

need to ***"Train up"*** our children ***"in the way THEY should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old, he will not depart from it."***

What does this mean? It means very simply seeking to find THEIR purpose that God has called them to from the foundation of the earth. It means looking at YOUR giftings that God gave you especially for this calling of ministering to your children. Those giftings are the most important thing you can *do* for your children! These giftings will help them to fulfill their life call! Also, look at your child's giftings and natural talents. These will be key to what they will become. You may not have a vision for all they will become, but you will know you are going the right direction as you nurture and use your child's giftings from the Holy Spirit and natural talents that God has blessed your child with so they can minister to others. The best place to begin is right in your home! Find lots of opportunities to use gifts/talents. Let them serve at home in the family. Develop your family ministry and let them use their gifts to carry that load. Use those gifts in hospitality. Get them busy in your family business using their gifts. This is *just* as educational as any other lesson you could ever teach...probably more so since it is training them in the direction that God has planned for them from the creation of the world. Want all simplified? Have a vision for what GOD sees as the finished product with your children and never let the world sway you from that vision!

Commitments...

Is this a snag area for you? You would love to slow down to God's pace for your children. You would love to train them up specifically for their calling. BUT! You are too busy????

I heard an interesting quote in a workshop by Trudy Abel this past year. She was quoting the recent statistics of homeschooling families. The average families have 5.6 activities per child each week. Yes! 5.6 PER CHILD! I am exhausted thinking about that myself. But, this is what we are finding with homeschooling families.

We are the "movers and shaker" in our culture. We truly want what is best for our children. Yet, I believe we are missing it completely just because we want to be sure our children do not miss a thing and that they have every opportunity that is available. This is very simply a lack of restraint. Proverbs 29:18 says... ***"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."*** Another version says, ***"Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint."*** We need God's vision. Then, we need to make sure that all we do matches up to God's vision. This will slow us down so we can carry only the burden that God intends for us to carry!

What does this look like? How can we choose what *we* are to do???

Seek God's Purpose For You... If what you do does not work toward that purpose, then leave it out! Yes! This will hurt! Yes! It will be hard! There are so many good things out there to do. But, we must remember that there is only one option that can be the *best*. Satan has defeated many godly people by confusing them with all of the "good" options just long enough that they pass by the "best" that God had planned for them.

Function In Seasons... Decide what is most important for this particular season and limit yourself to just that. There *will* be other seasons that would be better for whatever you are to do. You don't have to do it all at one time. Your children do not have to do it all. In fact, when the next season comes, you may realize that those tugs no longer tug at you. But, say the thing you are struggling with really is what God wants for you or your child, you can't have it all in one day. Often God will give us a vision for what will be done in the future so we can take steps toward that here today. Our question should be "What one thing will I do today?" "What one thing am I to do today?" As we find this step for this season, more than likely we will also find preparation for tomorrow, along with an easy burden today AND tomorrow!

Simplify... Simplify to do only what disciples the children in the way they should go. Evaluate by asking yourself the following questions about all you do...

Can I say that it...
Prepares them for God's call?
Brings quiet and rest for the whole family?
Contributes to the family ministry?
Builds memories?
Matures them in the Lord?
Offers a slow pace for each and every day?

Desire a Slow Pace... Genesis 33: 13-14 says, "*And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all of the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir.*"

Test for the To-do's...

Are you pacing yourself with the world (Esau) or with "*that of the children?*"
Are you having to leave off work or stress out to get work done in order to compensate for the time away?

Is there enough time left to minister to others or are others simply a distraction and interference?

Is there enough time to rest? To have a slow pace?
Is there time for spontaneity or are the plans ruling?
Is there enough time to develop deep relationships?
Are you giving your children all of the advantages except the advantage of a slower pace? Calm home? And deep relationships?

If the priority is not relationships, we are simply missing the whole point. ALL that God has done all throughout time has been wrapped around relationships. Think for a moment... God created man for intimacy with Him. God created woman for intimacy with man. The first effects of the fall affected relationships—between man/God and between husband/wife! All throughout Scripture God is revealing Himself to man so man can have a relationship with the One, True Living God. Christ came to restore relationships between God and man; husband and wife; parent and child; between people. Then, one awesome day ALL will be restored as Jesus returns for His bride for eternal communion!

We can do a lot of things. But, I believe that the main thing is seizing every moment in our relationships with God, our husbands, our children, and others.

A while back I was reading Sally Clarkson's book *Seasons of a Mother's Heart* for the very first time. There was one quote that seems to echo in my mind when I am faced with decisions of how to spend this precious time today. She wrote, "*The downside was becoming readily apparent—less time for family rituals and hospitality, less opportunities for talking with the children and involvement in their homeschooling, fewer homemade meals and more junk food, and a house that was getting out of control. I found myself asking the kids not only to do their work without me, but far too often I expected them to help me with my work and to help with the baby. As I pondered these developments and their impact on my life from the quietness of my teatime chair, the sweet face of my mature oldest daughter came to mind. In just a few short years, she would walk into adulthood, closing forever the door of this precious time of young womanhood. Was I going to have the time to touch her heart for the Lord, to share secrets over mugs of hot tea, to discuss spiritual lessons learned and life decisions to be made? Would I walk by her side through that room of youth and escort her through the door into adulthood, or would I just be an occasional companion as she walked it mostly by herself?*"

What is most important? The number one thing is being ALL there! Being a wife who is ALL there. Being a mother who is ALL there. Building relationships today! Pouring all we are and have into others. Discipling our little ones today! Leading our children softly, tenderly, without driving them one day! Letting the world pass by with all of its glimmer and ritz! Focusing on the most important before this part of the journey is closed! In the light of these things, yes...God's burden IS light and easy to bear!

Curriculum...

If there is one area that seems to come up in conversations...in workshops...in books the most, it is the area of curriculum. Yes...curriculum! Why? Because it is one of the toughest areas to find what works for each individual child and it is the one area that is constantly changing as the children grow and change. Because of this, it constantly needs continual simplification if we are to experience that light and easy burden that God has planned for us.

You see, I do not believe that there is a "no-no" curriculum or a "perfect" book or even teaching method for each and every child. In fact, every season we begin in our homeschool journey meets us with differing demands and needs. The only way we will ever be right where God wants for us to be is if we live surrendered lives...lives surrendered to His plan and His way in ALL things!

How can we ever do this?? Here are some quick thoughts...

Look Back At Your Purpose!

Base all you do on where you are going, not on what YOU think ought to be taught... what others around you are teaching...or even what is traditionally taught in "school." I firmly believe that when we were building our home the most important lessons my children were learning were not academic at all. Sure, they were learning academics. Yet, God's scope and sequence was for them to learn much, much more. They were learning *WHO Harold is* (the MAIN thing we are called to teach!)...*practical skills* (Talk about a great need in our culture today—so many "educated" people who cannot do one thing for themselves and are completely dependent upon others for even the most simple of skills.) ...*real life* (Isn't that one of the big myths of education??)...and *godly character* (only instilled as we serve others...no better training ground than building a house HELPING serve Daddy.).

Even now looking at what we do...we DO teach academics, yet the greatest lessons are those wee hours of the night discussing ideas...those moments outside exploring God's creation...those lessons learned while fixing something broken (Harold LOVES to restore what I call junk! So far he has restored an old pickup truck...a wrecked Harley...two sailboats...and now a little sports car. Think of all the valuable practical skills the children are getting NOT to mention the practice in godly character AND being like Christ, Who takes the "greatest junk" and restores us into new creatures that are spotless and working!!).

Listening to God makes us nothing like others. Our children will have a call for their

lives that is like no one else. God wants for us to listen to Him so we prepare them for that calling. Our choice of curriculum has to go along with our lifestyle and our gifts and talents so we can move toward God's purpose that is JUST for our children.

Look At YOUR Family!

Take into consideration WHO you are and WHO your child is—not what your best friend or mentor likes the best. This gets down to the nitty gritty. This is where you have to do your own homework to study, understand yourself and your children, and get to know what you are really all about. What do I mean? How do you find out what is just right for you?

Look at your teaching style. How are YOU most comfortable teaching? You may like lessons plans, a "set in stone" schedule, and curriculum for each and every subject. You may be bound in chains by them. You may like to have a part of your day that you KNOW lessons will be done. You may like to have lessons all throughout the day so you can respond better to the challenges in your home. ALL are ok! The BEST, LIGHTEST, and EASIEST will be that which is YOUR way and enables you to be YOU! Your children will enjoy a Mommy who is relaxed and comfortable with what she is doing more than any other dynamic in teaching children.

Another thing is to *consider each of your children and WHO they are.* Curriculum choices can get REAL tricky when we consider that each of our children have different learning styles, temperaments, spiritual gifts, talents, and interests. WHEW! This is why Abeka may work for one child...while KONOS for another...while Five in a Row for another...while none of the above for another!!!! So many mothers carry around a burden and condemnation because their child just does not seem to "get it" and their friends all seem to love a certain curriculum. Many quietly mask their frustration from not being able to make a certain curriculum or approach work for them. If this is you, take a look at your children. Accept their delights, their abilities, their inabilities, their frustrations. Take a look at how you can truly get the information *into* them most effectively. THEN all will begin to fit together. If you will realize that your "teacher" and "prophet" will simply devour hours on end of book work, seat work and that they LOVE having lesson plans so they feel a sense of completion, then you will have an easier path toward finding curriculum that works or tailoring your curriculum to their needs (You CAN make a check list and schedule for even the most relaxed curriculum so your children can have that sense of accomplishment!) If you can ever realize and accept that the "server" has to DO constantly, then you will soon see that they *genuinely* struggle with being still and learning from lectures. You can tailor any curriculum to them or at very least you will be on the road toward finding a curriculum that will meet them where they are and take them toward God's plan for their lives. This could go on into a BOOK of its

own (In fact, we are working on one!), I believe you get the idea. This can all be summed up in *just get to know them!*

Look at your life. Take a look at your daily, weekly, and yearly schedule. Take a look at the demands you are trying to meet in your life now or throughout the year. Take a look at your budget. Take a look at your confidence. Take a look at your experience in homeschooling. These all will give you direction toward a curriculum that will work for you.

We have WONDERFUL resources in our home. If you were to see my shelves, you would instantly say, "WHAT APPROACH DO YOU USE???" "WHAT ARE YOU DOING THIS YEAR???" "DO YOU USE ALL THIS STUFF???" My answer would be that we have found that resources have seasons. Resources have strengths. Resources have limitations. The key was in developing MY way of teaching. Looking at what I believe about education, about children, about myself. Looking at how we best learn. Then, matching it all up for my life today.

Ten years ago I did NOTHING besides staying at home with one child I was teaching formal lessons to and another child I was chasing around cleaning up after! I could put her down for a nap and have plenty of time for one-on-one tutoring. Seven years ago I added the dynamic of teaching more than one and that NO ONE took naps and that my husband's schedule changed completely. The last few years we have been on the road ministering, the children are now older, studies are deeper and need more time to develop. Tomorrow will be full of change as well! All changes. Nothing stays the same. We have to grow with life. So does the education of our children.

If we are to truly hear God, we must be willing to lay down anything for any amount of time God says for us to lay it down...EVEN if that means for good. If we are truly hearing God, we must be willing to use whatever we use the way HE says to use it. Consider this as you choose what you are to do in your home and you will find a burden that is light and easy to bear!

Bring Real Education Into Your Home!

This is key for you wherever you are in your journey and whatever you decide to use as a resource. This will be the difference between a LIVING and a DEAD homeschool and family life. Bring life into your home. Capitalize on what is yours! You already have life-changing learning tools at your dispense. You have the atmosphere of your home, you have the disciplines within the home, and you have real life...ALL three of these can make your home a learning home! Make the atmosphere one of learning at all times. Make the atmosphere FUN! Make the atmosphere one of purpose. Make the atmosphere that

which is disciplined by routine not by dictates of curriculum. Make the home one that is full of life, learning, and rich in ideas so the entire family is fed spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally!

This does not just happen. We must simplify. I don't know about you, but I sure can crowd in a lot of stuff to do in a day...taking away all of the life out of my home! If I want a light and easy burden--abundant life, then I must simplify all so I can utilize the tools God has given me. I have to simplify my day, each and every one of them, sticking to the MAIN thing! I have to guard over my home as a keeper of the home, keeping balance in all of the aspects of our life. Just one thing out of balance forfeits the effectiveness of our family, creates a heavy load, steals the joy and delight in our home, and crowds out the abundant life that God has provided for us to enjoy! We cannot have an hour of Math a day in our home without something else being scrapped from the schedule. (Now, NOTE that if MATH is the thing God has given you as your priority, you must listen to Him and let Him order your days!) If the children dawdle over chores, something else must go.

Far too many homes are completely ineffective for God because there is not balance. We all enter each day with the same number of hours...each week with the same number of days...each month with the same number of weeks. Why is one more productive than another? It all comes down to hearing God and His direction for each and every moment. The great thing we are to do is probably not a great thing but the multitude of many little things. Unless there is balance in all areas of life, there is very little accomplished in the end.

We must each go before the Father to hear how He wants us to order our days. We must cry out to Him as the Psalmist, "***So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.***" (Psalm 90: 12) Each of our days counts. We must cry out to the Lord asking Him to give us wisdom in what we are to do each and every day. Although I cannot tell you how to schedule your days, I can tell you that your days will be light and easy if you are staying restrained to your call, allowing God to show you what HE wants for you and your family. He will bring order and balance. Nothing in your home will dominate to the neglect of other vital parts of a full life. Play will become as important as lessons...which are as important as quiet times...which are just as important as read alouds...which are just as important as ministry...which is just as important as chores... which are just as important as free time and play! All is important as we see things through God's eyes. He will capitalize on the atmosphere and real life in your home to bring a routine that will get much accomplished for all in your home while making your load light and easy to bear!

KEEPing the Home

Eek! Yes! Here I go into "no man's land." Do you struggle with this area? This has perhaps been the one area that I find burdens me the most. If I KEEP a clean home, I am touchy about others LIVING in it. Just one mess makes my blood boil! If I focus on relationships, the first area to "go to the dogs" is my house! How do I balance KEEPing my home and KEEPing everyone in my home sane?

YES! I am the first one to step forward here and admit that it is NOT fun for me to spend time out of each of my days cleaning and caring for my home. Why? I don't like the feeling of wasting time like I do (Oh, as I clean, I get SO side-tracked! I read every little letter...look at ALL the pictures...!!!! Then, I am SO picky about how it is done!!! Tired yet?), when that is my only focus in life. I don't like feeling an "ownership" over the house that I am to use for ministering to those God brings my way. I used to feel guilty for not being able to get it all done and BE NICE while doing it all. Part of my guilt came from a passage that I am sure all of you know by heart, Titus 2: 3-5...

"The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, KEEPERS AT HOME, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed."

I have found this passage to be sooo frustrating in the past. Partly because I really do want to be a godly woman with all my heart, but I also know how frustrated I get when I spend too much time on housework that never seems to be finished! I felt for years that this passage was teaching that the woman's role was to stay AT home, KEEPing house!

Recently, I found a treasure that I pray will lift your burdens and simplify your life as it has mine! Let's look at some definitions...

- **Keep**...to hold; to retain in one's power or possession; to preserve; to retain; to preserve from falling into danger; to protect; to guard or sustain; to hold or restrain from departure; to tend; to take care of; to feed; to pasture; as to keep a flock of sheep or a herd of cattle in a yard or in a field; to preserve in any tenor or state; to regard; to attend to; to hold in any state, as to keep in order; to continue in any state, course, or action; not to neglect or violate; to fulfill; to perform; to obey; to observe in practice; to maintain; to supply with the necessities of life; to have in the house; to entertain; to keep watch or guard; not to betray; to restrain; to curb; to withhold; to hold in subjection; maintaining the family estate

- **To Keep**...to remain in any state; to last; to endure; not to perish or be impaired to lodge; to dwell; to reside for a time.
- **Keeper**...one who keeps; one that holds or has possession of anything; one who retains in custody; one who has care, custody, or superintendence of anything.
- **Keeping**...holding, restraining, preserving, guarding, protecting, performing.

This gets down to the nitty-gritty! Tremendous isn't it? Tremendous, but freeing! This means that our role is much more than merely STAYing at home or KEEPing house. Sure, there is an aspect of the keeper at home that means we *stay at home*, and we all know that much is lost as we "go" too much. But, my dear friends, there are many ways we STAY at home...our physical presence, our emotional presence, our spiritual presence, and our mental presence. Merely being busy in the house is not enough. The godly keeper at home is the one watching after the way her home is headed. She is the one who makes sure that all that is done in the home is restrained to the call.

In Proverbs 31, we see in verse 27 that "***She looketh well to the WAYS of her household.***" This entire passage is a beautiful passage that gives us a glimpse on the godly keeper of the home. She *does* take her responsibilities in her home very seriously. She cooks, cleans, sews, serves in her home. But, this is not all. I remember time and time again of puffing up because I stay at home with my primary job caring for my family. I was missing it all along. The godly keeper at home is the one to take care of the home, but it is more than physical care of a house. Keeping the home is physical guard over the family, it is spiritual guard over the family, it is guarding the minds of the family, it is guarding the emotions of the family.

Keeping tabs on all the "ways" of our family is a full time job. It includes so much. Keeping up to the minute status. Being aware of all going on in the home. Not being caught by surprise because we are prepared for all the demands. Knowing the pain, struggles, temptations, stumbling...straying...hurting when they go down unhealthy, dangerous, painful paths. Agonizing when they suffer. Stepping in to correct the situation that is hurtful. Being the one to narrow the path, and discipline in the way they should go. This is tough work! Guarding them is difficult in a society where we are accused of sheltering our children, as if there is a grave danger in looking to their ways.

The Bible is clear that this is a primary role of the woman...the woman is the KEEPER of the home and the man is the HEAD of the home. A vital role! A powerful role! A demanding role!

We are to be there...ALL there. We are to be on guard...at ALL times. We are to be at watch...in all areas of life. All we do must wrap around this tremendous role in the home. If there are things that distract us, they must go. If there are things that

compete for our attention, they must go. No one else can fulfill our call. If we fail, our home will fall to pieces as a result.

KEEP the home. Be the keeper of the home. Build relationships at home. Build memories. Build your influence through your home. Pour all you have into your home. Make your home an atmosphere of learning by balancing all to the glory of God. Make your home a place of hospitality. Minister in and through your home.

Don't let anything hinder you from being a godly *keeper* of the home...even housecleaning! In fact, for far too many homes, the main hindrance to a godly atmosphere is the very thing that we THINK we are to do...you have got it housecleaning. Want to know if I am right? What wears you out? What burdens you? Why CAN'T you have fun? What do you complain about the most? What makes you furious with those in your home? My dear friends, this is ME. I may not be writing this for any of you, but I am a taskmaster when it comes to my home. Buddy, if I clean it, I want it to STAY clean. Nothing frustrates me to anger any faster than working diligently to set a cabinet in order only to find after I have been busily cleaning up stairs that someone completely disheveled that same cabinet looking for something that was not EVEN in it! If I don't get angry, I am at minimum sent to tears.

God has not called me to step up to the call of *House Beautiful*. (thank goodness) Instead, He has called me to be one who will watch after all of the ways of my home. He is glorified by a home that others can see HIM inside. This does mean that we become good stewards of all that is under our domain. But this also means that we only carry the burden that He has called us to carry...yes, that light and EASY burden. We can find ways to make housecleaning EASY. Yes! Are you in need of some quick ideas?

Quick Homemaking Ideas...

Utilize your help...Have a set chore time. Put everyone to work! You will have more time to enjoy your family and your home won't distract you along the way.

Guard Your Time... Expect the unexpected...illnesses, bad days, delays, interruptions! Learn to say no so you will have more time for keeping homemaking simple! Turn off the TV--the best way to keep your little ones productive! Plan for free time--IT IS OK!

Limit Your Time Spent on Cleaning! Let's face it, our homes will never stay spotless, so let redeem the time to spend with our eternal treasures! Have clutter-drills during the day where the children pick up as much as possible in 5 minutes. Set a timer. In just five minutes most of the house can be cleaned back up! IT WORKS! Do semi-annual

cleanout...fall and spring. This will help to get things back in order...to re-organize those places things are to be put...and to de-clutter. Then, the children can help you maintain the home IF THEY ARE TRAINED to help and not become part of the mess. Purchase servants for making your job easier...bread mixer...crock pots...blenders...dishwasher! These will save hours of time and do the job better as well!

Keep meals simple...Use *easy meals* (Easy dishes like-tacos, burritos, enchiladas, nachos, salads, spaghetti, chicken pot pie, burgers, lasagna, granola and yogurt, shakes, muffins) or *big meals* that you can reheat or serve in a hurry(Soups, breads, casseroles)

Find great helps for homemaking...

Dinners in the Freezer By Jill Bond

Hearth and Home By Karey Swan

Sue Gregg Cookbooks (our favorites for healthy AND easy meals that TASTE GOOD!)

Make a Mix By Karine Eliason, Nevada Harward, Madeline Westover

Homemaker's Forum (available from Urban Homemaker 1-800-55-bread)

Taste of Home

Emilie Barnes Home Organization books!

It is so easy to be encumbered by a load in the home that God does not intend for us to carry. This is not saying, "Feel yucky if you LIKE cleaning." Enjoy womanhood. ALL aspects. EVEN if you do not enjoy cleaning house, you can have liberty here in knowing the truth. We are not commanded to just stay in the house cleaning...we are to learn to KEEP our homes. To subdue and have dominion. This can include watching after the health, cleanliness, and effectiveness of those in our home by doing the little things "*as unto the Lord.*" There can be true joy when we simplify all to get down to the main thing we are called to do, not what our culture tells us we are to do .

Simplify Your Life!

Yes...your WHOLE life. Want to know how? God has called us to surrender ALL. He wants our whole life. As we come in complete surrender, we find true simplicity in all areas of our life. We find the main thing!

What IS the main thing? Take a look at two passages, Jesus answers for Himself in Mark 12: 28-30...

"And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments

is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

Also, take a look at Matthew 22: 34-40...

"But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the greatest commandment of the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law, and the prophets."

The main thing is to love God with all our heart...all our soul...all our mind...all our strength. That is ALL we are! He wants for us to commit all we are to loving Him and others. That sure simplifies things quite a bit. In fact, that means that all that is not wrapped around loving God and others is vain and useless, not God's perfect will for us.

A few weeks ago, I taught a seminar on *The Hidden Woman of the Heart: Developing a Passion for the Call of Womanhood*. On the Saturday morning, one of the precious ladies made our day as she shared what went on when she went home. She asked her husband what HE wanted for her to do each and every day...what the MAIN thing was for her. He thoughtfully gave an answer that I believe reflected a man of great wisdom as he told her that he wanted for her to seek to love God with ALL her heart, soul, mind, and strength and that all else would just fall into place. AMEN!

Love is not merely going to church...although we who love God do go to church. Love is not merely teaching Sunday School or singing in the choir...although we who love God do serve God as we are called to serve Him. Love is not even reading the Bible...even though we who love God do read our Bible. We mix up "doing" for LOVING. God wants for us to LOVE Him. By this I mean, enjoying just sitting in His presence...getting excited as He touches your heart, soul, or weary mind...just listening to Him as He shares His plans, passions, ideas, and wisdom...running into His great big arms when you are tired, weary, scared, or anxious...loving Him for WHO He is rather than what He can do for you. He wants us to love Him more than anything or anyone. He calls Himself many names, but one that is especially intimate is one He reveals in His heart wish for us... **"And it shall be in that day, says the Lord, that you will call me Ishi [my Husband], and you shall no more call Me Baali [my Baal]."** Hosea 2: 16

He does not want us to just know Him as our God, Lord and Master. He wants for us to

become intimate with Him KNOWING Him as the Lover of our souls and as OUR Lover. He wants faithfulness, but from a heart of passion for Him. He wants for us to enjoy being WITH Him, rather than merely fulfilling our obligations to Him. He wants for us to have a passion for being with Him rather than putting Him off. He wants for us to run into His loving arms to pour out every concern, fear, frustration, heartache, heartbreak, sorrow, grief. He wants for us to come to Him when we are filled to overflow and about to burst forth in praise, adoration, excitement, passion, and worship.

This IS the main thing. This IS why we were created. Doesn't it feel soooo good? But, why don't we devour the opportunity to be in relationship with God? I believe it is because far too often the distractions of this world compete for our attention and devotion. We put God off and miss the blessings He has in store for us.

Want to simplify ALL of life? Why not get down to the MAIN thing? Indeed, just as our dear friend said that IF we will just love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, then all else will fall into place. We will naturally live a life of worship and praise instead of living in the rubbish of doubt, fear, and death. We will be able to walk in the Spirit, forsaking those fleshly desires that so often get us off track. We will find direction, a lamp for our feet and light for our path, for all areas of life—including homeschooling and homemaking. We will find out who our children really are and how God wants for us to train them. We will find more time to enjoy life right where we are! We will find that companionship and support that we crave, often at very lonely times of our life...we will have the arms of God to run to in our darkest hour or at the height of elation! And, finally we will be able to enjoy the journey.

These days are very, very special. We are given the power of influencing the lives of all around us, especially our husbands and these precious children God has given us. May we all seize each moment...staying focused on the MAIN thing and letting all else go. May we bring that heavy, burdensome, harsh, hard, sharp, and pressing burden to the feet of the Father and walk away in newness and life with a burden that is light and easy to bear. May these days be a delight as we walk with the Lord each step of the way!

Recommended Resources...

Bible Study...

See our tape listings in the back! Especially *The Great I AM: Everything We Will Ever Need* and *Seasons in the Homeschool!*

Mothering...

Ministering to the Heart of Your Child By Cindy Rushton...Book-\$12.00; Audio reading of the book-\$12.00; BOTH Book and Audio Reading...\$20!

Want a teaching tape on this topic? We recommend Titus Two: The Incredible Power of a Mother

(2 tapes in a set-vinyl album) \$10.00.

Womanhood...

A Virtuous Woman...Help Me Lord! How Else Can I DO IT ALL??? Audio Set With Cindy Rushton... Audios, \$12.00; teaching notes for *The Hidden Woman* just \$10 more!

The Hidden Woman: Developing a Passion for the Call of Womanhood... Audio set with Cindy Rushton...\$20.00 tape set; \$10 extra for teaching notes, *The Hidden Woman!*

Hidden Woman: Fulfilling the MANY Roles of Womanhood (Atlanta 2000) with Cindy Rushton... \$12 (audio set); \$10 extra for teaching notes, *The Hidden Woman*

ALL THREE Seminar Sets...

The Godly Womanhood Series.... \$35.00 (tape set); \$10 extra for teaching notes, *The Hidden Woman*

Homemaking...

We recommend Sue Gregg's Cookbooks and Cooking Course (available through our catalog and website)

Homeschooling...

See any of our homeschool books (listed in the back of this reprint book)

Homeschooling...Digging Into ALL of the Options! By Cindy Rushton \$10.00

Want a teaching tape on this topic??

Homeschooling Digging Into ALL of the Options...\$5.00

Fill Your Cup with Purpose and Direction! (2 tapes...MORE IN-DEPTH) \$10.00

Come Fill Your Cup... Seminar by Cindy Rushton on Audio \$20.00; Teaching notes, *Come Fill Your Cup...Encouragement For the Homeschooling Mom*, are available for an additional \$10

Time for Tea With Cindy Rushton... Seminar by Cindy Rushton on Audio \$20.00; Teaching notes, *Come Fill Your Cup...Encouragement For the Homeschooling Mom*, are available for an additional \$10

Time for Tea Series with Cindy Rushton

Single Titles:

Fill Your Cup with Vision \$5

Fill Your Cup with Purpose and Direction (2 tapes)...\$10.00

Fill Your Cup to OVERFLOWING with Ideas (2 tapes)...\$10.00

Fill Your Cup with a BIG DOSE of Encouragement (2 tapes)...\$10.00

Mentoring One-on-One: A Note From Debby

As I was preparing this issue, I sat pouring through my email box through the dear letters that have come my way to ask questions, give ideas, and even some that are just to minister to me. This precious letter from Debby seemed to be a perfect word for this section of the newsletter. I am always inspired as I see REAL ministry...ministry from the home. I know that all of you will enjoy this as Debby pours forth her wisdom that God has given her as she has obediently FIRST enlarged the place of her tent! Enjoy!

Hi Cindy,

It is your turn to sit down with your favorite tea and hopefully enjoy this update.

The Lord has opened the door wider than we ever imagined for our home based family ministry. We had a burden for the 18 widows in our church wanting to visit, quote Scripture, and sing for them. I took our children to a senior living home where one of the widows live and I thought we would be in her room visiting her but her room was too small for all of us. We went to a nice visitor's area to visit her where anyone walking by saw and heard us. We were a bit shy about being in front of everyone. I remembered why we were there and forgot about "us" and focused on our widow friend.

We sang, quoted Scripture, and read her favorite Psalm. We soon had an audience and the workers were awed at the children. Cindy, we are like you and really like to do things for the Lord in secret, but sometimes I believe He needs us to shout for him. We caught on fast that these people are thirsting for love and need us. What a fulfilling time we had!

When we were finished the workers came over to find out who we were. They have never seen a family minister like this. By the time we left, we were on their schedule for the next month and had made many friends.

Later, we could see that we needed them. We love to sing and the children have learned many passages of Scripture. I began to feel selfish that our children could share so much with these thirsty people and we didn't discover this earlier! The Lord has His timing though.

This is easy for our family to do. We do all this at home in family devotions and we just bring our home to them! This has made us sing more and has encouraged us to learn more. We later went to another assisted living home and we are going back there also. The Lord had something special for us at this home.

While we were singing I noticed a little lady in the front that obviously had the joy of the Lord. Later we talked with her and learned her name, Elsie. She is 94 years old and a godly kindred spirit. She encouraged us and knew the Bible so well the principals of the Bible were beautifully blended into everything she talked about! What a treat for me. I have been searching for mentors and have come up short. I decided I would be one and never have one. Isn't He good!??? I can't wait to visit her again.

Our family and a friends family put together a Valentines Day party for the widows that are able to get out. We had nine come. We made canvas hearts for them and filled them with candy. We also made them bookmarkers with a poem on them. We served them and afterwards sang for them. They were so blessed but I really do not know who got the greater blessing because we all were so tickled to be able to do this for them! We are already making plans for an Easter Party! We want our children to see the value of learning from the seasoned gems. They really are a lot of fun. They have been through so much and have learned so much that we can learn from them.

Another ministry the Lord has opened for us is to another family. I have a friend at church that just had her first baby a year ago. Her husband often forbids her to go to church. She struggles daily to obey him and to be a good mommy. He works second shift as my husband does, so she come over once a week for supper and helps us with house chores. We have been used to encourage her to love her husband and have been able to teach her how to train her little girl. She has helped us so much by helping us get more organized. It has helped homeschooling go smoother. We are humbled to be used in this way because we know we have not arrived and are still learning. We pray with her often. We try to have the whole family over to encourage them as a whole. This week I will be teaching her how to make bread.

There was a time that I would whine to God that I desperately need a mentor. One day I heard Elisabeth Elliot tell us that if you don't have a mentor, be one. I stopped feeling sorry for myself and started looking for opportunities to be a mentor. I started sending cards to the sick and hurting in our church and giving poems of encouragement to young mothers and the Lord opened this door to help my friend and in return I am getting mentored! I am so thrilled because my six girls are learning so much by watching all this happen.

One of the widows is the oldest of 11 children and grew up during the depression. She has been ill this whole winter and hasn't been able to go to church. She has been such an encouragement to our family and loves us I felt we should take care of her during her illness. I have sent over soup, bread, and goodies. We have gone over to her house several times to visit her. She is a real prayer warrior and has taught us a lot about prayer. She simply trusts and believes God. These ladies are such a hidden treasure that we are

thrilled to have found!

I have a K9 update that I will send later. How is your family doing? Tell them that we say "Hi." Love, Debby

Wow! Debby, I appreciate you pouring forth! Your wisdom brings us to see from our Father's eyes! Surely the greatest treasures are hidden away for the faithful! Thanks Debby for challenging us anew!! Our bunch also says, "HI!"

Letters We LOVE!

Dear Cindy,

I received your books in the mail about ten days ago and I am thrilled! They are so useful and practical! They are exactly what I needed.

I have read all of Marilyn Howshall's *Wisdom's Way of Learning* books and for the past two years have been trying to implement her Lifestyle of Learning Approach. I had already eliminated most of our workbooks and textbooks, and our children had started producing their own notebooks, but I was in need for more ideas. I have had them do some Copywork from time-to-time but still relied on a few grammar workbooks, just in case.

Well, after reading your books, I am now confident that they really don't need those grammar books. Your ideas for Copywork are excellent and you have provided so many wonderful models that I don't think I will ever be in need for other ideas again! I have already started having my children do some Copywork every day and they enjoy it so much more than anything else we've done. My 8-year-old daughter delights in this kind of learning and my 5-year-old daughter is happy doing whatever her sister does! My 11-year-old son is doing very well with it also.

I also love Charlotte Mason's Approach. I am enjoying your *Charlotte Mason Primer* so much. Your practical ideas, again, are so valuable. Thank you so very much for sending me this book. I am now considering reading the whole Charlotte Mason Original Series.

I also received my first issue of *Time for Tea*, and now I am totally convinced that God really brought you my way. I have always struggled to make a consistent daily time with the Lord, and reading your article on *Daily Manna* was so helpful. I had never thought of it that way. God surely knows my needs and it looks like He has sent you to me to meet some of them with the practical ideas in your wonderful books and with the encouragement to not forget my daily manna! Isn't He amazing?

Thank you so much for your ministry, Cindy. I am sharing about you and your wonderful books with all my homeschooling friends!

PS...I hope that someday you will be able to come to Upstate New York—Syracuse area to do a meeting!

Dear, dear friend,

What a blessing to see that God has brought our paths to cross! He is certainly more than sufficient to meet us right where we are! If your need is practical, God will abundantly supply all of the practical help that you need. He even does so step-by-step! Just exactly where you have a need! If your need is mental, you are short on ideas. All you have to do is come to the throne casting out your insufficiency and He immediately pours forth ideas that really work in any area of need! If your need is emotional, our God is the God Who REALLY knows and cares. He will pour forth encouragement, comfort, peace, inspiration, love, grace, and peace that will meet even your unspoken needs! If you find that your greatest need is spiritual, once again you will find that there is ONLY one

place that you will find help in your very hour of need.

Our prayer is that you will find love, encouragement, and support in the moments that you spend with us mom-to-mom in our *Time for Ted!* We constantly ask the Lord to keep us faithful to His great call for our lives as The Rushtons. I know that we ALL come to each issue of the magazine...to each book...and to each conference or workshop with needs that only God can meet. Our prayer is that *"The Lord God (will) hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary..."* (Isaiah 50:4). We pray that our work will include teaching that meets others wherever they may be, but there is only one way that you will come apart encouraged...if God speaks through our pen and my tongue.

Continue to listen to HIM! He will faithfully instruct you each and every day. Also, continue to lift us before Him for His direction, inspiration, and renewal day-by-day. I look forward to growing WITH you through the years! Love, Cindy

PS...I WILL BE in Pennsylvania in a few months! You are on the way! We would love to stop by! May the Lord bring our paths to cross!

My precious friends Cynthia, Matthew, and Elisabeth,

I cannot express to you in words how much it meant to me to have you here on Monday night. What an inspiration from God you all are to me and my family. And Cynthia, thank you for all the beautiful words you spoke. I am absolutely spellbound when you speak! That gift could ONLY come from God. And Matthew, thank you for your strength and hard work and honor you displayed for your mother. And last but not least, thank you Elisabeth for your beauty and all your sweet input to your mom's presentation. God bless your precious family.

Dear Cindy:

Just three days ago, I was at my whits end with my family/homeschool. I was ready to leave them all and become a new identity in another place. As a matter of fact, I told my husband that I was leaving Friday night after the conference and not coming back. Although my plan was fantasized, some truth lurked at the bottom dangerously. However, I did come home Friday night with a glimmer of hope. Saturday my soul received more hope and encouragement. As I sat in the padded pew, my eyes burned and I could hardly focus on your face. At times, I would shut my eyes and the heart of the Father was ministering to me. I left the workshop with rest and peace. Unlike the few others I have attended in my nine years of homeschooling. Now, I truly understand what "retreat" means. Thank you for being obedient and ministering to the truly wearied mother. Love, author of "the loaded question"

Feedback: Among the seventeen pages of notes taken, the three most immediately applicable principles I left with are:

(1) Retreat daily and receive true encouragement from the Father

- (2) Ask yourself what is most needful for each child that day and focus on that
- (3) My husband and children ARE my home and not to put the HOUSE before discipleship of the children and being a helpmeet to my husband. (My standard of my mother in law's perfect house has changed to that of a "training house".)

I have a highlighted, well worn copy of WWOL that I read some years ago and lots of Barb Shelton's stuff. After glancing over "Treasures for Mom" in your workshop handout, i realized that I have 15 of the books on that list. You are a kindred spirit indeed. I also knew that as you were speaking. I spoke with you on the phone about three years ago briefly about starting a cm support group. You were in the middle of a loss and were grieving on the phone with me as you could hear my infant in my arms as we spoke. I haven't forgotten you and was pleased to finally hear you in person.

Cindy,

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the workshop you led in Raleigh, NC this past weekend. I received a great deal of encouragement for school, but more importantly, for my walk with God. I have been going through a time of discouragement and depression this year, and you were definitely a blessing.

I do have to share with you that I experienced an ectopic (tubal) pregnancy a couple of years ago also. It was all I could do to sit there while you shared what you had been through. While I can't say I was angry at God like you shared, I've definitely asked why a lot and have grieved over the loss of my baby. Thank you so much for opening up and sharing. It's so easy to think I'm the only one who has struggled in this.

I did want to ask a question. You kept mentioning the Time for Tea email loop and the CMason email loop. I'm signed up for the Time for Tea, but don't know how to go about signing up for the CMason loop. Can you tell me how to go about this? I did a search on the e-groups site, but there were so many, and none of them sounding like the right one.

I'm looking forward to listening to the tapes and reading the books I bought from you. I know I'll be even more encouraged. Thank you again.



Welcome To Our Time For Tea Winter 2001 Issue!

The holidays are over once again. Many of our days are spent cuddled up as the snow gently falls outside into a beautiful white blanket covering every inch of our land. (SIMPLY beautiful!) We are all back to work with daily lessons, demands behind the scenes of our day-to-day ministry, and all we can squeeze into each day.

Growing...

As I sit down to put the last touches on this issue of *Time For Tea*, we are praising God today for His awesome provision as He worked out all of the details for our new warehouse and office space for the ministry headquarters TODAY!

Last year, Harold built a shop on our property for our ministry. The very week we moved in, we had already outgrown the space because we enlarged our stock of items we are making available through the mail order division of Rushton Family Ministries. This was only a HINT of what was coming in the year 2000. In fact, the last year has been one of unprecedented growth. Now, as we just took the first boxes full of supplies over to our very first warehouse/office away from home, I have found myself a little teary... and a lot overwhelmed at the goodness of God. My heart patters as I very excitedly, yet just a bit reluctantly walk into the next chapter of our lives. I feel like a little toddler clenching onto his toy VERY tightly while squealing, "MINE!"

Talk about submission being tough...I *THOUGHT* my husband was completely in charge of the ministry all of this time. Now, as he plunges into the next chapter, I am finding myself holding back saying "WOEEEE...I LIKE THINGS AS THEY WERE!" hehe!

More Books Coming!!!!

There are many changes on the horizon this year. As we reminisced over the last year, Harold was very concerned with one area of our ministry. In fact, it is the only area we regret...that there was soooo much STUFF to do, that I had less and less time to write. The manuscripts have piled up, many in need of a good edit and set-up...others just a bit of time and energy. We felt that God wanted our family on the road even more this year...but, there was a very real need for things to go on while we are on the road.

New Voices...

Soooo, announcing our business' new home! It will now be leaving our property and moving just inside Muscle Shoals. Our phone number/address/email will remain the same... but, you will soon be hearing new voices on the phone and see sweet notes from our darling helpers in your orders. They will be relieving me of the extras that have challenged me as I have tried to balance the "stuff" with my calling as a wife, mother, and spiritual mother. When you hear their sweet voices or receive their emails, let them

know how absolutely precious they are!

Reps Are On The Go!

Speaking of appreciation, we now have reps popping up all over the country to represent our books at your local bookfairs and conventions. If you need one of them at your event, please contact our offices. Also, if you don't see our booth, let your convention know that you WANT US!

I have enjoyed hearing from some of the committees as they have approached us for this year and for 2002 at the request of YOU! They have NO idea what a HOOT we are all going to have when we get together at their convention!

It won't be long until we get to SEE you! Take a look at our schedule, which is included earlier in this issue, or see our website to keep updated as we go along the way. We are open for bookings that are on the way there or one the way back home as we travel. In just a few days, we leave for our New England Fling! We love stopping along the way because this helps us to see some of the smaller groups that need encouragement and how-to's.

Our Catalog!

Our first catalog is now released. We are already working on the 2001 catalog. We are enclosing a catalog in the packet for regular mail subscribers...if you are a subscriber by email, just email me at Time4tea@hiwaay.net OR request your catalog NOW at our website www.cindyrushton.com. It is FREE upon request!

Harold's New Treat!

Yep! Are you already noticing our NEW clip art in this issue? It is courtesy of my darling, addicted husband (see left). He has been driving our family CRAZY taking pictures of us EVERYWHERE we go! He believes that this is "professional." I think he is just wanting to PLAY! ha!

We are pictured all throughout the pages of this issue, along with some of you who have already been captured with us! We hope you enjoy peeking a little more into our life at home and on the road!

Well, on to this time for tea with you, my dear friend...

Ready???

As I begin this issue, I pray that this issue really ministers to the depths of your heart. We really seek to hear God as we plan each and every issue. In fact, there is never an issue that goes to print exactly as we plan! This issue is NO different. In fact, over half of this issue (OK! I admit it...I wrote too much again!) is waiting for the next issue (AND another book that will be released in a few weeks!)

I pray that what remains in this issue will mean as much to you as it does me at this season of my life. So, as you turn the page...grab yourself a cup of tea (a BIG one!)

snuggle in for a while... it is once again our ***TIME FOR TEA!***

Delegate...The Key To Endurance, Anointing, and Focus!

By Cindy Rushton

Ever noticed Exodus 18. Take a moment to read through the passage...

Are you tired? Weary? Feeling overwhelmed at the weight of your calling? Are the burdens pressing in and you have no idea where to begin throwing off the load? Did you read the title of this article and KNOW this was for YOU (or HOPE it was NOT for you??)?

You are not alone my dear friend. I find this passage to be a challenge for all of us. The weight of carrying a home is tremendous. The weight of carrying a homeschool is tremendous. The weight of a ministry is tremendous. Yet, there is a way we can faithfully step up to the call and endure...DELEGATE!

This passage became MINE a few months ago as I was treated to a morning quiet time on our boat. We sneak away as often as possible to "camp-out" on our boat. (Actually I call it camping, Harold says that I have NO clue about what REAL camping is!) On those little breaks away from daily life, I usually wake up before the rest of the family and sneak on deck for quiet times in the most AWESOME atmosphere I have found yet!

On this particular morning, everything was quiet... peaceful... nurturing. The waves rocked our boat gently back and forth. The birds chirped their morning song of praise. And, just as faithful as the gorgeous sunrise on the Tennessee River, the Lord pulled me aside to give me a glimpse of where He was about to take me in my life.

Growth is never easy. Expansion is not very comfortable. The inevitability of having to delegate even more is just downright PAINFUL, especially to those of us who LOVE to do, do, do!! Yet, God showed me in a fresh way that morning the key to endurance, anointing and focus!

Think about it...we find that one of God's greatest leaders had only one option if HE was going to *endure* AND if the people were going to go toward God's promise in *peace*. His one and only option was to delegate!

I am so glad that I am not the only one who struggles with delegating. Actually, I LOVE the Bible because there are so many REAL people, with REAL struggles! I love