and end by marking the date at the end of

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the selection. The next day we pick up where we left off. As we finish a section of Scripture, we then decide where we are going next. I have been amazed at how practical God's Word is at all times and how dependably He leads us with the next portion of Scripture just as He leads our Read Alouds! I really believe that Bible Reading is so much more special because it is a part of that treasured time of our day. The children are ALL there with me as I read through the Greatest Story of all times. I am constantly challenged to think from the children's point of view...talk about pure hearts and deep conviction! We all grow because we are being fed eternal manna and living water...in addition to our tea and snacks! ☺

Just this Easy...

Our daily Time for Tea is just this easy. We don't make it complicated by tests...by book reports...by written narrations on all we read. We are not even legalistic that our time be limited to books. We have been known to cuddle up with art prints JUST like we do our books. When our Time for Tea includes Art Prints, we simply cuddle up to "listen" to the artist as he or she communicates through the canvas. My little ones have been known to sketch or paint the recent art print with their own style while I read a section from a great book. We also LOVE biographies, so we have enjoyed reading sketches about artists or the latest composer that we are getting to know! This only takes minutes, yet the results have been overwhelming our lives. Just a bit here and a bit there has helped to carry us into our world with a little bit more understanding about the worldviews of our culture! Not to mention, great art and music feed our minds with ideas that keep us growing into the vessels that God can really use in our culture!

Well, why not put on a little Classical Music in the background. Warm some water...EVEN if you prefer to use it for hot chocolate with fluffy marshmallows! ☺ Dust off those poetry books or that book you keep putting off for another day. Curl up with your little ones...there is NOTHING quite like Time for Tea!

Teatime Thoughts from Teatime Treasures

By Laura Leathers

Have you ever stopped to consider the different types of tea-kettles? There are the standard colors of black and white. Then, there are the vibrant new bold colors of lime green, yellow, and orange. Then, there are the standard, never changing kind with stainless steel and copper bottoms or enamel. How about the shapes? I've seen large oversized kettles and small kettles. Let's not forget the name brand tea-kettles, such as Paul Revere, LeCreuset, and Krups. In other words, there is a brand, make, or model on the market to meet any woman's particular desire for color, shape, size, brand, and price. We have endless choices.

Last December, I was feeling particularly overwhelmed. My calendar of events included the normal shop-till-you-drop, homeschooling, Christmas cantatas, ministry projects, and our first annual Homeschool mom's day out, *A Cup of Christmas Tea*, which was held at my home. I made it through the month of December and headed into the New Year being physically tired and spiritually dry.

Full of Living Water???

One cold and dreary day in January, I remember looking at the tea-kettle on my stove and thinking I am just like that tea-kettle. It was empty and so was I. A tea-kettle is meant to hold clear cool fresh water. Am I not a vessel that is to be full with the living water? I know God wants to use me to pour Himself into so that others might receive the living water. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, **"...but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."** This particular holiday season, I had not taken time to be consistent in going to the well for the living water. In my daily hectic pace of life, I had allowed myself to literally be robbed.

Robbed? I had robbed myself of the greatest privilege we have as Christians. *Being still and knowing that He is God* (Psalm 46: 10). My Father, Who is the awesome, never-changing, almighty God, the One Who created water, and gave His Son to be our Living Water, calls you and I to enter into His presence. Not because we are worthy, but because He desires for us to be there. We find in Lamentations 3: 22-23, **"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."**

That January morning I crawled up on the lap of My Father and listened to His heart of love for me. Asking for forgiveness for trying to fill my husband's cup, my children's cups, and anyone else who had come along my path. I asked Him to replenish this vessel so I could be of service *with* Him.

Heat...Preparing for Use!

I learned something else about the tea-kettle. When the heat of the flame is applied to the bottom of the tea-kettle, it is for the purpose of producing extremely hot water. When this hot, boiling water is
