

Getting Back To God's Design for the Godly Home

Poetry Notebooks!

Pirate Story

Three of us afloat in the
Meadow By the Swing.

Three of us aboard

in the bas

lea. Winds are i

They are Blow

Spring. And v

Meadow like

there are at sea

Where Shall

to-day that w

Wary of the we

and steering by

Shall it be to Afr

a steering of the b

To providence or b

or of to Malabar?

Hij! but here's a Squ

a-rowing on the s

on the meadow a-charging

a roar! Quick and

ape them. they're as mad

Scattered crumbs

When winter winds are blowing

And clouds are full of snow,

There comes a flock of little birds

A-flying to and fro,

About the naked garden,

Around the empty field,

In any roadside shrub or tree

That may a berry yield.

You'll see them flitting, flitting,

And hear their merry song.

The scattered crumbs of summer's

feast

Feed winter birdies long.

The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers

The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers

The breaking waves dashed high

On a stern and rock-bound Coast,

And the woods against a stormy sky

Their giant branches tossed.

And the heavy night hung dark

The hill and water o'er

When a band of exiles moored their bark

On the wild New England shore.

by Felicia Dorothea Hemans

Keep steadily in the view of the

great principles for which

you contend... The safety of your

homes and the lives of all you

hold dear depend upon your

courage and exertions. Let

each man resolve to be victorious,

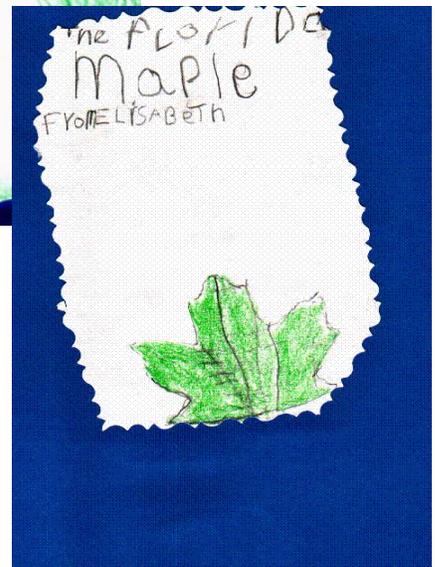
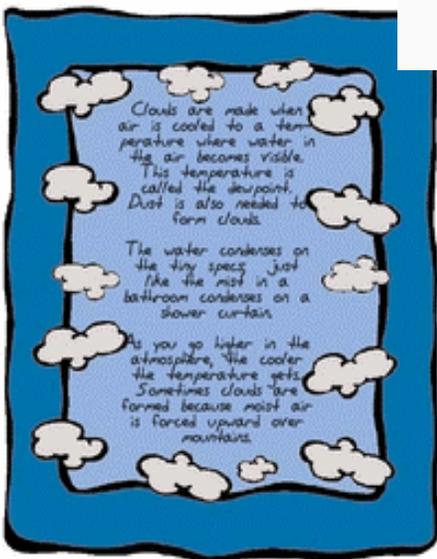
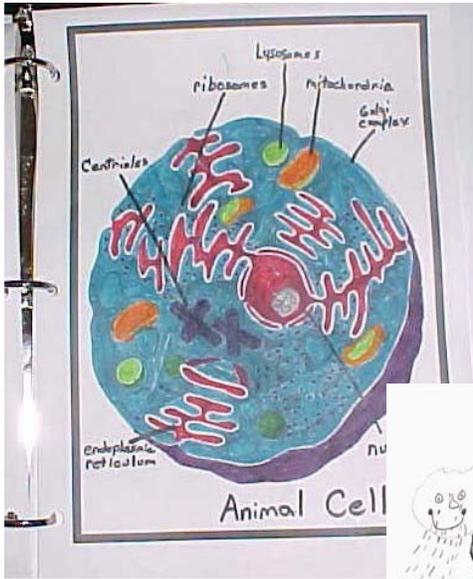
and that the right of self-govern-

ment, liberty and peace shall

find him a defender.

— Robert E. Lee's speech to
his soldiers,
September 9, 1861

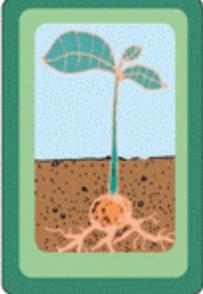
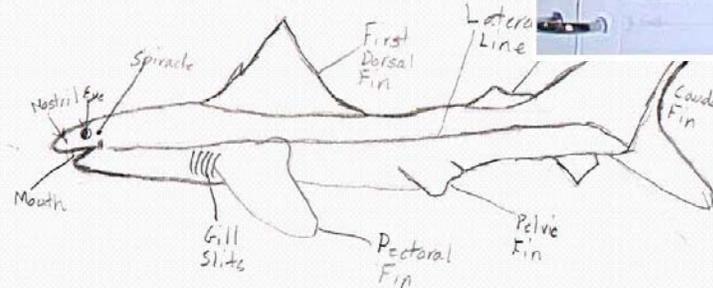
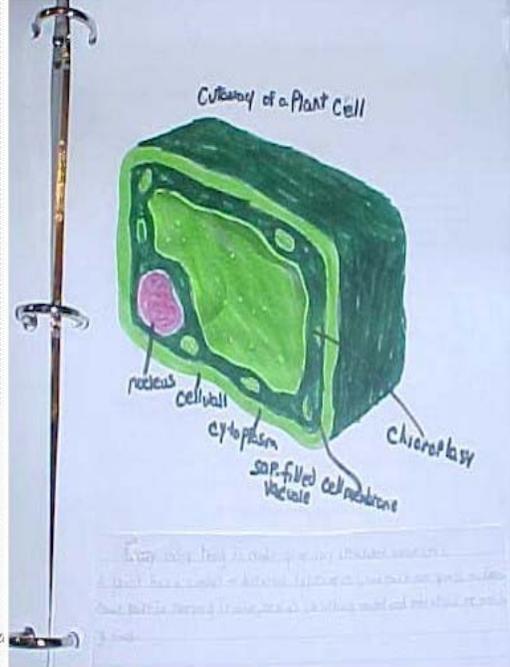
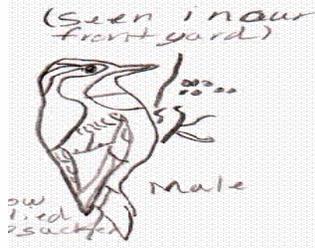
Science Notebooks!



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Life Cycle of a Plant

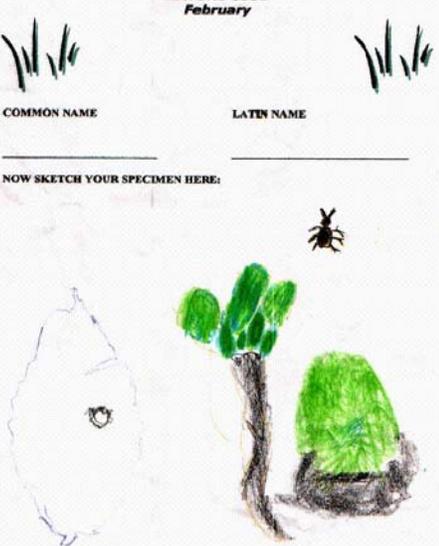
First the plant germinates, which means starts to grow. Then, when it has grown, pollination takes place. This is a long process. First a bee is attracted to a flower because of its bright petals and takes pollen onto its body from the stamen. The bee then flies off to another plant and rubs the pollen off its body onto the stigma. A pollen tube is formed and the pollen travels through this to the ovary. Ovules are then produced which are seeds. After pollination, the seeds are dispersed, which means they are spread out everywhere by either wind, animals or rivers (water). Then the seed begins to grow, and the whole cycle starts again.

NATURE CLUB
February

COMMON NAME _____
LATIN NAME _____

NOW SKETCH YOUR SPECIMEN HERE:



ELISABETH



A Notebooking Shopping List...

By Cindy Rushton

Excerpted From *Homeschooling Today Magazine*



- ♥ **ONE Notebook Per Child...** Our favorite notebooks are the 3-ring vinyl notebooks that have the clear pockets on the outside so the children can design their own covers. We usually choose the white notebooks (Either 1 or 1 ½ inches thick, although some of the more beloved studies have required larger notebooks.) and fill it full of plastic sheet protectors. Then, all our children have to do is add their work each day.
- ♥ **Plastic Sheet Protectors...** Plastic Sheet Protectors are absolute MUSTS! They work great at protecting your child's work from spills, rips, and smudges. They work great if you are using 3-ring binders. Especially for preserving pressed specimens. We use the 8 ½ by 11-inch sheet protectors. We buy them by the box at Sam's (the best price at the writing of this book). I choose the NON-GLARE type, because they are more durable. They do not scratch easily and they are not as *brittle as the shiny ones*.
- ♥ **Paper!!!** You can find bright colored, often acid-free cardstock paper at your local office supply store for VERY reasonable. We choose a wide variety of paper depending on what we need...
 - **110 pound white...**for art (great for watercolors and markers and glue projects) and timeline notebooks.
 - **110 pound colored...**for notebook covers... for sturdy pages... for mounting specimens... for mounting pictures.
 - **Any pound...**any color! Great for adding a touch of color to any page!
 - **Plain lined paper...**use paper for their level of handwriting.
 - **Printer paper...**for printing off of the computer and Internet.
- ♥ **Staplers...** We keep the regular staplers AND the heavy-duty booklet staplers. These are especially great for making booklets!
- ♥ **Camera...** Yes, you can use those disposable cameras if that is your only option. However, this year I found something that is simply priceless... digital cameras! Not only do you save money on film processing, but you can

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also paste-and-clip all of your pictures into documents that your children are writing. Printing is as easy as the click of a button. NOW...if you have a nice camera, you can still have your film processed in most locations so that you can request a disc with the pictures on it. Those pictures can be used as clip-and-paste into your documents as well. This unleashes those children who are hands-on into a whole new world of writing. If they are your children who are constantly building, cooking, creating, or tinkering; they can document what they are learning through Scrapbooking the process. Yes, Scrapbooking in a BINDER!! Get those cameras out! Turn those little ones loose!

- ♥ **Other "Essentials"...** You are sure to already have lots of these. Just round them up and keep them accessible for your children. What "essentials" am I talking about? Different kinds of scissors, hole punchers, highlighters, pens, pencils, markers, watercolor pencils, sketch pencils, mounting tapes, mounting corners, glue stick, stickers, rubber stamps, paper cutters, colors, paints, and of course, Scrapbooking books and magazines!



Excerpted From *Notebooking! Yes! You CAN Be a Binder Queen Workshop Manual*
Need more help with Notebooking? We HIGHLY recommend our book, *Notebooking! Yes! You CAN Be a Binder Queen* . Plus, the book could not hold it all, so we also recommend our *Notebooking! Yes! You CAN Be a Binder Queen Manual*. Oh! AND we have companion tapes, tape sets, BOOKS, and even reproducible packs! See our listing!

Step-By-Step Help For An EASY History Study...

By Cindy Rushton



Ready now? No idea on how to bring this together for a lesson plan? Have absolutely no idea of how to develop a lesson step-by-step? I won't leave you struggling! Here are EASY steps for developing a fun and easy study on any time period...

- ♥ **Decide on a period to study...**Decide where you want to begin. No idea? Look at your children's interests...do you see any interests that would be a good starting point? Are they into sports? Why not begin with a biography on their favorite player? Do they love ballet? Why not begin with the story behind *The Nutcracker*? Whatever their interest, dig in and enjoy!
- ♥ **No idea of how to develop?** Grab a great resource like The *Wallchart of World History*, a textbook or curriculum company's scope and sequence (often found in catalogs or furnished upon request), or even an encyclopedia. Collect and use resource lists such as *The Never-ending Rushton Reading List*, *Lessons from History*, *Lessons from History: The Art Part*, *What in the World's Going On Here?*, *Greenleaf Guides To...*, *TruthQuest History Guides*, etc. Make a list of information about the people that made history during that time... the literary works that preceded or were written around that period of time... the places that history took place...any battles, inventions, exploration, discoveries or government changes, etc. Just dig in!
- ♥ **Use your list to research for resources about the period.** Hunt for read alouds, picture books, maps, art, biographies, speeches, hymns or music from the period, cookbooks, journals, games, videos, or any other resource that will help you and your children to dig into that period of time.
- ♥ **Decide on activities and projects to coordinate with the study.** Activities and projects are priceless! They help to bring the children into the History periods. Decide which field trips, movies, crafts, videos, interviews with people, audios, or other activities that you will use to bring the study to life.

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- ♥ **Access FREE (or almost FREE) stuff!** This is where I think it gets simply TOO fun! (Am I just CHEAP???) I love finding resources that are out there waiting for us to devour! History resources are abundant. Hunt for them right where you are! Some great hide-a-ways are: local museums (they often have teacher/student packets that are available FREE upon request), the Internet (There is an abundance of free information, lessons plans on ANY topic, art prints, literary pieces, pictures, and music for any period.), library (Anything from books to videos to audio books, etc! Make friends with your librarians, they are awesome resources!), cemeteries (neat quotes and rubbings...really!), coin, rock, indian artifact, and gun shows, living history days, history re-enactments, historical societies, antique stores, field trips, interviews, documentaries, etc.
- ♥ **Make a list of all resources needed, where to find them, and when you will need them during the study.**
- ♥ **Dig into your study!** Don't do this by yourself! Let your whole family dig in! Now, here is where you need to know that there ARE going to be rabbit trails. Expect AND, prayerfully, HOPE for them! Wondering how you will study as a family? Let the whole family research the period. Your younger children will not find the same morsels that your older children dig up, but the fruit comes as your family functions as a family with each sharing information based upon their own interests and abilities. The deeper your family shares, the deeper the studies will be. But, there is more than that! The deeper the memories and tighter the family ties. So, let the whole family dig into the study. Read! Read as a family...read individually. Assign topics for each child to research and share with the rest of the family. This deepens the studies while teaching your children how to research and share their findings with others. Discuss! Share over meals. Narrate (re-tell what is being learned). There is nothing quite like narration to prepare your children for composition, speaking, speeches, and even family life!
- ♥ **Document the study all along the way in History Notebooks and Timelines!** This not only serves to keep records. Notebooks and timelines are treasures for life! Anything and everything can be (and should be!!) kept along the way. Their History Notebooks can "keep" their History Copywork and Dictation exercises (need ideas see the resource list from this issue), their drawings and pictures, photos, mementos, maps, and any research. Their Timeline Notebooks can trace the lives, inventions, explorations, etc. that your children study in their lessons. Not only does this document those hard to record lessons, but it creates an heirloom that will last the rest of their lives.

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- ♥ **Pull in real life!** All of it! Real places make learning hands-on. Real people are perfect teachers as our children apprentice and get to know what their lives are really like. Real disciplines not taken out of real life not only teach the subjects, but also instill a lifestyle of real learning as the children learn to develop Unit Studies, write books, write plays, make notebooks, and research topics of interest. Make your entire life a classroom. You will find that real life is one of the most powerful learning tools used to teach History the easy way.
- ♥ **Work on an end of study project or presentation night.** Some of our most precious memories through the years come from those moments around our homemade teepee eating real live Indian foods, when company dropped in for dinner! EEK! Oh, and the castle that stayed in the children's room until it finally fell to pieces (Castles made from refrigerator boxes just do NOT hold up as long as the "old" days!) Oh, and forgive me for another OH! But, I simply cannot talk about History without remembering the Alamo! Really! Ending a huge Unit Study on Frontiersmen, we were blessed with a trip to San Antonio courtesy of my husband's job. When Matthew heard the plans, his only request was and I quote, "Oh, Mama, my heart's desire is to stand at the Alamo in my coon-skin hat and Davy Crockett clothes and musket for a picture..." Yes, I was mush. Something about "my heart's desire..." J Words do not express fully what it was like to see the gleam in Matthew's eyes every time that someone would pass by him and whisper (loudly, of course!), "Hey, I thought Davy was dead, but I am SURE that it's him!" Oh, and there was this year, after 7 years of deep and passionate study of the Civil War, when Matthew actually toured Gettysburg. Priceless! Although studies do not have to be FINISHED (as evidenced by the Civil War Study), planning a special project or presentation night can give a special sense of accomplishment. Anything will do: a family celebration, a special History Day, a field trip, a camping trip, a movie night, a special meal/feast, etc. Let your imagination go!

Make Sweet Memories!

Inspired? Ready to get going? Oh, I pray that you are not just ready, but you KNOW that you can begin today, right where you are! Take what is in your hand at this time. Study as a family! Take advantage of the places you travel, those hobbies that you love doing together (metal detecting, antiquing, re-enacting history...), even that special family time watching TV and videos. Make and play games to reinforce the information being found along the way. Plan meals that can bring the past alive as you cook your way through history. Equip those little ones for their many adventures by studying the clothing, designing, and sewing period clothing. Gather and create accessories

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(we told the grandparents who all donated to a dress-up box filled with fun goodies that are perfect for ANY period we study). Turn them loose to play! You can be sure that your little ones will hold on to every word of your read alouds so they will "know what to play" that day!

Don't miss one memory! There is so much history in your own backyard. Make it yours! Interested in some far away place? See what you DO have! Get as hands-on as possible. Re-create as much as you can right where you are. Go there through books. Your whole family can travel together back in time and far, far away just through those moments you share in the middle of a great book!

Taking a vacation? Why not plan to see places that you have studied? OR why not plan a study of a place you will be visiting. Let your little history buffs plot the journey so you can see the chief spots of interest. When you get there, eat the food, feel the sand, smell the morning air, hear the talk, see the people, see the places! Collect post-cards. Take pictures. Find mementos for those notebooks. Seize each moment. Treasure each memory being made.

A Timeline Notebook—Easy As A,B,C!

By Cindy Rushton



OK! Ready to dig in? Have NO idea where to begin? That is what THIS is for! Let me take you by the hand and show you how step-by-step...

- ♥ **Choose Your Format!** Well, I assume that if you are reading at this point that you are interested in a Timeline Notebook. Of course, there are MANY variations for timelines—notebooks, lapbooks, charts, wall timelines, accordian timelines, book timelines, map timelines, on and on! For real! I love the notebook timeline for several reasons—
 - **Compact!**
 - **Portable!**
 - **Individual—or family!**
 - **See patterns/relationships like a story!**
 - **Great for all ages!**
 - **Great for all abilities!**
 - **Great for all grade levels!**
 - **See people who lived at the same time!**
- ♥ **Gather Supplies!** You probably have EXACTLY what you need right in your own home already. Your supplies can be as simple as a 3-ring binder per child, plastic sheet protectors, and a pencil per child. The great thing about making a Timeline Notebook is that you can make this as simply or as crafty as you would like! Over the years, Notebooking has worked so wonderfully in our home that we are constantly on the lookout for different and fun supplies. Since I am a Scrapbooking nut, we love trying out all of the new Scrapbooking supplies during our daily school time. By doing so, our daily lessons are as fun as a Scrapbooking party—EVERYDAY! Of course, you do

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not have to go this wild, but I am sure you will want to! If you have no idea where to begin, see our shopping list for quick ideas on supplies that work great!

- ♥ **Make Your Supplies Accessible...**Set aside a place for your materials and a place for your children to work. There is something wonderful about having a place for everything and everything RELIABLY in its place. The work in the beginning is well worth the time during the school year. When we begin a new study, I go through my books copying all pages that would make great coloring pages, maps, and timeline figures to go along with our copywork and narrations. I reduce many pictures or copy all thumbnails that would be great for our History Timelines. We have a shelf that contains books that I find along the way with great copywork that I would like for my children to add to their notebooks on those "no ideas are flowing" days. Just having everything there, ready to go, is such a blessing on those busy mornings. Plus, I have learned over the years that this is the best way to really utilize the resources that I have on my shelves. Just file away any pages or pictures in either manila envelopes or file folders. If the children know where they are, they are more than likely to use them on their own. Also, you will want to use anything else that you have in your home. I keep our paints, papers (plain and colored cardstock and 20lb paper; writing paper; etc.), glues, templates, cutting utensils, rulers, markers, pens, pencils, etc. on a shelf and in plastic bins by our dining table (where we do our daily lessons). They are in their spot and that spot is close by. If we want to encourage our young writers, we must give them free access to the best materials. The benefits are unbelievable!
- ♥ **Find Your Favorite Page Style.** There are SO many options available today for your Timeline Notebooks. We have a FREE blank timeline page on my website (<http://www.CindyRushton.com/articles.html>) that you can print off and set up for your notebook. Of course, there are lots of other cute pages that are online too—just see the website pages that follow. Choose any of those that you like OR make up your own! Just choose something that you WILL use. J It is sooo worth the investment of time.
- ♥ **Choose the Period to be Covered in Your Timeline.** Will you dig in for a complete History Timeline Notebook? Will you try a State History Timeline Notebook? Will you try a smaller period of time—Life of--- Timeline? Choose a period that will be covered.
- ♥ **Order Your Pages.** Once you have decided on the period you will cover with your Timeline Notebook, decide on how to order your pages. Covering the

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life of Helen Keller? How would you order your pages? By each year? Five years? What about a Lewis and Clark Expedition Timeline Notebook? Prefer to set up your pages by the month? What about an Ancient History Timeline? (we have suggestions on that included in this book!) Print out your dates on your pages and order your pages for the notebook. If you are like me, you will want to add them into plastic sheet protectors in your notebook.

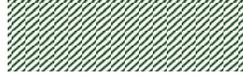
- ♥ **Use It!** Now, you are ready to use your notebook! Keep it handy so it will be used during your studies. Add info as you go along! Miss a while? That is OK...just set aside a special night to go back and add in all of the goodies that were covered since the last entry. ENJOY!



Need more help?

Check out our NEW book, *"Let's Make a History Timeline Notebook"* or our *Make Your Own History Timeline On CD*.

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Let's Try Lapbooking...

By Cindy Rushton

*Excerpted from Cindy's NEW Book, **Homemade Books! Yes! YOU Can Be a Writer Too!***



Want to try Lapbooking? Does it seem like the perfect place to keep all of those precious booklets that your children have been creating? That is what this chapter is all about!

Quick and Easy Steps to Getting Started Lapbooking...

- ♥ **Learn how to make booklets.** As you will notice in each of the clips with Lapbook examples, each big folder consists of many small booklets and fold-ables. You are probably creating these already, but if you need help, check out some of the links in our website section of this book. There are great instructions for creating fun booklets. We also share a few ideas in the previous chapter on booklets. Let the sky be your limit! You can produce any style or shape for your booklets. They will all be adorable in your Lapbook.
- ♥ **Teach your children how to make booklets for themselves.** Show them the basics. Then, you can turn them loose.
- ♥ **Teach children to record neat information into the booklets.**
- ♥ **Keep booklets in a plastic baggie until you are finish with the study and ready to build your Lapbook.** We keep our booklets in plastic baggies in our notebooks during our studies. Once we begin wrapping up our study, we can begin to get an idea of how the booklets can be set up in our Lapbook to blend together and make a neat Lapbook. One thing to remember, if you have a certain theme, you may want to plan ahead by using specialty papers and coordinating supplies.
- ♥ **Take a file folder and fold into a "Shutterfold."**
- ♥ **Take out booklets from the study.** Get an idea of how you want to display the booklets in the Lapbook.

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- ♥ **Add any "extensions" needed to hold and display all booklets.** An extension can be made with another file folder or with cardstock paper or even poster-board. Use tape to attach the extension to your folder. Extensions also provide even more stability to the book. One neat thing about this project is that you can keep on adding extensions and booklets for years.
- ♥ **Glue booklets, pictures, captions into your Lapbook.**
- ♥ **Add stickers and any other accents.**
- ♥ **Decorate and title your cover.** Titles can be designed and printed on your computer. Don't forget to add the student's name and age. Remember that although you *CAN* create one Lapbook for your entire family, it is really more special for each child to make his/her own book. Each Lapbook will show individual abilities and information retained from the study.
- ♥ **You are done!**



Let's Make Easy Booklets...

By Cindy Rushton

*Excerpted from Cindy's NEW Book, **Homemade Books! Yes! YOU Can Be a Writer Too!***



Although many of Matthew and Elisabeth's books are full size comb-bound books, MOST of their books through the years have been simple booklets that they have created along the way. There was something about the simplicity of making a booklet that seemed to be "do-able." They would get a brainstorm about something that they were excited to learn and dig out supplies to make a mini-book about that topic. One might be about the "Birds in our Backyard" while another was about the "Books of the Bible." We have so many. They are precious! You can too! Well, let's see how easy it is to make booklets. Ready? Let's go step-by-step...

Step-by-Step Making Easy Booklets...

- ♥ **Decide on topic of booklet.**
- ♥ **Gather resources from your study.** Library books, internet information, copywork, narrations, timeline, pictures of historical figures, vocabulary, sketches, etc.
- ♥ **Gather supplies.** See our supply list. You probably have all you need in your home already. For booklets, all you will need is paper (any kind—choose paper that coordinates with your study), markers/pencils, glue, and stapler (We use a long-arm stapler for all of our booklets—these are available at office supply stores.). We keep all of our book-making supplies together in our "Writer's Nook" so our children always know where they are and that they are free to use them at any time. This helps more than anything with little booklets that they decide to make on the spur of the moment.



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Gather supplies and watch your young writers get addicted too!

- ♥ **Let your child find pictures, stickers, and neat information to add to the pages of the booklet.** Photocopy or print out any neat pages that you may want to cut and paste into the booklet.
- ♥ **Let your children add special touches to the booklet.** The sky is the limit! Your child can add any special touches that they prefer to make their booklets special. They may want to add neat borders, sketches, or stickers. They may want to use their rubber stamps to adorn the pages. They may enjoy cutting the whole booklet in a special shape. Just let them enjoy!
- ♥ **Remember!** Don't rush! Don't push! Don't take over! Enjoy the process!



Gearing Up for Another Big Year!

OR! What I Am Going to Do On Summer Vacation...

By Cindy Rushton



Summer! At last!

Yes! It is once again Summer Time. I don't know about you, but it seems that this school year has set a record in how fast it has gone by. For me, this year reminds me of my husband's pilot training, which I am devouring. In the plane, we are able to soar higher than I ever dreamed AND at record speeds. I love that we can get where we are going fast, and relatively at a straight course from point-to-point. I want that for Homeschooling. Praise God, that with HIS yoke and HIS way, we do tend to soar higher and get where we are going with fewer distractions. As a result, the blessings are so very abundant. In turn, life is passing by as fast as our read alouds!

Oh, that is not the only thing that reminds me of Harold's flight training... In his training, much of it now involves practicing "touch-n-go-landings," where he comes in for a landing, only to gear back up again for another round. I am currently in the midst of a "touch-n-go" with Homeschooling. Once again, I am gearing down, only to gear back up for yet another big year. What about you? Well if so, this article is just for you!

Remember your "school days?" What about your Summer Vacations? Oh, I am not talking about those horrid essays we all had to write at the beginning of every school year. I am talking about the awesome days of Summer Vacation. The good, old retreat from the daily grind? Remember how you NEEDED the rest from the *daily grind* so you could pull back, kick back, and really have a break, be renewed, refreshed, refueled, and ready for another school year?

We *still* need that break today as we Homeschool. Actually, we need it more today than ever before. We simply cannot expect to go on day-in-day-out for years at a time without gearing down for a good, old Summer Vacation. We need it now just like we did as children.

So...whether you are "on approach" for a "touch-n-go" or you are coming in for a brief "landing" so you can get some rest, this article is just for you! Of course just in case you cannot tell, I could not decide which analogy to pick for the article, so whether

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you are "gearing up" OR taking a nice, long "summer vacation," my prayer is that after you read this article, you will have the summer of your life! I pray that you will be able to begin the new school year ready for the awesome year ahead! So, without further "ado" may I ask, "What are YOU going to do for Summer Vacation???" I have a few ideas that may make this summer very, very special!

What About Taking This Time to Retreat...

Yes! Retreat! I remember the day when I first found out that soldiers in the midst of battle retreat. Yes. Good soldiers, smack-dab in the middle of battle, raging battle, retreat. I know that some of you may be thinking exactly what I was thinking when I first heard that. Do WHAT? Yes, beloved, good soldiers do retreat in the MIDST of battle. They retreat for several reasons, but there are a few that tend to get my attention as I think of Homeschooling my children.

Rest!

First, they retreat in order to *rest*. I know, I know...you are thinking of all that YOU have to do today. How can a busy mother retreat just to rest? Well, there is power in rest. We need to see that power. We need to experience that power. In real life battles, commanders KNOW the power in bringing their soldiers apart to rest. As a result, they assure that their soldiers retreat in order to get rest. In turn, they are strengthened and empowered for the battle that they must win.

We are no different. In fact, I would say that the battle we face is much more important than any other battle on earth. We are battling for the family. Our battle will make a difference for all of eternity. We battle for the hearts of those we love so dearly. Not so much for their hearts to merely turn toward US, but for their hearts to be tender to our Lord, Whom they come to know better through our encouragement and ministry to them.

We are going to get tired and weary along the way in that battle. We are hit from outside and inside. When the hits are new and fresh, it is easy to pick up the armor to block those shots. However, as the battle continues long and hard and our impact begins to be noticed by the enemy, the hits get harder to block and to withstand because the enemy knows that the only way to defeat us is to get us to quit. The best thing for us at that time is not continuing where we can be annihilated, but to retreat, to rest. Oh, I am not talking about sleeping. Quite to the contrary, I am talking about getting GOD'S REST! Rest for our weary soul. Rest that enables us to go back into battle as a formidable foe! More on this in a bit! For now, let's look at another reason soldiers retreat in the midst of battle...to strategize!

Getting Back To God's Design for the Godly Home

Strategize!

I am sure that you could have easily guessed this one. It makes perfect sense for the soldier in battle to step back, take a look at any new advances of the enemy, take a look at successful advances made on his own behalf (just in case they hit the enemy hard enough to become a continued tactic in the battle against that enemy), take a look at where they have come from and where they are going, and plan the next attack. Have you ever thought of the total necessity of pulling back to retreat so you may evaluate *your* strategy in Homeschooling?

If there is one reason that we should all retreat, this is the most important. Without retreating, we will be less prepared than if we are on the "front-lines" all of the time. Why? We need to take time to refresh our minds on God's plan for our families. We need to pull back to let Him equip us for the battle by showing us options out there for the "attack" and which one is just perfect for us. Yes, He has a plan JUST FOR US...one just perfect for me, one just perfect for you. A plan that is promised to work, to be easy, and most of all, to take us to the end of our battle in victory!

Take this time to pull back and find God's strategy for you. Find His plan. He wants to fully prepare you for battle. Let Him show you His options, His plan of attack. Learn of Him (Matthew 11: 28-30). His ways are as old as time. They work. And, best news yet! They are EASY! Dig into God's Word for HIS how-to's that are JUST FOR YOU! He is a wonderful "taskmaster" as He is gentle, kind, and refreshing. He cares about all of the details, even the preciousness of our children that is so often forgotten by so many vying for our attention. He wants for us to have the very best education for our children, yet make the most of every moment with them. Pull back in the middle of your hot battle and try His way. You will find the retreat you need in order to give you an advantage in your battle that will guarantee victory for you!

Re-Supply for the Battle...

Re-supply for the battle. This one seems so obvious. Battles empty out our reserves very, very quickly. We obviously cannot battle without supplies. A soldier pulls back into a retreat at any time that supplies get low or when they are in need of new weapons for the battle.

We are no different as we carry on in our battle. We cannot go on day-in- and-day-out without a full (and overflowing) storehouse of joy, encouragement, and inspiration. I know that I even find myself in the middle of a busy morning using up all that I have on-hand (by breakfast at times!). My only option at that time is my mid-morning re-supply. Oh, get a picture of this warrior at that moment...prostrate on the floor in the bathroom (I know it is the scummiest place in my house, yet it has a LOCK on the

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door!)...crying out in repentance and complete neediness...not getting back up until the Lord has cleansed, renewed and refilled me. How much more do we need a special "retreat" at the end of the year to re-supply for the battle?

It is at this time of year that we need time sitting at the feet of the Lord to re-supply for the battle. We need to re-fuel on joy, HIS joy. We need to re-fuel on encouragement. Do you find any better encouragement than HIS encouragement? We need re-supply on His Word, allowing Him to speak to our hearts, souls, and minds through His own special Word, just for us!

As we are strengthened to go back on the battlefield, we need to also update our "equipment" so we are prepared for advancement or any hits that the enemy may wage against us to push us back. As Homeschooling soldiers, we need to "update" for yet another big year. We need to re-supply. Look at the supplies that you have, look at the supplies that you need. Take a look at your schedule, your plans. Find what you need to get where you are going. Get rid of all that hinders (1 Timothy 2). Gear up for yet another big year.

Oh! Take This Time To Rest!

Yep, you read right...rest! It is OK! Take the time that is necessary to pull back, kick back, and hear God! Turn to Matthew 11: 28-30...

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

Matthew 11: 28-30 (Amplified Bible)

Want some of that rest? Kick back for a bit! Take Christ's yoke! The word *yoke* means *obligation or commitment*. Jesus Christ has an obligation or commitment to you in all of the areas of your life, especially Homeschooling! Isn't that such wonderful news? That means He has a vested interest in every single area of your life! He calls Himself the "Author" and "Finisher" (Completer) of the good work in your life. However, He does not commit or obligate Himself to complete or finish what He does not begin, commit, or obligate Himself to in the first place. We must join with Him for His yoke if we want guaranteed success!

Want to know how to tell what His yoke is? Do a "yoke" check! We need to do a "yoke" check to make sure that the commitment we have before us is truly HIS com-

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mitment...HIS obligation. This passage in Matthew 11 has an easy way to check our yoke: Does it make us...**labor, heavy-laden, overburdened**. Or, does it bring...**rest, ease, relief, and refresh your souls**. Do you find it to be...**gentle, meek, humble, lowly, restful, relieving, easy, refreshing, recreational (FUN!), blessed quiet for our souls?** Is our yoke...**wholesome, useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant, light and easy to be borne?**

If we want to really have a truly successful AND happy Homeschool, then we must take the yoke of Jesus Christ. We must become students of HIM, learning of Him. He is the perfect Teacher. He lived His whole life doing the very thing that we are called to do...discipling. We can take this time to kick back a little bit and learn from the Master. We can take this time to learn of His methods, His ways, His approach and we will find rest for our weary souls. We can change our pace, so we can check out our "yoke." We can take this time to swap out all that is not Christ's yoke while grasping on to all that He wants for us!

Scared? Well, summer is the best time to try a few ideas that you are not "sure" about. Maybe you are not too sure about trying something new like Nature Studies, Literature Based Learning, Notebooking, Unit Studies, Creating Books, or Read Alouds. This is the time to give them a try. Your schedule is different anyway. You may find that the ideas work so well that you want to use these approaches permanently.

Summer also give you the time to take the time to do those "extras" that never seem to get done. You probably have a huge list just like I do. Summer is the time of year to do those extras since the schedule is scaled back. Of course, you may be like me. You may choose to do those extras now AND keep them in the schedule for the new school year too! Just think through those extras. Which ones do you want to do over Summer Vacation? Fine Arts? Nature Study? That Unit Study you are dying to dig into, but never get around to? Those field trips in your own back yard (and along the way to and from your summer trips)? What about having that friend over for tea? Why not take this time to try your hand at those little business ideas that the children never have time to bring to life (bake bread, mow lawns, baby-sit...)? Perhaps, you would like to actually take time to swim, sail, travel, or read. Why not now? What about a book project? Take those studies from the past year and make a finished project that will teach more about Language Arts than your children learned all year AND have fun teaching them! Whatever YOUR preference, take this time to rest. On this summer vacation, take the time to kick back a bit...have a little fun...and learn of Jesus Christ. As you gear back up, you will be ready to soar!

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Take Time Today to Renew!

We have now retreated and rested, but that is not all that is necessary in order for us to be ready to soar! We also need to renew our hearts, souls, and minds for yet another big year.

There is constantly a battle waging for our hearts, souls, and minds. I believe that one of the strategies of the enemy is to "lull" us to sleep. He wants for us to trust the "auto-pilot" to keep us going. If our "auto-pilot" is the Lord, we can surely trust that He will keep us going. But, you need to know that His approach to parenting is not "chilling" out during the "flight." He wants much, much more from us in this journey. God wants for us to join Him in this adventure. He wants for us to see this opportunity to minister alongside of Him. He wants for us to be His "helper" to bring this work to pass. Because of this, we need desperately to take time to renew to the call before us.

What do I mean by renew? I mean a complete heart, soul, and mind renewal to the call of Homeschooling. God wants for us to have a heart for Homeschooling. I am not talking about a heart for "school" in the home. I am talking about a heart for having all that Jesus died to give us. Homeschooling is only one means that God uses to restore the family to His perfect design. Yet, so often, our enemy distracts us into thinking of Homeschooling as another means of education. There is so much more to Homeschooling. It is not all about academics. We are given a precious gift of really ministering to the hearts of our children. We are given time and opportunity to train our children up to use all of their special gifts, talents, and bents. We are given the opportunity to really impress upon the hearts of our children our passion for God, life, relationships, and learning. Oh, if we could only constantly renew our heart, we would have a contagious passion that would keep us fired up and on track!

We also need to renew our soul and mind. What do I mean by this? This is renewing our will, mind, and emotions. This can only begin one way. Let's see how Romans 12: 1-2 says that this can begin...

"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 (Amplified Bible)

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I love this passage! I absolutely love anything that can give me **THREE EASY STEPS**. This passage is one of those passages. Want to renew your soul and mind? Want to renew your mind, will, and emotions at any time, in any area of your life? Here are the **THREE EASY STEPS**:

1. **Daily come before the Lord sacrificing ALL you are to Him.** Yes, beloved, **ALL** that you are: your plans (everyone of them)...your ambitions (even that college thing!)... ideas (even the best idea can be your idol, your high place, so **ALL** of those ideas!)... methods (Yep! **ALL** of them... even if they are great! Even Charlotte Mason's Approach, the Unit Study Approach, the Classical Approach, the Principal Approach, those Textbooks, the Lifestyle of Learning Approach, the Heart of Wisdom Approach...did I leave any out? That one too! Sacrifice it, if it is of God, He will let you continue in those ideas. If not, well, ugh, God has some great ideas for you!)... techniques (Yep, even your beloved ideas!)...fears (Why fear when God knows every single detail of your life and those of your children?)... concerns (There is not one concern that God does not know and have your provision, so lay it down!!!)... *all* must be presented to God as a living sacrifice each day!
2. **Do NOT conform.** Are we not a nation of people-pleasers? In no area do I see more peer-pressure than the Homeschool movement. We try to please the culture. We try to please the church. We try to please fellow Homeschoolers. When are we going to turn away from people pleasing and conforming to the ways of others? When are we going to repent and turn our hearts intently to our Lord and Saviour? When we do, we will find the freedom to hear Him in each and every area of our lives, even our Homeschool. Then, we will find the renewal of our souls and minds that we so desire. Then, we will be able to *"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]."* Then, we will see the glory of the Lord in our homes. Then, we will have the revival that God wants in our land!
3. **Be transformed by renewing your mind!** Oh, beloved, reach for this renewal! It will transform your entire life! Of course, this begins as you sit at the feet of Jesus. As you daily immerse yourself in His Word, you will begin to be transformed. You will soon have different priorities... different beliefs... different ambitions... and soon, you will be able to prove what is good, acceptable, and perfectly in the will of God. If

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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! But, this need not happen. We can have all that Christ has planned for us! Sit at His feet!

Yes! Three easy steps to a complete renewal! Then you will KNOW His "*good and acceptable and perfect will*" for you and your children! Isn't that great? Just sitting at His feet this summer, sacrificing yourSELF, not conforming to anyone or anything around you, and hearing Him, you will be able to completely renew your mind. Talk about a retreat! Oh, do record this!

Take the time to write what He shows you. Write down where He wants for you to go. Write down what He shows you as you look back—what HAS been learned, where you HAVE come from, what HAS been accomplished. Write down all that He shows you about where you are today—WHERE are they, WHO are they, WHAT is the ONE THING that they need today (academic, spiritual, character, relational, physical), WHAT would you do today if this were the last day you had in life (do it now while you are listening and planning!). Write down what He shows you about tomorrow—WHERE do they need to be (next week, next month, next year, at the end of this Homeschooling journey), HOW can you get there. Write down your commitment to this high call. Write down your commitment to the lifestyle of learning for a lifetime, for the long haul. Not to Homeschooling, but to a home, to God's design for the home.

Take the time to record your retreat with God. You are going to love looking back later to see His faithfulness. Trust me, after 11 years of seeing God prepare me each and every year AND follow through, I KNOW that He will never leave me in this calling. This helps SO much on those days that I am not real sure that I can press on. All I have to do is look back to see that He will be with me and I know I can go on!

Take This Time to Re-Organize!

Now, I am not a homemaking queen here. Actually, I can reasonably assure you that unless God did have the absolutely most crazy sense of humor, I can probably boldly write (now I am getting scared!) that I will never write a book called **HOMEMAKING THE EASY WAY**. (If I do now, I will just rename it, or quote this totally unfaithful comment.) Don't get me wrong. I believe that God is a miracle God. He can do ANYTHING with ANYONE...just look at my life! However, it would take just that for me to ever become a homemaking queen much less write a book on it. So, I will give you my ever-so-humble and easy approach to Homemaking here!