

Ignite the Fire! By Terri Camp

# Ignite the Fire!

## Freedom Inspired Real Education

By Terri Camp

## FOREWORD

Dear Terri,

I don't know if you will remember me, I imagine you touch so many hearts, that it would be impossible to remember us all! I was the one who cried on your shoulder at the curriculum fair at the First Baptist Church of Trenton last April. Both of our cars quit running that month, my husband lost part of his income due to an insurance hike, and I lost my ability to focus and do God's will. Then I met you, and you gave me your book, Ignite the Fire! You asked me to write to you---to let you know how I was doing.

When I took your book home with me, I spent the next week studying it from cover to cover. I read, memorized highlighted, and made notes in the margins, but most importantly ---I prayed. When I finished your book, I was ready to begin home schooling again. I woke up fresh and early Monday morning and I prayed, "Lord, what do you want me to teach my children today?" His answer was, "How to be a friend." I chuckled to myself and thought, okay, that'll take five minutes. What will I do with the rest of my day? But wanting to be faithful and obedient, I began our school day with my three year-old son's Awana book, Ern E. Elephant Made Peanut Butter Cookies for His Friends. Ethan shouted, "Hey we can do that for our friends too!" That's all I needed to hear. We put up our pencils and books and headed for the kitchen.

My daughter Olivia was seven, my son Jonathon was five, my son Ethan was three, and my daughter Adelia was almost two. I gave them each a turn in measuring and mixing while we discussed what makes a good friend and how we can be one. As we began baking cookies, I shared with my children my favorite Bible story of all --- Elijah and the first angle food cake. I told them how Elijah feared for his life, how he ran away and prayed that God would kill him --- "All at once an Angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' He looked around and there by his head was a cake baked over hot coals and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "'Get up and eat, for the journey is too great for you.' So he got up and ate

and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God” (I Kings 19:5-8)

So you see --- the Lord provided strength to Elijah with the first angel food cake: We had a wonderful time in the kitchen that day.

When our cookies were all finished we prayed that God would show us who needed a friend. We would take some cookies to them. The first thing that came to my mind was how Jesus taught us to take care of orphans and widows. Well I didn't know any orphans but we do have a widow in our church that I had been praying for. We listened to her stories of yesterday, while sharing with her our experiences in home schooling. This was the start of our “cookie ministry!”

It has been four months since I met you, and there isn't paper enough to share all that has happened because of you and your book. Our cookie ministry continues, as does our lesson on how to be a friend -- - a long five minutes don't you think?

Anyway Terri, I just had to share this much with you. You were my angel sent from the Lord --- and your book was my cake --- it still holds its sweet savor and continues to strengthen me. The Lord touched me through you and even though the journey is still too great for me --- I find my peace and strength in the Lord.

Thank you, Terri

In His Love,  
Elizabeth Ross

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## INTRODUCTION

How does a family go about schooling by “fire?” In Genesis 19:24, God used fire to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorra. Why would He use fire to destroy these cities? I am not claiming to have the mind of God here, just drawing some conclusions on my own. The first of those is this:

Fire purifies. When a forest experiences spontaneous combustion, a great inferno rages. But after the smoke settles, new life springs forth. All the old, dead trees are gone making way for newer, stronger, living trees. When God creates the fire, whether through spontaneous combustion or a lightning strike, the forest is purified. But when someone else starts a forest fire, out of carelessness or even on purpose, they risk the fire blazing out of control and destroying everything that comes into its path --- including homes, buildings, and even human life.

Likewise, we must not be careless with the education of our children. We must be very careful to ensure that God is the one starting the fires of purification in them. Even when we are purposeful in our task of home schooling, we can cause more destruction than we realize.

If I take the approach that my children will learn best if left to their own, I am being careless. Oh, they will learn some. They may even learn a lot. But when their education is guided by their own initiative, a key component in their education has been left out. That component is God. And God can never be left out of the equation. God has designed each of our children to be a unique creature. They each have passions given them that have been designed for the purpose of their being. If we allow them simply to “live and learn,” they may not gain the wisdom to develop those passions and talents on their own.

If we purposefully seek out the “best” curriculum, we again leave God out of the equation. We are following a man-made plan for our children. God did not design our children to be carbon copies of each other. He did not design them all to know the same things, to have the same gifts, to have the same talents or to learn the same way.

No, he created them to be needed and to need the gifts and talents of each other. They spend their years at home developing these gifts, passions, and talents so that when they venture out into the world as adults, they will be able to use them for the glory of God. They will have something to offer that perhaps no one else has. Another person will have different gifts to share with them.

The Fire Philosophy of home schooling bridges the gaps between the other popular philosophies of home education. When you use a complete textbook approach, the child is force-fed his information, rather than discovering it for himself. On the other side of the bridge, however is the family that uses no textbooks. They expect the child to discover everything on his own. The Fire Philosophy blends these opposite education styles, creating a child that can launch from a base of information into his own personal discoveries and can even journey further than the available resources!

The Fire Philosophy is a proactive philosophy of home schooling. It requires sacrifice on the part of both mother and father. When people ask you how many hours you home school your children each day, you will not have a definitive answer. The Fire Philosophy of home schooling is a twenty-four-hour commitment, just like being a parent. ON the other hand, it frees you so that you do not feel like you are “working” with your children all the time. You can do laundry and home school. You can wash dishes, do the ironing, nurse the baby, play with the toddler, teach the seven year-old how to read, and fry the bacon. You cannot, however, sit in front of the computer or television all day long. If you are in the habit of doing that, get out of it now!

It saddens me that many parent choose their curriculum based on how “easy” it is for them. The goal often becomes creating children who can go to their rooms/desks/table and do their “work” on their own. Hey, I’m guilty here. I couldn’t wait for my children to reads so that they could go off and do their work on their own, coming to me only for correcting, or the occasional question. My goal wasn’t for them to love learning; my goal was for them to learn to read so they could do the daily assignments on their own.

The goal for my children has become different now. I no longer am looking for them to be able to get their assignments done. I am now looking for them to create their own assignments. My goal is for them to understand the concepts they learn. It is for them to know more than just the who, what, and where; the goal is that they may also know the when, the how, and the why.

My favorite education quote of all time is, "Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire." William Butler Yeats.

When I throw a question out to my children like, "What war in Iowa would Winnie the Pooh have liked" I want them to think about it. When they give up, and I tell them, "The Honey War," my goals are met if they return with the question, "What was that?" If they just say, "Oh," then I have been simply filling buckets with stale information.

A child who has only been filled with stale data and facts will often feel that his bucket is full. He won't want any more. Or worse yet, he may act like the bucket that has been tipped over, neither receiving nor retaining anything.

I want children whose buckets are filled, not by me, but by the ash that remains after the fire. The ash of the fire can only be gathered by my children. I cannot shovel it into them.

Perhaps this illustration will help you understand the concept: Take a great big bucket and put a little kindling in the bottom of it. Strike a match. Now, if you just leave it alone, you have a few ashes left in the bucket. But if your child sees you putting the kindling into the bucket, they will begin helping you build the fire. The kindling will not be sufficient anymore, and larger pieces of wood will need to be placed in the bucket. The fire rages. Still more wood is placed on it. Wow, this is fun building the fire! You have to go further into the forest to get more wood. Still you and your companion continue building the fire. When it is time for the fire to go out, you slowly let it extinguish. You wouldn't dare throw water on this fire; the ashes would spill out onto the ground. Often you will be able to create a new fire in another bucket from the fire you are now letting smolder. Or you can even have several fires going at the same time. When the fire is out and

you gaze into your bucket, you see that the bucket has been, after all, filled with the ashes from the fire.

In the same way, the Fire Philosophy of home education begins with a small flame. Together, you and your child add fuel---kindling, sparks, or logs---to the fire. As the fire glows brighter and brighter, the thrill of building it increases. Digging deep into the forest, your children begin to seek out their own understanding just to keep the flame ablaze. When the fire goes out (and the Lord will direct this timing) the ashes that remain are the permanent knowledge and understanding your children retain. Small flames of enthusiasm in learning provide starter fuel for other flames, in other areas, and the excitement of building the fire ignites a passion for learning that burns brighter with every new discovery. This is the model and metaphor for the Fire Philosophy. If this idea inspires you or if you want your children to grow in their enthusiasm and understanding of your schooling, then read on.

Leonardo DaVinci said, “Just as eating against one’s will is injurious to healthy, so study without a liking for it spoils the memory, and it retains nothing it takes in.”

I think DaVinci had the right idea. Have you ever met a person who loved pie so much he dreamed of entering the pie-eating contest at the local county fair? Or perhaps it was the root beer guzzling contest, or the ice cream eating contest. Whether that person won the pie-eating contest or not, more than likely they no longer like pie. My husband’s friend participated in a Monopoly marathon, playing for twenty-four hours straight. Afterward, he swore that he would never again play the game he had once loved.

If you’ve ever tried to teach a child to read before he was ready you know what I’m talking about here. We had one daughter who was allergic to reading. She was “eating” when she didn’t need to eat yet. She didn’t like it and she retained virtually nothing. We had determined that she needed to read. After all, she was five years old, and everyone knows that five-year-olds need to learn to read, especially home-schooled five-year-olds. The world is watching us, not to mention grandmas and grandpas. So I pushed. She would sit next to me on the couch and do the book with me. As soon as she

had to read the first letter she would begin scratching, coughing, sneezing, and even twitching. This went on for a long time. Finally after a few months of her not learning much of anything and continuing to be allergic, I decided to stop teaching her to read. I waited until I could spark her interest. I bought an easy reader book about wolves and told her the book was hers as soon as she could read me the back cover. She then had a desire to learn to read.

Today my daughter claims that reading is her God-given talent. Using the Fire Philosophy, she learned to read and to love it. The Fire Philosophy ignites fires in our children so what they learn is both retained and enjoyed.

## The F.I.R.E.

We have chosen the term "fire" because it so fully incorporates all that we are trying to do with our children. It conveys a sense of excitement in learning, and it invokes the image of a burning passion for understanding.

Beyond just the emotions that the word conveys, however, its letters also provide a useful acronym for the method itself. F.I.R.E. stands for "Freedom Inspired Real Education." What do I mean by "freedom"? I do not mean allowing our children to have ultimate liberty. I do not mean that we allow our children to play computer games ceaselessly. I do not mean our children are allowed to watch movies, even "good" movies all day long. The History Channel has some great educational programs on it, but it will not teach our children to think and grow for themselves. Instead, it will develop in them a passive learning process. An occasional show or two will not harm them, but if it becomes your habit to "see if there's something good on," then your children are missing out. I would rather they never watch anything than they become educational vegetables.

The freedom that I refer to is a freedom that comes only from following God. 2 Cor. 3:17: "Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (NIV)

Galatians Chapter 5 is a great chapter on freedom. It begins, *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."* (Verse 1 NIV) Verses 13 through 15 say, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command. Love your neighbor as your self. If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

What does this mean for me in light of home schooling? It means that I have had my yoke taken from me. Christ has set me free from my burdens. As a home schooling mom trying to follow a standard curriculum, I found myself bound. I found myself burdened. It wasn't

until I gave up our home schooling to Jesus, that I once again found that freedom.

I often found myself wanting to study a certain area with my children, but I felt confined by the books I was using. I felt like I was giving them more work in what I felt was an already overloaded day. I was finding myself struggling with the promptings of the Holy Spirit in my life. He would prompt me to study a certain area with the children, and I would reason that there just wasn't enough time.

Now that I am FIRST turning to the Lord, I find the promptings from Him get done. It's a great feeling knowing that your children are learning what the Holy Spirit wants them to learn.

Take note though - Verse 13 holds for us a serious concern to keep on guard against. We are not to use our freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather, serve one another in love. One aspect of that sinful nature for a home schooling mom who is educating her children through "F.I.R.E." is a tendency toward laziness. I urge you not to become lazy in educating your children.

Another one of my favorite group of verses is Deuteronomy 6:5-9. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates."*

Those verses illustrate education by "fire" - the best way possible. We are not to set aside a certain amount of time for educating our children. We are to be educating them ALL THE TIME.

I know some of you are saying, "But the Bible isn't talking about Algebra. It is talking about God's word."

The Word is the foundation of your home schooling. If it isn't, it doesn't matter how much Algebra you are doing. Everything our children learn should be learned in light of scripture. If all scientific

concepts were taught in light of scripture, we wouldn't have a whole group of Christian children who aren't sure if evolution is true or not. Scripture would be the foundation, and science would simply build upon that. We are instructing our children upside down. It doesn't count if you give your twenty minutes of Bible first. That is not giving God's Word priority; that's simply giving it required time. God wants us to live in Freedom. To do that we must LIVE God's Word, we must "walk" in His Word. We must "rise" to His Word. We must even "sit" with His Word. Remind yourself frequently what it says in Deuteronomy 6. "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates."

Freedom in the F.I.R.E. Method of home schooling is giving our lives up, giving our children up, and giving our time up to Jesus. He enables us to walk in Freedom, when we are slaves to Him.

Now that we know what Freedom means, what is a "Real Education"?

I went to Webster's 1828 dictionary to find out what he had to say about the word "real." This is what it said: "True; genuine; not affected; not assumed. The woman appears in her real character."

If "real" is to be defined as that which is true, we therefore need the definition of "true": Genuine; pure; real; not counterfeit, adulterated or false; as true balsam; the true bark; true love of country; a true Christian. --The true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (John 1)

EDUCA'TION, n. [L. educatio.] The bringing up, as of a child, instruction; formation of manners. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, arts and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable; and an immense

responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties.

I included the definition for true here, because it has a great bearing on the definition of real. Real means True.

A real education is one that encompasses more than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. A real education is an education that seeks to know what is true. It is not passive. It is proactive. Filling out a workbook is passive. Discovering the truth about gravity is proactive. Newton was being proactive when he developed his theory about gravity. He may have seemed to be passive (just sitting under a tree), but he was thinking and seeking for truth. In fact, he was being educated as he sat under the tree.

I once heard a story of a young boy on his way to manhood, who came home to be home schooled. His parents apparently knew the benefits of the F.I.R.E. Method of home schooling. He did not have any interest in doing his book work. All he did was stare out the window. His parents decided to allow this passiveness for a time. That young man, unbeknownst to his parents was not "just" staring out the window. He was observing his environment and actually became an expert on birds. Birds became his passion.

A real education is an education that is not rooted in a workbook or a textbook. It is an education of the mind. It is an educational process that allows God to use the child's mind to develop in him the passions that God Himself created in that child.

A real education is an education that relentlessly seeks after truth. A child does not merely accept as fact all that is given him. He observes and discovers for his own what is true. This can only work if the child is rooted in God.

What I often hear, and have even spoken myself, is there isn't enough time to "do Bible". We fill our children's days with too much if there isn't time for Bible. Also, I would tell you that you cannot "do Bible". Oh, yes, you can sit at the table for twenty minutes, read a chapter or two, memorize a verse, and say you have "done Bible". But that is NOT rooting your children in God. God must be the focus of your life. He must be the One who decides, guides, transforms,

and educates your children. It is only when He is the guide behind the education of your children that your children will be able to come to a real education. Only when He is THE FIRE that your children put their faith and trust in, will your children fully realize their passions and talents.

Until your children are totally relying on God to educate them, however, you must be the one relying on Him. You must be keenly aware of what God is doing in the lives of your children. You set the example, you follow His leading, you forge the path, and you set them in the narrow way.

## **GATHERING THE WOOD**

In 1 Kings, Elijah calls out to his God to light the fire. I too, call out to God.

This is the first step in moving your family toward the Fire Philosophy of home schooling. As a family, you must surrender your children's education to God. I know you're saying, "But how is God going to teach my children grammar?" Well, isn't He big enough? Didn't He create everything? Does He not know everything? Give Him your children, and He will light the fires that need to be lit to ignite the passions within them.

I call the following step, "gathering the wood". I call it this, because if you are trying to start fires, it is vital that you begin with good wood. If you are using the world's standards of measurement, you are using green wood. If you are using God's standards, you are using wood that is perfect for burning. If you light a fire under a child and the wood is not good, it will simply fizzle and go out. We could gather all the sparks and matches we want, but without good wood, it will profit them nothing.

### **The Fuel Book**

I will encourage you now to get a notebook (from now on called the "Fuel Book"). This should be a notebook that you will use for this purpose frequently. Choose one that "feels" good to you. You can use a three ring binder, a spiral notebook, a small spiral, or a hardback journal. The tool doesn't really matter. You can even decorate it if you want.

With your "Fuel Book", a Bible, a pen/pencil, and a locked door, sit down with the Lord. If your husband were a guiding force in your home school, I would encourage you to pray with him. If you can't do this now, then find a time alone when you can. Please do not read the next chapter in this book until you have been able to do this first step. Don't move forward one step until you've had the chance to pray.

## **Tending the Fire**

I'm not going to tell you what to pray, but I can give you some guidelines that have helped us to be focused and to be within the Will of God. I will use the ACTS model for prayer.

Adoration--Acknowledge the sovereign power of God. Tell Him how much you love Him. Etc.

Confession---Confess that you have not been giving the home educating of your children to Him. Confess to Him that you have been allowing others to educate your children. Whatever confessions you need to make, make them now. For some of us (ME included) this may take quite some time.

Thanksgiving---Thank Him for loaning you His children, for they are only on loan to us. Thank Him for each child, by name.

Supplication---Ask Him to guide you step by step. Ask Him to take over educating your children. This would be the time to get specific. You might start with your own family. Ask Him what you should study as a family. Now, this is really important . . . Listen to His voice. So often when we pray, we talk and talk and talk, and then we hang up. Prayer is a communication, a conversation. Conversations are two-way. Listen.

When God is talking to you, take notes. It's okay to pray with your eyes open and pen in hand. You might try asking for specifics for each child while you do this. As things come to mind, write them down. They may be personal, spiritual, academic, or perhaps all three at one time.

You may also hear a sermon that makes you think of something you would like to be working on with your children. You may read something in a book that seems particularly important. Your child may say something to you which causes you to "take note" that you want to come back to later. Your Fuel Book should become a part of you. You should take it everywhere you go, just in case you want to write down a message from God.

You can organize your Fuel Book any way you want. I would recommend putting tabs in with the name of each of your children on the tabs. You might even have a tab for your family as a whole. A lot of education in our home is done with everyone together, including Mom and Dad.

Here is an example from David's page:

- Begin concentrating on the social graces of being a man. (David is currently 8) i.e. opening doors for Mom, bringing in the groceries, caring for his sisters, etc.
- Find interesting books for him to read. Concentrate on the sciences as the main topic. Biographies of Christian scientists would be great.
- Encourage memorizing math facts. Spur him further when he comes to me with a math conversation. (David will often come to me with some great mathematical discovery. I could let his discovery end there, or I could spur him on to a higher level.)
- Give David pages of poetry to copy in his notebook. Encourage him to read them and recite them out loud for the family.
- Encourage David to read out loud to me. Repeat what he has read, then have him read it again. Have him try to read the sentences as a whole, rather than word by word. ■ Give him experiments whenever I get them through e-mail, or other places.
- Encourage David to spend time in his Bible. GET DAVID A BIBLE!

This reminded me that I hadn't bought David his own Bible yet. Last year he wasn't reading with any fluency, but now he is. He NEEDS to have a Bible of his own.

Having these pages helps to keep me focused. I usually just add to the list, but sometimes - like if I felt David had mastered his multiplication facts - I will cross it out. You can also use this as a base for your record keeping.

Speaking of record keeping, having a separate record book for each child's work is a good idea. You could have a separate page for each

of the topics from the page in his Fuel Book. For example, the first page of his record book would say, "Begin Concentrating on the Social Graces of Being a Man."

On the page about social graces, you would write things like, "I stood outside the van door for three minutes yesterday, waiting for David to open it for me. Today, I only waited for one minute. I saw progress in David's kindness to his sisters." I like to keep the notes on these pages positive. If the child isn't getting it, then that should still be recorded in the Fuel Book.

One good way to organize the personal record book is to separate it by subjects that you work on. This way, you aren't rifling through page after page trying to find the one that talks about reading biographies.

The next page in David's record book might say, "Memorizing Multiplication Facts." You might write, "2/26/98 - We played the floor game today. David only missed two facts, both sixes. Will continue working on sixes, but he seems to have the 3's 4's and 5's down pat." You don't have to record in this everyday. But they tend to learn a lot even when they aren't officially "doing school".

In order for this type of system to work, you must spend time with your children. You simply cannot be an absentee mom, waiting for your child to come to you with great insights. It is okay for your child to go off and be alone, but you should always be aware of what he is doing and even be engaged with him on a regular basis while he is doing something alone.

If your son or daughter goes off to build a rocket ship, you need to peek in on him or her occasionally. You might need to offer some assistance, or perhaps point the child in a certain direction. You might need to help add fuel. You might need to call Daddy at work. Hopefully you do not need to call the fire department. Or, you might need to be there when an experiment fails. We need to learn to be sensitive to the needs of our children. Consider this "tending the fire."

## **God's Standards**

I want to encourage you to not settle for what the world has to offer. The world's standards for our children are not the same as God's standards. God's standards are much higher. The world doesn't care if we are raising spiritual leaders. The world doesn't care if our children love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and mind. The world doesn't care if our children have a greater love for their fellow man than for themselves. If the world doesn't care about the things that are most important to us, then why do we measure the success of our children based upon the world's standards? I find it interesting that people use the term "measure up", when the unit of measure is far below where we want to be.

When you are writing in your children's Fuel Books, use the system of measurement that is the highest. Do not base your ideas on the standards of the world. When we allow God to be in control, the standards we've had for our children will rise dramatically.

I'm going to give you two examples of standards for Ashley. The first one will be using the world's standards as my base measurement. The second will be using God's standards. (Ashley is my oldest daughter. She is currently thirteen years old.)

### **World's Standard:**

- Be sure she does her lessons each day.
- She should be able to use a calculator. Teach her to use a calculator.
- Read 30 minutes each day.
- She should be socially adept, put her in many social functions. Particularly functions with many children of the same age.
- It's important for her to be able to CONFORM.

### **God's Standard:**

- Hide God's Word in her heart. Meditate on it day and night.
- Ashley now owns her own bread making business. She should be able to learn good stewardship, budget, save, and give. She will be responsible for all the record keeping required. She may hire brothers and sisters to help her if needed.
- Ashley will read great works of literature. She shall spend much of her leisure time reading about great men and women.
- Help her to not be peer dependent.
- Train her to be HOLY. (Romans 12:2)

Do you see the difference?

It is important for us to know the difference between God's standards and the world's standards. If we are educating our children to fit into the world, we are falling way short of where God's standards lie.

I've said all this to remind you that as you are praying for your child, do not pray with the world's standards in mind. You can pray that God will give you the tools and guidance needed to get your kid to have a high SAT score. And, I am confident that He will, if that is your goal. But, wouldn't you rather pray that God would give you the tools and the guidance to help your child to have a heart for God, to develop the passions that God has given him for His purposes, knowing that this means a superior knowledge?

God has created each of our children so differently. Therefore, we must turn to Him and allow Him to show us what, where, when, and how to teach and instruct our children.

We all want the best for our children, which is why we must turn to the One who has the best standards.

## THE OXYGEN

Every fire must have oxygen in order to continue to burn. Even the very smallest spark, must have oxygen. You, the parent, need to view yourself as the oxygen for the fire. You are an essential component in the Fire Philosophy. Sure, you could release your child to burn on his own, but without the oxygen there - praying, encouraging, lifting up, and offering some helpful suggestions - the fire would go out quickly.

What does it take to be good oxygen?

It takes a dedication to your children. You must be dedicated to uplift them. You must be dedicated to pray for them. You must be dedicated to "be there" for them when they need assistance or guidance. You must also be dedicated to stay out of the way when they need you to.

To be good oxygen we need to have strong relationships with our children. We need to know what makes them tick. We need to be ever watchful for that spark in their eye, which can turn into a raging fire if given the oxygen to burn.

So, how do we act as the oxygen for our children?

One way is to know the different ways children learn. Some children are tactile learners. They like to touch things. If you are teaching a tactile child how to read, you might cut the letters out of sandpaper so he can feel them. Others are auditory learners. Hearing information is the best way for them to process that information to their brains. Then, there is the visual learner. Yes, you guessed it. They learn visually. They will be fairly easy to teach how to read. But getting them to remember dates that you have read to them will be a little trickier.

There are some neurophysiological studies that have proven that there are even more factors involved than just a child's predisposed learning style. These other factors include temperature, sound, light, and even food intake. Did you know that some children learn better when they can sip on water, than if they didn't have anything? Some

children learn better with music on and some better when it is totally quiet.

I'll never forget a time when a grandmother called me in despair. She had begun home schooling her grandson and he wasn't able to sit at his desk and read to her for the 30 minutes she was requiring of him. After talking with her for a bit, I discovered that her grandson enjoyed curling up on the couch with grandma having cookies and hot chocolate. I told the grandma to try reading with that environment the following day.

She called me the next night, and boy, was she excited! They had made cookies, got the hot chocolate, curled up together under the afghan on the couch, and he read to her for almost an hour!

Cynthia Tobias has a wonderful book out called, *The Way They Learn*. This is a **MUST READ** for parents who are implementing the Fire Philosophy of home schooling.

I recommend that you try to incorporate as many of the learning styles in the education of your children as possible. This will have a two-fold effect. First, they will be able to function at their optimal level because they'll be learning in harmony with their learning style, and thus, in harmony with the way God made them to learn. Second, it will give them exposure to the other modes of learning, essentially making them more rounded learners. When children are exposed to learning in all the various modes, they receive each style in doses small enough to handle.

When you take a hands-on learner, for example, and thrust him into an environment that is mostly auditory, he cannot learn as much as he could if he were allowed to "feel" what he is learning. You can, however, use both philosophies at the same time. Let's say you're doing a unit on flight. You've chosen a great book to read to your children. All the information they need to know is in the book, so you plan to read it, and then give your children a test to see what they have learned. You will be surprised when the tests are turned in and one child appeared to learn **NOTHING**. Hey, I've been there. I know what it's like to spend time and energy teaching something to my children only to have them appear to know nothing when it comes

time to take the test. But the light at the end of the tunnel appears when the tactile child constructs a model of the first Wright Brother's plane. If he is allowed to construct while you read, he will retain more. Now, I know that this is difficult for some of you "I-can-only-do-one-thing-at-a-time" people. But believe me, some children simply must be doing something in order to absorb what's going on around them. That is the nature of the tactile learning style.

On the other hand, there are also those children who would be so absorbed in doing the model that they would hear muffled sounds in the background, not even noticing that you are reading a really great book to them. As parents trying to teach more than one child at the same time, it is imperative that we learn what is the best environment for our children to learn in.

I have often thought that with eight children I would eventually get two that are the same. I have not. Yes, there may be just four learning styles, but within them are multiples of combinations. So your job as an educating parent is to learn your child. This is not an easy task, but it is also not impossible. You simply need to do your homework first.

There are many experts in the area of learning styles. Seek them out and discover.

The Fire Philosophy of home schooling works for a variety of children with a variety of learning styles. I want to remind you, however, that the Fire Philosophy of educating your children is God directed/parent following/with child input. It will not work if any of those three things get out of order. If you are allowing your child to direct, that puts God either following or simply with input. God must direct. Please do not forget that. Read Proverbs 3: 5 & 6.

As we are home schooling our children, we need to view our family with the goal in mind that we are to glorify God first and foremost. That is our chief goal in life and in education. We cannot separate them.

One of the greatest advantages to home schooling is the enhancement of family unity. I've heard parents say time and time

again that when they brought their children home, they became a family once again.

Because of the desire to promote family unity, we do a lot of our subjects or units together as a family. Daddy cannot always be in on every subject, but he is often in on the decisions as to what we are going to study next.

We often will have meetings, though no one really calls them "meetings," where we discuss the different subjects the children would like to study. We will often come to the meeting with ideas already. For example, we decided that whatever we were going to study next needed to have a lot of geography. We also wanted it to be missionary related. So, when we came to the meeting, we had already been directed to the mission field. All we needed was some input from the children as to what mission field would be interesting at the time. It was a unanimous vote for South America.

In this "meeting" they got excited about the prospect of studying South America. We were the oxygen that fanned the flame. As we talked about some of the exciting things we would learn about, they became more excited. They couldn't wait to begin. One of the things we want to be sure our children grasp is that they aren't going to simply stand back and soak up information. When we study a geographical region, the children go on a trip to the place we're studying. When we study an historical time period, the children are thrust back in time. If we study a famous scientist, the children watch as he tries one experiment after another. Education is an adventure. As your children learn in this way, they will discover that they desire to go on more adventures.

No matter what you are studying, even if your children are doing individual textbooks, all it takes is a little extra "air" to help fan the flame. If there isn't even a hint of spark in your child, just add in some extra oxygen, and it will come.

The oxygen comes in at all stages of a fire. It is needed at the point of spark. It is needed as the fire grows and grows. It is even needed when the flame blossoms into a raging inferno.

Sometimes, however, you will see when the fire is going out. You can see when there is no spark. Sometimes, as we are following the Holy Spirit, it may be time for the fire to be extinguished. There are other times that the fire wants to go out, and yet it still needs to rage a while longer. That is when we must add some fresh oxygen.

Keeping on the subject of South America - let's say you've been studying a couple of countries for a few weeks and the fire is beginning to go out. What do you do? You want to do a little bit on each country but the kids seem to think, "You've studied one country, you've studied them all". Here's one suggestion: tell them that within one of the countries there lies a hidden treasure. You, the oxygen, figure out which country has the hidden treasure. You can hide it anywhere. Each day, give a clue or two as your children "explore" different countries, trying to see if they can find the hidden treasure.

I'll spell it out for you a little bit more. You have decided that the hidden treasure is buried deep within the Amazon jungle of Ecuador. These are all clues that you are giving the children: "An Indian Chief holds the treasure in a special place. The hut is as long as a basketball court."

You don't tell them that it's in Ecuador, you don't tell them it's the Auca Indians; you just tell them that an Indian Chief is holding the treasure. As you give them clues, they discover that it isn't in the country that they've studied for the past few days. They will go on to the next country, and the next, until they get to all the countries. Then, they will add up the clues you've given them and discover that the hidden treasure is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's hidden in the heart of the Auca Indian Chief, the same chief who ordered the killing of four missionaries.

As you are playing this treasure game, you may find that you have one child who shows a particular interest in the mission work. You may see that child's heart beat faster as you talk of the tribes that have not yet heard the Gospel of Jesus. You may see tears in their eyes as they think of those who are lost and dying. You may even have one of your children that stands up and says, "I want to do THAT!"

**DON'T IGNORE THESE SIGNS!** Don't push them under a rug. Don't hide them under a bush. Encourage them. Oxygenate them. (I didn't even make that word up!) This may be their calling; and if you don't oxygenate, they will be missing out on an opportunity to begin working toward their God-ordained purpose.

Helping to develop passions within your children is one of the greatest rewards of parenthood. Aside from my children knowing the Lord, I cannot imagine anything greater than seeing them develop their passions and using them for the glory of God.

There are many things as parents that we can do to help fuel them in their passions. When our children are growing and developing, one of the advantages of home schooling is that they have more opportunities to explore the world around them. They also have the opportunity to participate in the fields they want to go into. If you have a child who would like to be a lawyer, home schooling allows you to provide him with opportunities to see a lawyer "in action". You also have opportunities to talk with lawyers. Perhaps they will even allow your child to work in a law office to see what goes on behind the glamour of the courtroom.

So often what our children want to become is based on what they perceive the occupation to be about. When in fact, the occupation they are choosing is nothing like they thought it would be. I once heard of a study that found an astronomical amount of college graduates not working in their chosen profession. Once they got there, they didn't even enjoy the type of work. What a shame that is.

Another big advantage of home schooling with the Fire Philosophy is that our children aren't forced to be "carbon copy children." In other words, we do not seek to make all of the children fit into the same mold. They are allowed to spend the majority of their time on the gifts and talents to which the Lord has given them. A lesser amount of time is spent on the things they need to learn to "round" them out. For example, our child who has a gift in mathematics is allowed to further their knowledge in that area. While they may still need to learn the rudimentary skills of the English language, they are not required to spend most of their time learning skills that are not even related to their field of study. Of course they do need to be well rounded, but not

at the expense of their true gifts. I firmly believe that if we allow them the time to work on their passions and not fill their lives with the unimportant things, we will have young adults who know their place in God's plan, and will work their hardest to accomplish their goals for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Understand, however, that playing video games is considered neither a talent nor a gifting. The reason I mention that is this - there are some parents who would say that if left "to their own", their child would choose video games or television all day long. These are not passions! These are passives! You could even go so far as to call them "snuffers" - you know, like the little things that are placed on top of candles to make the fire go out. As a parent following the leading of the Holy Spirit, it is your job to eliminate the snuffers and to oxygenate the passions.

Furthermore, let your children see the passions that you have. Allow them to see you working at the passions that God has given you. Talk with them about His purpose in their life. I can guarantee that if you oxygenate their passions, you will not need to give them a course on self-esteem. They will have God-esteem. And that is far superior.

I have many moms come to me and say, "That's all well and good, but it's my fire that needs to have some oxygen." That's when I tell them to study something they find fascinating. If you've always wanted to study constellations (but just haven't found the time because you're too busy working with the children) do a study with all the children on that very subject! You will enjoy it. Your enthusiasm will increase. Your children will see that it is desirable to want to learn about different subjects. They will also learn that it can be fun. Perhaps you could do a study on what really happens to socks between the feet and the clean clothes pile. I've always wanted to know that. Haven't you?

## **THROW ANOTHER LOG ON THE FIRE**

When you have a fire going, you can boost the flame if you have some good logs to throw on it. Really big logs will help the fire to rage even longer. When I think of “logs” in educational terms, I think of certain things that are foundational to the education of our children. These things must not be neglected.

What are the foundations logs of education? They are math facts, good vocabulary skills, good grammar, the ability to spell with ease, and basic facts in several subjects (like the periodic table in Chemistry). And what foundation is complete without a thorough understanding of the Bible? The logs for the fire are extremely important. There may be some people who will tell you it doesn't matter if your children know their facts, but I will contradict them. It does matter.

There are many good ways to teach your children these basic facts. Not all memorization has to be dull and boring. Children don't have to sit around begrudgingly memorizing their facts. Some of my children have even gone so far as to say, “Oh Mom, can't we memorize something today?” You can even make it more fun by calling it a “Fire Drill.” Memorization can be done, it can be done well, and it can be done fun.

If you notice that your children just don't have their multiplications facts down, take a week off and play with them. Take the time to play some games that will help to reinforce those math concepts and encourage them to want to learn their math facts. You could buy some fancy shmancy computer program, but isn't it more fun to get down on the floor and play with them yourself? Have you ever heard these words from one of your children: “Oh boy, I'd better go study my sixes, I don't have them down very well yet.” Think that would never happen in your house? I can almost guarantee it would happen if you played the floor game.

## The Floor Game

The floor game is a giant game board played on the floor, or even outdoors. You design the board, you design the contents, and you are the playing pieces. (For ease of explanation, I'm going to use multiplication facts) Get several sheets of paper and cut them in half. Have your children write out the multiplication problems on sheets of paper, one problem per sheet. You could use existing flashcards, but having the children write out the cards emphasizes it just a little more. One sheet will have  $5 \times 1$ , another will have  $5 \times 2$ . Now, make up some special cards like, "Hop forward two spaces" or "Go back one" or even "Go back to the beginning." The neat thing about this game is that you not only get to make up the cards, but you also get to make up the rules.

We made on big die out of foam board. You could have two dice if you want or even use a little bitty die.

When we play this game, I lay the cards out in serpentine fashion around the house. We go up the stairs, down the stairs, into the bathtub, around the wet towels (these are the hazards), and to a final "end spot."

Another advantage to the floor game is that the children will delightfully run around cleaning up the living room if they are going to be able to play the floor game. Just an added bonus that all moms would appreciate!

Before you play, decide the penalty for a wrong answer. We used homemade family trivia cards. A wrong answer on a problem is met on the next turn with a family trivia question. If they get that right, they may then advance on the next turn. If not, they must answer a new family trivia card.

Let the play begin. All children participating will roll the die (or dice). The highest number goes first. If you would like to play this with all ages, adjust the game accordingly. Just put two numbers on the sheet, and, depending on their age, they either have to multiply or add the numbers. We choose to play separately for adding and multiplying.

Let's say the first child rolls a five. He walks five cards. He must answer the fact or do what the card says. If he answers correctly, he may roll again. If you have one child who is going to answer most of them right, you might limit how many times she may roll. The greatest joy with this game is in its flexibility.

Another game you can play with multiplication or addition facts is the penny toss game. This also works for phonics drill.

### **The Penny Toss Game**

The penny toss game works like this: At the bottom of each cup of a muffin tin place a piece of felt with a letter written on it. I've found that using pieces of felt keeps the pennies from bouncing out of the muffin tins. Mark off a starting line and have the children toss pennies into the cups. When they get a penny into the cup, they must correctly say the sound that the letter makes. If they say the sound correctly, they get to keep the penny. About the most this game will cost you is fifty-cents per child. I can usually handle that. One problem you will run into when playing a game like this is that the older children will want to play too. What I have them do is form words, either four, five, or six letter words, based on the letters that are in the tin. It isn't as easy as it sounds. But they line up for hours and do not tire of this game very quickly. I tire faster than they do.

### **Color-Coded Memorization**

Suppose you want your children to memorize the books of the Bible. Not only do you want them to learn the books, but you also want them to learn the order of the books. One way to do this is to use color-coded memorization. Purchase some sheets of felt and cut them into horizontal strips about an inch and a half to two inches high. The first five books will all be written on the same color of felt. You can choose the color based on something you want the children to relate to the books, or you can simply group them. If you use tan for the first five books, you might explain to them that tan signifies the tan sand as the people wandered through the desert. Either you or

your children will write one book on each strip of felt. When you're done, you'll have five books on five pieces of tan felt.

Place the felt pieces on the floor, or the couch, or somewhere they will stay in place. Cover a small Ping-pong ball or a plastic golf ball with Velcro®. The object of the game is to hit the books of the Bible in order. They must throw the ball at the first book, Genesis. If they hit Genesis, they may try for Exodus, and on and on. Again, you decide the rules. If they miss, you may make them place all the books they've earned back in place, or you may let them keep them, allowing the next person to begin where that one left off. Eventually your children are throwing the ball at sixty-six books in the proper order. You might even sing a book-memorization song as you play the game.

Some children will learn something more solidly if it is color-coded for them. Remember the visual learning style? If you want them to learn all the states and their capitals, you might want to use color-coding for the different regions. This will help some children to retain the facts better.

## **Scrabble®**

Another log, a strong vocabulary, will be useful throughout their lives. One of the games you can play to help build a stronger vocabulary is Scrabble®. In our home, we allow use of the dictionary to find words they want to place on the board. This helps them to learn new words, so we've made it a house rule. If you come to our house to play Scrabble®, my children will be looking up words in the Official Scrabble Players' Dictionary.

## **The Dictionary Game**

In the Dictionary Game, one person looks up a word and says it out loud. Each of the players writes down a definition for that word, including the person who chose it. The definitions are scrambled and each person votes for the one they believe is the right definition. The winners each get a point. Play advances to the next person.

## **The Secret Word**

A third way to improve vocabulary is to have the children each secretly choose a word to use throughout the day. They should use it in sentences that make sense of course. At a designated time, everyone tries to figure out what each person's new word was. If the word is discovered, then both the person who used the word and the person who discovered the word may get a treat.

Do you want more ideas for vocabulary improvement? Buy each of your children a dictionary, punch a hole in it and tie it around their waists! I'm just kidding. I do, however, purchase a dictionary and a thesaurus for each child and encourage her to use it. When I graduated from High School, my dad bought me a real nice Collegiate Dictionary. My kids all seem to prefer that one to the smaller paperbacks. I even found it beneath Ashley's pillow. I'm not sure if she was hoping to absorb the contents through osmosis while she slept, or if she simply wanted to be able to look up new words if one popped up in her dreams. Speaking of kids dreaming. Erica will learn new vocabulary words in her sleep. It's like she practices them while she sleeps. Immerse your kids in our language!

## **The Dictosaurus Game**

One more vocabulary building game is The Dictosaurus Game. Mom chooses a paragraph and writes it on the white board, or on something similar. The goal is to be the one person who, using a thesaurus or dictionary, can change the most words in the paragraph. The paragraph could be anything Mom decides. Let's say I want to use the nursery rhyme, "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water," etc. The children then write out the rhyme, "Jill, along with Jack, hiked to the peak of a knoll, with the purpose of acquiring a container filled with clear liquid from the well." You may require your more advanced students to rhyme the second line with the first. Children love to be challenged!

When I was growing up, my dad, my sister, and I played the Dictosaurus Game using common clichés, and we thought it was great fun. In fact, we still talk about playing that game.

Still want another vocabulary building game? Begin with one word, like “aardvark.” The first person says, “Aardvark.” The next person must add a word to aardvark that begins with the same first letter. So they may say, “Arty aardvark.” The next may say, “Arty aardvark advances.” And on and on it goes. We do, however, allow the use of conjunctions to help advance the sentence or story.

## **Spelling Bees**

To encourage you children in their spelling skills, have spelling bees with them. Get the official spelling bee lists and play Spelling Bee Competition. This game will be more fun if you give different words to the kids based on their skill level. Don't give the six-year old a word like “unpretentious,” unless, of course, he can actually spell it. Sign that child up for the real spelling bee competitions!

## **3 x 5 Index Cards**

For younger children you can write all the letters, plus some duplicates, on 3 x 5 cards. Give them a time limit and have them organize the letters to form as many words as they can. They must, however, be spelled properly. Another game for younger children uses the same 3 x 5 cards. Two players each draw seven cards. With those seven cards they each form a word. The first child may make the word “deck.” He then draws four more cards. Every two-letter word earns two points; a three-letter word earns three points, etc. There is an advantage in being able to play multiple cards from your hand. Play until all the cards are gone, and then add up the scores. This is one of those games you may find your children playing for hours.

These are just a few ideas that I have accumulated over the years to help my children with their “Fire Drills.” These logs, when used as the foundation of a good fire, ensure that your children will be able to build fires that rage for a long time.

## **SPARKS**

### **Sparks Promote an Attitude that Releases Kinetic Studies**

What does that mean? Basically a "spark" is a plan, idea, or project that promotes in your children a desire to study a subject, or promotes in them a desire to improve the skills they have already attained. It will produce in them an "energy" (that's what "kinetic" means), which makes them WANT to continue to learn, explore, and study. Once your children get the hang of the sparks concept, they may begin inventing sparks of their own. You do not have to be creative to come up with sparks for your children. Steal them from other people. Whenever you hear a mom talk about a spark she used to ignite her children, write it down and use it! Keep track of sparks in your fuel notebook. Notice what kinds of things spark your children. Not all children will be sparked for the same things. Take notice of what things inspire your children.

All of the sparks listed in this chapter have been tested on real live children. (No children have been harmed in this study.) The age levels vary, of course, depending on the abilities of each child, but the neatest thing about sparks is that the child will either create or expand from the point he is at. A five-year-old and a ten-year-old beginning with the same spark will learn, will grow, and will both be challenged.

### **Mailbox**

Let's begin with some sparks for you to try on your own children: One of the best sparks to begin with is a mailbox. Now, I don't mean go out and buy a new one from the store. Have each of your children make their own personal mailbox. They can make them out of shoeboxes, tissue boxes, oatmeal containers, etc. They may decorate the boxes anyway they want. My children's boxes even have flags on them that can be raised when the children have a letter. Allow them to have their boxes near their bedroom door, hanging from the wall, or placed on shelves. Please understand you must set

up a couple of rules. When placing a letter into someone else's box it must be encouraging, uplifting, and kind. This is not a time for Big Brother to tell Little Brother that he's a pain in the neck! Packages are allowed too. Mom and Dad might need to get in the act and have their own boxes!

This simple little project has been known to help children learn to spell better, for they don't want to send a letter to Dad with misspellings on it. It energizes them to write, write, and write some more. Children also learn to communicate effectively as a by-product of giving a child a personal mailbox.

You remember making Valentine boxes at school, don't you? Well, this is a similar concept, but the children keep them up all the time.

## **Science Experiments**

Easy science experiments are another great way to put a spark in your child's learning. You can purchase simple science experiment books at all the major discount stores. There is even a scientist who will e-mail a science experiment to you each week. (If you would like an experiment a week, send e-mail to Robert Krampf at [krampf@krampf.com](mailto:krampf@krampf.com)) He also travels around the country and is a great opportunity for you to take your kids to see a "real" scientist. These experiments are great ways to begin your week. Your children will often find experiments they would like to do on their own.

## **Floor game**

The floor game is a spark I discussed in the chapter on Fire Logs. I added it here too because it is such a valuable spark that I want to make sure you don't forget about it. Let your children decide what floor game they would like to play and what they want to learn about. Perhaps they are studying a continent and would like to plot a floor game with the countries, traveling around answering questions about them. Don't forget that your children are often a wonderful source of sparks.

## **Velcro® ball game**

The Velcro® ball game was also discussed in the Logs chapter. Again, let your children figure out what kinds of things they want to learn. This is a great game for an older child to do with a preschooler. They could cut out different shapes and place them around the room. The child then tries to fit the shapes the older child has shouted out.

Speaking of older children teaching younger children, this is also a spark. We have some time set aside in our schedule for the older children to teach something to the younger children. Our oldest will work with a younger child on phonics, or she may read to all the younger children. We have so many children in our house that they are grouped into older and younger children categories. I often wonder how the younger children will feel when they are thirteen years old and we still refer to them as “the younger children.” Another one of our older children does an art lesson with the younger ones. This is a great time for all of them and gives the older children an opportunity to share a talent or gifting with a younger child. If you do not have any younger children, borrow some from another home schooler for an hour or so each week. A young mother with only young children will probably appreciate it if you take them to your house for an afternoon of play-dough, paint, or other messy craft.

## **Volunteer Work**

Another opportunity I’m including as a spark is volunteer work. You could have one of your children volunteer for a story hour at the library. Reading aloud is a marvelous skill of prime importance that is often overlooked. Boys and girls alike should be able to narrate a story clearly. You might decide to volunteer as a whole family.

## **Roll End Paper**

Do you all know what roll end paper is? It is the end of the rolls of newsprint. Many newspaper offices will sell hundreds of feet of this paper for a dollar or two. Not only is it economical (we make our own wrapping paper), but it is also a great spark. If you unroll some of the

paper, your children are going to find a use for it. If you are studying the human body, outline each of your children and have them draw the parts of their body. The little ones will draw in major things like eyes, ears, etc. The older ones may draw the nervous system, or the organs, or even draw and label the muscles.

Another project you can do with roll end paper is to tape it up to the wall and let your children write notes or draw on it. This may even be a keepsake for you someday.

## **Timelines**

We home schoolers often hear about the importance of timelines. Not only are they great for your children to get some historical perspective, they are also great for sparks. When you have a timeline up and some places seem kind of bare, your children will want to fill those spaces up. There are many ways to make timelines, and there are also books on timelines. We once used roll end paper to make a timeline, using 10 inches for every decade. That timeline was like a scroll. It was extremely heavy. We had a great time working on it, but didn't use it as much after the initial few times because it was so big and heavy. It was about 50 feet long. Was the experience worth the time and effort we put into it? I believe it was.

## **Contests**

We have children who are competitive. We believe that healthy competition is good. Therefore, we use contests to help spark our children. All I have to do is announce there will be a contest and everyone races for the resource books. I usually just outline the contest for them, tell them the rules, and send them on their way. My children especially like when we have contests with the other families in our home school group. One time we had a contest to see who could create a vehicle whose main passenger was an egg. The vehicle had to travel down a ramp, crashing into a board, without breaking the egg.

## **Nature Walks**

Nature walks are a must. Have your children take a few things with them when they go on a nature walk. Nature notebooks are vital. My children keep a backpack already packed for the days I tell them we are going on a nature walk. In their backpacks they carry pencils (some carry colored ones) and their nature notebook, which is a small spiral notebook with a hard back. The sheets are blank at the top with lines on the bottom. They also have observation books in their backpacks.

## **Biographies**

Reading biographies to my children is one of the best sparks I know. They tend to spark new interests as well. I will discuss this at length in the Fire Books chapter.

## **Family Games**

One way to give your children an appreciation of their own family heritage is in the development of family games. Have your children create games for Grandmas and Grandpa, or Aunts and Uncles, etc. You can create a game like "This is Your Life". You might include some of the historical things that happened during that person's life. You might have your child interview the person who they are creating the game for and include some of their "stories". You may even include trivia from their life. That's just one way to create a family game.

## **Board Game**

Whenever I see my children getting a little bored with a subject, I have them create a board game based on the subject we are studying. All I do is furnish them with poster board. They create the rest. They also have access to the pieces from our other games. But often they like to make their own pieces as well.

## **Encyclopedia Roulette**

Another fun and easy game to play is called Encyclopedia Roulette. I instruct each child to get an encyclopedia. They all sit down and I tell them to look through their encyclopedia for a certain amount of time and find something interesting to share with the rest of us. We then vote on the most interesting topic. Or I might tell them to all turn to the same page number. They must then peruse the page and tell us all what their page is about.

## **Famous Person**

Have your children dress up like a famous person. They will then give a speech based on the life of that person. The other children or audience members will try to guess who your child is portraying.

## **Stump the Parent**

Have your children create a *Jeopardy-style game* based on anything they want. We liked to call it Stump the Parent. The contestants of the game ...will be Mommy and Daddy!

## **Movie**

Sometimes you can use a movie to spark an interest in a child to learn more about a certain time period or person in history.

## **Unit for the Whole Family**

I have found, when we decide on a unit for the whole family to work on, that the children get more excited than if they just do something on their own. If we are all working together on it they are more apt to want to discover information to share.

## **Treasure Hunts**

Treasure hunts are a great way to teach map-making skills, geography, history, etc. All you have to do is have a treasure to hide and a way to find it. You could do treasure hunts through the house. Or you can do giant treasure hunts outside. You can create a giant map and have your children go to the correct places. You can even tell one of your children to create a treasure hunt, and off they will go.

## **Website**

We found a spark that has lasted for a long time when one of our children created their own personal website. She spends a great deal of time doing research and working on her website. She set the goal to make it educational and informative. She is constantly revising it to provide more and more information. This was a spark that lighted a fire for her, a fire that may never go out.

## **Tea Parties**

We like to have tea parties at our house. You may think a tea party is frivolous and could not possibly have the ability to spark a child. Oh, but that is so not true. We like to read poetry during our tea parties. Often a child will create a poem on his own that he would like read at the tea party. Some children look forward to teatime with great excitement. And who wouldn't want to sit around drinking tea (or Kool-Aid), eating scones (or animal crackers) and reading delightful poetry?

## **Assemble a Book**

Often if I want to encourage some creative writing, I will assemble a book and give it to the child. Or, I might just tell the child to assemble a book and write a story. They love to do this! I assemble the book placing blank paper between two sheets of cardstock. I then three-hole punch them and bind with yarn.

Another way to spark an interest in writing is to have them correspond with someone who writes neatly and who is faithful (Grandma) to return letters. This helps them to see how important it is to have neat handwriting (and has the added benefit of sparking a good relationship with Grandma.)

## **Food**

I often use food sparks for my children. You can make a bunch of pizzas the same size, and then cut them into wedges to help them with fractions. You can make a batch of cookies, cut them into state shapes, and have the children make a relief map of the U.S. with frosting. You can even have an "international" food day, based on the region that you want to study.

## **Puppet Show Theater**

Do you have a puppet show theater? I think all home schooling families should have a puppet show theater and some really good puppets. All you have to do is set up the theater in the living room, and the kids will take up the puppets and begin.

You will see as you begin implementing a spark just how energetic your children can get when they are excited about learning. They will run to the encyclopedias. They will bounce to learn their multiplication facts. They will even jump to find the right resource that they need for the project. It's not just the external difference you will see, but also deep within them, they will be developing a desire to learn.

## **ADDING THE KINDLING**

On a few occasions a spark will go out after just a couple of minutes. Often it is because the child simply doesn't know what to do next. This is particularly true when you first begin home schooling by Fire. This is when I need to come along and add a little kindling to get more out of that spark. In this chapter I'm going to expand on some of the sparks discussed in the last chapter. Sometimes we want to do too much for our children. We often need to ignite the spark and leave our children alone to develop a raging fire on their own. But there are also times when it takes the children a little longer to learn to make their sparks burn. You can then turn to this chapter to add some kindling. Or perhaps the spark was raging, but the fire has gone out, but you want to light it again. Then you can use some of the ideas in this chapter to "jump start" the spark.

### **Mailboxes**

We'll start with mailboxes. A few weeks or a month after your children have made their mailboxes, they may stop writing letters to each other. This is when you slip an anonymous gift for them into the mailboxes. Leave one for yourself too, so the kids don't catch on! If that isn't enough to get them to begin using their mailboxes again, start leaving clues to come information. In the letter ask the child to respond by 5:00 the next day with the correct answer to the clue. You might give them a treasure for answering the clue. Some of the clues could be related to something you've been studying. Or you might tell them to write you a letter using a list of words. This is a great way to give them "assignments." They won't even know when they are getting assignments; they will just think they are having fun!

We have had little visitors over who enjoyed seeing our children's mailboxes. When this happens, our older children will often make a mailbox with the visitors so they can take a mailbox home for themselves.

Most of their mailboxes were made out of old tissue boxes. One that David made was a milk jug with the look of a helmet. He would raise

the grill when he didn't have mail, and it would be lowered when he did have mail.

## **Science Experiments**

Science Experiments don't usually lose their spark if you do a new one each week. It's important, however, for Mom to remain diligent in doing the experiments with the child. Nothing gets rid of the spark faster than a mom who doesn't have the time to do the experiments with her children.

## **Observation Notebooks**

Have your children create observation notebooks. They can record in the notebook each experiment and what they discovered. Have them first write what they think will happen in the experiment (their hypothesis). You could prompt them to try other experiments. Don't forget that they need to do the experiments at least three times so they can check their data.

If you are a mom that isn't especially diligent when it comes to science experiments, create a folder of them to be taken out any time the child says, "Mom, I'm bored."

Additional kindling could be to buy your children kits based on some of their interests or something you are studying. We bought a volcano kit to help kindle a study we were doing. If you have a young child who is interested in the way things work, you could buy them a resource book on the way things work, a computer program, or give him things to take apart. You can buy them at garage sales for very little money. When my son received the book *How Things Work*, he wanted right away to build a typewriter. So we let him try to figure out how he would do that. And don't forget the power of Legos® to capture the mind and encourage creativity.

## **Floor Game**

The floor game deserves on more mentions, as it is such a wonderful way to learn information. One way to add kindling to this fire-starter (which probably doesn't need any kindling added to is) is to have the children each develop their own floor game. You can also use flashcards that you already have. If you have a deck of U.S. Presidents cards, you can use those as your game spaces. You can even make the floor game a little more physical. You could have spaces that require them to move in a certain way. For example they may encounter a space that directs them to slither from then on. Or perhaps they must hop. Or maybe they must crab walk. This adds additional fun to the game.

## **Teaching Siblings**

If you have a child that balks at the idea of teaching a younger sibling, have them teach something that is very special to them. Instead of having them teach a child to read, you might have one of your children who is gifted in music teach a younger sibling the piano. Or perhaps a child who especially likes to cook could have a young assistant help her in the kitchen. You could even have a craft time led by an older sibling.

## **Volunteer**

One way to bless your neighborhood is by having your children volunteer to help neighbors with projects. Perhaps an elderly neighbor needs to hire someone to shovel the walk. This would be a good way not only to help your children, but also to help those around you. You could have someone in your house volunteer to shovel without pay. You could even expand this a little and illustrate to your children the idea of budgeting by showing them how much a person would receive from a fixed income like Social Security. I can almost guarantee your child would be more than willing to sacrifice his time to help. Another volunteer idea is to go to a local nursing home and perform a puppet show for them. You could have your children go to

a nursing home and read to those people who can no longer read. Prepare some songs and sing to them. There are many opportunities for service that we need to be aware of and need to make our children aware of. Sometimes the child may just become a special friend to another person.

I was a young girl of about seven when I began “visiting” my dear friends, the Darzees. They owned a bakery in town when we first moved to the area. I would go over to the Darzees’ house a few times each week. Whenever I went, I was allowed to sample one of the produces from the bakery. I will never forget the taste of those wonderful plumped up sugar cookies. They were my favorite. Mr. Darzees would talk to me of Greece and would teach me some Greek phrases. This prompted me to want to please him so I went home and learned the Greek alphabet. I can still say it for you if you’d like me to. I never did learn to say it backwards, but I did try. I even tried translating some of the New Testament in Greek based on a book that my dad had on his bookshelf. Later in High School I participated in a unit study of Ancient Greece. When in college, the first class I signed up for was Greek. I acquired much of my teaching style from great men like Socrates and Plato.

So you see, volunteering to be a friend can have lasting rewards and can spark fires that rage in our hearts forever. I am convinced that one of the people I will be allowed to visit with in Heaven will be my dear friends, the Darzees. Perhaps their mansion will be across the street from mine.

### **Roll End Paper**

Adding kindling to the roll end paper may seem a little silly at first. When the children get into using the paper, however, there is no stopping their imaginations. I like the roll end paper particularly for drawing the human body, but it has a lot of other uses as well. Children could make murals with it. They can draw cities and countries. They can create landscapes. They can use it as a backdrop for a play they are making. My children use it to make huge welcome signs or Happy Birthday cards. It also makes great wrapping paper.

## **Timelines**

You can make timelines for just about anything you are studying. One way to do a timeline is to put a long strip of paper all around your room. Make it high enough so little hands don't pull it down but not so high that the children cannot add to the timeline. Having a timeline up at all times is a very good idea. Just put up a different one if you want to do a different period of time. You could even make it very elaborate and color code it. Perhaps you will make all the government figures and information in red. You might do the music and drama in yellow. Inventions might be in blue, etc. If you are studying the Revolutionary War, you might have a timeline just for that. Whenever you talk about another event or battle; just put it on your timeline.

## **Contest**

Of all the times I've announced a contest, I don't remember ever having to add kindling to the spark. However, there have been times that we have needed to "go back to the drawing board." There are times that a child's invention simply doesn't work. It is sometimes difficult to keep them from being discouraged, but if you make it a little less painful by saying something like, "back to the drawing board: in a cheerful way, it may keep the discouragement at bay.

In our basement we have a room that is referred to as the "arts and sciences" room. In there we keep all the paints, a drafting table, painting sponges, glue, glitter, etc. We also have our recyclables in there, items we've collected that would normally have ton in the trash, but we figured they might be useful for something...someday. This is the stash the children use to make many of their projects. We put two garbage cans in our kitchen. Into one we put the normal garbage. Into the other, we put things like paper towel tubes, toilet paper tubes, clean juice cans and lids, Styrofoam trays (do not use any that have contained raw meat), etc. You can also pick up supplies at garage sales. Or just let it be known you want garbage, and people will happily collect it for you.

Whenever your children get that glassy eyed look of boredom, announce that you are going to have a contest. I have not found a good source of contests, so either the children or I have come up with most of them. There is always an objective. When we had a boat contest, the objective was the boat must float, must be able to move through the water, and must not sink if a hurricane came. The children discovered what things were buoyant and what were not. They discovered there must be a certain amount of weight. The boat contest was one of my favorites.

### **Science Fair**

Another type of contest could be having a science fair. Arrange with another family or your home school group to get together and do a science fair. It doesn't have to be elaborate to be great fun for all of the children.

### **Nature Walk**

If it were feasible, I would take my children on a nature walk every single day. When I was reading the biography of C.S. Lewis, I discovered that he did take nature walks every day. These were some of his most loved times. I want that for my children. Not only am I facilitating in them a love for learning, but I am also trying to instill in them a love for God and for His creation. Taking daily (or as often as you can) nature walks will help keep them on this path. There is surely delight in relishing in the beauty of nature. The children also receive the added benefit of spending uninterrupted time with Mom. When out on a nature walk, the child does not have to compete with telephones ringing, dishes that need to be done, or any of the other things that seem to be pressing in on Mom.

Different mediums of art add fun to a nature hike. One day, you might take with you some charcoals, another day watercolors, and still another day, you might take colored pencils or crayons. Don't forget the cookies – they go great with paint!

I will often give my children an assignment when we get to the trail that we are going to take. Sometimes I will tell them the first person to identify a living plant will receive a reward. Or perhaps, the first to find a creature will be rewarded that day. As we are walking along, it is nice to stop in a particular spot and begin to draw what we see. So often we spend our lives running to the next place and miss the view along the way. I want my children to learn to stop and see all that God has given us. I don't believe life is a series of steps that must be arrived at; it is a meandering trail that simply must be absorbed.

## **Biography**

After reading a biography to your children, discuss ways in which the life of this person now affects your lives. Whenever I read a biography, a portion of that person's life becomes a portion of my life. I have read many biographies of people who have lived in the countryside of England. I believe this has influenced my own life. As I read of them taking their walks and spending time in places like Oxford with the spires and towers, or of watching the rain come down, day after day, I long within my heart to visit such a country. Even if I can only visit in my imagination, it becomes a part of my life. One of the beauties of home schooling is that we can send our children to England, France, or Scotland even if it's only in a book. They can read of great men and women of faith and through them, gain a deeper knowledge of the Lord they serve.

Just as it is important for our children to know of the great men and women that shaped our history, it is equally important for them to know their own heritage. This component is often missing in our lives today. When looking at the heritage of your family, you can spark a desire to know more about a country or a group of people. You can spark a desire to want to be a part of your family's ancestry.

## **Family Game**

The paternal side of my kids' family has a legend that their family came to America via a cabin boy on the Mayflower. The claim is that

a boy of twelve, left Scotland in 1620, came out as a cabin boy on the Mayflower with the Pilgrims, and settled in the state of Connecticut. Our children could create a family game based on this small piece of information. They could discover more about the Pilgrims. They could learn more about Scotland. The list is endless because each new discovery can lead to another discovery.

Your children can create family games based on the life of an ancestor. Steve's dad has in his possession the diary of a captain in the early 1800's. This relative could easily be turned into a spark for my children.

A relative of my moms was the first white child born in the county. My dad's grandparents came over from Norway. All of these tidbits can be turned into board games that can be given as gifts and shared with members of the family.

## **Board Games**

Speaking of board games, these are sometimes a little harder for children to begin creating. Sometimes they need some added kindling from Mom or Dad to help them get the idea rolling. Sometimes all it takes is a brainstorming session, but there are other times that they need a little extra prodding along. You might have to help them by giving them assignments. Again, they don't really think they are getting "assignments," but think they are creating a board game.

If they are creating a game on the Civil War, the first thing you might have them do is gather some facts. You might tell them that they each need to come up with a certain number of facts about the Civil War. You might then tell them to find some interesting stories about the Civil War. Have them discover the supplies that the armies needed. The list is endless. Once they gather their data, transferring it into a board game is pretty easy.

## **Encyclopedias**

Encyclopedias are one of the most loved series of books in our house. When my children were very young we began using the encyclopedia to learn about all the things that began with a certain letter. For example, we might have chosen the letter S. We would all (three of us at the time) sit on the couch and look through the encyclopedia (letter S) to find new information. It was great fun and the kids would not let me stop. They would want to keep going through the whole book. That wasn't possible in one sitting, of course!

You might use an encyclopedia as a beginning point for a paper that your child is going to write. If they are stumped with an idea, you could simply say, "Go to page 368 in Volume N, and write about that." It's totally random and sometimes not appropriate but it adds a sense of mystery to their paper. Even Mom doesn't know what their paper will be about on that day. There have been many sparks ignited in just this very way.

There also comes a time when a child grows beyond the encyclopedia. You know the day when your child comes to you and says, "I want more information than they are giving me!" That is the grand day when you drop all of your plans and head over to the library.

## **Movie**

Some of you may wonder how you can use a movie to spark your child, or what kind of kindling you can add. You may choose a movie based on the idea it will spark your child, or you may stumble upon a spark by accident. This happened with us while watching the movie *Searching for Bobby Fisher*. Our oldest son, who was five at the time, became enamored with the idea of playing chess. His daddy sat down with him that night and explained the game to him. Just a few months later, he was challenging everyone to chess. From then on, he received a chess set for Christmas, and for his birthday and Christmas since he always seemed to lose the pieces down the

vents, thus needing a new one that often. It's fun for us to find him different kinds of chess sets. We will probably get him a marble chess set when he turns eighteen. His goal was to eventually beat the chess master a.k.a. Daddy. It took him three years, but he finally did it. It was a day that will forever be etched in his memory.

We have used other movies hoping they would light a spark in our children. Many of the movies we chose were historical or biographical in nature. We have found that, for the most part, this is an effective way to light a fire.

Still need kindling for a movie? Try having your children construct one of the sets (in miniature), or paint one of the backdrop scenes from the film. If the film is historical, have the children write a story about one of the characters taking a time machine to the modern day. What would they say? What would they think of us? If they are adventurous enough, your children may enjoy acting out one of the scenes from the movie. They might even want to act a conversation between one of the characters and someone in modern times. These are just a few ideas. If you take the time to discuss the movie, other ideas will come as well.

## **Unit Study**

When the whole family is involved in a unit study, I have found the children get into it more than when they are doing things alone. If you really need a little more incentive, have them invite some friends or relatives over, and give a little presentation about what they have learned.

One of the fun ways to do a unit is to all sit down and decide what you are going to study. Then choose a day that you are all going to come back together and discuss what you have learned. The object is to try to come up with some interesting facts that aren't known by anyone else. Or a child can create a crossword puzzle or other kind of "test" and administer it to the entire family.

## **Website**

To help a child want to learn more about a subject that they are interested in, assign them a Website to create. Many places on the web offer free home pages. They also offer point and click web site creation, which is not the most beneficial for a child. One of the biggest benefits of web site creation is learning to write HTML and Java, CSS, etc. I think it is important for them to learn these skills. We checked out a book on HTML from the library and my children were off to a running start. There were also tutorials online that I allowed them to use.

## **Tea Party**

When having a tea party, it would be delightful for you to invite one of the widows from your church. This would also encourage the children to clean the house, although, I'm sure none of you have any trouble getting your children to clean! Another benefit of inviting a widow to tea is the company of an older member from your church. Often the home schooling family is misunderstood. This is a great way to be a shining light, even to the people in your own congregation.

## **Writing A Book**

If your child has trouble writing his own book, you might start with him drawing the illustrations and narrating the story to you. Sometimes the process isn't nearly so daunting if he doesn't have to write the book out in long hand. You might at first need to give him some ideas to write about. For some reason, writing a book about his life is a lot more fun for my child than writing a paper seems to be.

## **Food**

If you have never used food to spark an interest in your children, you have been missing out on a special blessing. Pizza is an especially fun way to learn. You can make pizza relief maps using chicken, sausage, various vegetables, and ranch dressing. You can color the ranch dressing blue for water, brown for desert areas, etc. The

mountains could be a pile of chicken topped with some ranch dressing or mozzarella cheese. Perhaps a patchwork of sausage and broccoli for states like Iowa and Nebraska.

Whenever we are studying a new region we try to find foods to sample. It might cost a little more to buy a plantain, but the memory alone is worth the cost.

Being able to educate our children has multifaceted benefits. Among those benefits is an education where the children actually learn what they are studying. Whereas so many attempts at education dampen the desire and dull the understanding, sparks and kindling keep the embers burning for years. The memories that we make with our children as we study with them enrich everyone in the family. As we all work on a project together, we create a bond with each other that gives our family a solid and lasting base on which to stand. And if tragedy strikes, the bonds you have will get you through anything!

## **FUELING THE FIRE WITH NOTEBOOKS**

*What is a notebook and how can it be used to help fuel fires in your children?*

A notebook is a three ring binder. You can purchase any size that you want. I like the 1-inch size the best as I find them easier to store on a shelf. I also prefer the kind with a clear pocket on the front. Your child can design his own cover and it makes the ability to use the notebook for something else, a far greater possibility. You need to have plenty of these as the children will each want several of their own. Equip each of the notebooks with some blank paper (3 hole punched) and some lined paper. An extra item you may want to have would be page protectors. These can get expensive if you have a lot of "productive" children. You might consider protectors just for the special projects you are currently working with. For example if we are working on South America together, each of the children will have a South America notebook. This would include within it, outline maps (which we would keep in the protector sheet), perhaps some general information sheets, and other information you may want to include. I would caution you not to give them too much information to start, but to encourage them to find their own information sources to include. I have some notebooks that I require and some that are optional, based particularly on the interests of the child.

One of the biggest benefits to notebooks is the children learn the JOY of finding out information and developing a love of learning. As we have discussed earlier, each child has been created in a unique way by a Creator who knows what He is doing. The knowledge they gain in their early years isn't solely for the goal of them getting the best jobs when they grow up. It is much more about developing their character and individual gifts for their life callings.

The greatest advantage to the notebook concept is that children will learn at their level and a little above their level. They will be stretched, but not held back. One disadvantage of the public school system is that the brighter children often will have to wait for those who aren't

quite getting it, to catch up. This is not the case with notebooks. I would even recommend the notebook concept to be encouraged in the public schools. Or perhaps parents who are supplementing their children's public education with home education can use this concept to encourage their children to develop their passions and to learn about the things that interest them. Who knows, they might even be able to use it as a school project sometime down the road?

My sister and her husband are youth leaders at their church. They are using the notebook concept with their youth kids. The kids are required through the year to keep a notebook on the subject of Metamorphosis. So you see, this is a concept that can be used by many groups for many different reasons.

One thing to remember when embarking on a notebook or series of notebooks is to have a goal in mind. It doesn't have to be an elaborate goal, but it is important to have a goal in order to know if the goal is being met. It isn't enough to say, "I want them to learn all they can". That isn't specific enough. However, having a goal that is, too narrow is also not a good idea. That is, unless you have a child that is older and wants to specialize in a certain area.

I will first discuss some of the required notebooks. We do not work on each of these everyday. We would not have enough time to do each subject justice if we were only given a 30-minute time slot. I've found my children would just start "getting into it" and we would have to switch gears and move on to something else. We now have larger blocks of time in our day set aside to work on one or two notebooks each day.

## **The Bible Notebook**

They each have a Bible notebook. Even the little ones want their own Bible notebook. Our Bible notebook will not be exactly like your Bible notebook. Again, this is a subject that requires a great deal of prayer and a willingness to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit. If you feel

led to do the same thing we do, that is fine, as long as you know what the Lord has called you to do in that area.

Our current Bible notebook is based on the books of the Bible. Each day that we work on these notebooks is a new book of the Bible. For example, the first book is Genesis. Thus the first page in our notebook is Genesis. They may fill in sheets behind it as long as it has to do with Genesis, or the statement, He is the creator. After the book name, we have a statement that shows the relationship of Jesus in that particular book. So, the statement for Genesis is, He is the Creator. Everything they do on that page and behind that page is dependant upon that statement. I only require them to write the book and the statement. However, they never stop there. They take these notebooks to church and if the Pastor makes a statement or reference from that book, related to that subject, or not, they can add it to their Bible notebook.

You can do this notebook in one of two ways. You can have them write out all of the books with their statements, then when you tell them to work in their Bible notebook, they can choose which book they want to work with on that particular day. Or, you may have them do each book as you work each day. Then everyone in the family is doing the same book on the same day. If you haven't figured it out by now, I like to maximize my time, by minimizing my effort. Minimizing my effort means that we are all on the same page. However, if you write out all the books, they can work in their Bible notebooks any time they feel like they want to. You could spend a couple of days having them write out all the books, then when you have required time, you could tell them all to work on one particular page. That sounds like a good compromise to me.

I want to tell you a story about Exodus. We had done Exodus on this particular day. The statement for Exodus is, "He is our Redeemer". I had the children look up redeemer in the dictionary to see what it said. We discussed it at length. Cathy and David were both particularly enamored with this particular book and statement. They worked a long time on their Bible notebooks that day. That night when Steve began our devotions at dinner, the subject was "Jesus as our Redeemer". Now Steve did not know what we had done earlier in the day and I did not know what he was going to do that evening. But, the Holy Spirit knew.

As soon as Steve said, "What does redeemer mean"? Cathy was able to shoot her arm into the air excitedly because she already knew the answer to Daddy's question. This was a great day for her. If you memorize scripture together as a family, you can have a separate notebook for that, or you can incorporate it into your Bible notebook. Your children who read their Bibles daily and are old enough can write notes from what they read. If they have enough writing to do, you can have them draw relevant pictures of what they read. If your children take notes on sermons they can put them in their Bible notebook. You could make a block chart of all the chapters in the bible and have that pasted to the back cover and have them mark off when they read them. They will be amazed how quickly they can read the whole Bible if they get in the habit of reading daily. And they will be able to see their progress.

I would think it goes without saying, but when your child completes the whole Bible, he should be rewarded BIG. I have been known to pay my children for reading their Bibles every day for a whole year.

### **Handwriting Notebook**

My children also are required to maintain a handwriting notebook. This notebook contains sample letters and notebook paper. They are to practice their handwriting in them. Some children will become exempt if their handwriting is already neat. I believe I downloaded the sample pages from the Robinson Curriculum.

### **Phonics Notebook**

The younger children are required to maintain a phonics notebook. When they make mistakes in their writing, I remind them of the phonics rule that would be appropriate and they write it in their phonics notebook. I may elaborate more with this by having them find other words that would also fit this rule. As they look through their

notebooks they may see a pattern and be able to learn from the mistakes they have made in the past.

## **Unit Notebooks**

Whenever we do a unit together, the children each will maintain a notebook on that unit. They are allowed, yes, even encouraged, to go beyond what we are doing and discover for themselves more than we are covering. The first day of a new unit I will tell the children what we are going to be studying. I will tell them what my goal is for the unit. Sometimes they might, as we progress in the study, to develop a goal of their own. That is okay for them to do, as long as they keep within the original goal too. I will often give them a handout or two for their notebook. If it's a geographical region, I will often give them a map, or an outline map. I may give them questions that I want them to try to answer as we're going through the study.

## **Art Notebook**

A couple of times a week I will give the children a picture that I want them to draw, either from a picture, or something that is around them. These pictures they put into their art notebook. We have several good books that instruct them in art. I will sometimes have them do a lesson from one of those books, or I may have them draw something in real life. One thing my children have always been good at is drawing. My theory on this is that they have the time to draw. Many children do not have the time to do the "extras" that make life more fulfilling.

## **Personal Notebooks**

Each of the children makes their own personal notebooks. These may be on any subject they wish. They may be the foundation for a project they are working on, or they may just be for fun. This is primarily the reason they do their notebooks. They enjoy doing them. I will often find them working on their notebooks during their free time. They take great pride in their notebooks and enjoy showing them off

to everyone who is willing to see them. They take their notebooks with them in the car. They take them outside with them. They sit in their rooms and work on them. They check out books from the library so they can do more in their notebooks.

We have one child who loves working in her notebook so much that the other children accuse her of "hogging" all the notebooks. She has a stack of ten in her room that she is working on, or has filled up. Several of them are a series on the same subject. It has been neat to watch her work improve from the early notebook days to the present.

One resource we have found is the Extension Office in our county. They have several booklets on many different subjects. Our Extension Office is very pro home schooling and are more than willing to give us free materials and loan us for extended periods of time, their science kits. The booklets they have given us are the ones that are used for 4H projects. The booklets have many ideas in them. These make a great spark for their notebooks. Ashley has a booklet on horses. She uses this as her foundation for her horse notebook. She has also used her notebook to expand into her website creation. Some of the ideas on her website came from questions or projects in the horse booklet from the Extension Office.

## **SMOKE**

If there is a fire off in the distance, what is the first thing you see? You see the smoke.

What is the effect of a raging fire? The effect is an awesome column of smoke.

The smoke I'm referring to is the character of our children. We want within our children a character that can be seen for miles around. If my children are mediocre citizens, mediocre Christians, and mediocre parents, I have failed them in their education. My desire is to raise up children who are going to produce awesome columns of smoke.

That doesn't mean they must be on stage, or that we must always make them perform. It means that the character within them is so strong that it will be seen. They don't really have to do anything to make the smoke. It should just come from them, and I believe that it will. If we train our children to love learning and to love the Lord, they will rise above like smoke from a raging fire.

We can encourage this in our children. We can encourage them to step out at church. We can encourage them to be leaders in the group. Not all home-schooled children are destined to be leaders, but a great many of them will be called to leadership. We are not training our children to be "cookie cutter kids," but we train them instead to set their own course. Even our librarian calls homeschoolers a different breed. Home schooling gives our children the opportunity to learn how to be leaders in their homes, churches, and communities. Home schooling with Fire Philosophy in particular will teach our children how to complete objectives. They will know what information needs to be absorbed in order to complete a task, and they will know where to find that information. We are training them to know what they want and to know how to get there. We are also training them to know the Guide who will take them there.

While our children are young, we are their guides. As we seek God and His wisdom for their lives, He guides us. Gradually, as they grown and mature, they learn from this model. They observe and

emulate parents who seek God and His guidance. Someday they will leave our home, they will become parents, and they will need His guidance for their own families.

While I haven't had any of my children go out into the world on their own yet, I've seen plenty of home schooling children who have. I've also seen mine get a taste of what the world is like. If you will indulge me for a minute, I would like to share some observations that I have about my children in the world.

I must admit I have been fearful that my children would appear shy and withdrawn. But that is not true. Oh, it may be true in some instances, but when it really counts, they are smokin'. Along with our daughter, who told us the Holy Spirit had been prompting her, we decided it was time for her to make a public affirmation of her faith. We approached the Pastor who, along with the elders, decided that was okay. In front of our whole church, at the age of thirteen, she gave a marvelous testimony that had the congregation in tears. More importantly, she left a mark on their hearts. She spoke of how God is taking away her worry and about how she is learning to rely on Him, especially for the care of her animals. No one knew that shortly before she got up in front of the church we had discovered that her dog had been shot. Perhaps the smoke coming from her was simply for me. I saw a little girl who just months before had worried over every little thing in regard to her beloved animals. And here she was standing before two hundred people proclaiming that God is in charge of her animals and that He knows when they should live .. and when they should die. Our entire pew was in tears, and there she stood with barely a cracking in her voice. I knew in that moment that God was in charge of my daughter and that He would lift her up.

I heard someone come up to our pastor later and tell him, "All the kids should be required to do that."

A few weeks later, someone stood up in church and said, "I was inspired by the little Camp girl and would like to share my testimony."

I'm not saying these things to brag about my daughter, but to boast of the working of the Lord. We were unaware of what the Holy Spirit was doing in the lives of the members of our congregation. It was the Holy

Ignite the Fire! By Terri Camp

Spirit who prompted her to share her testimony. She simply obeyed, and God used our daughter as a means to send smoke signals to our church.

Our prayer for our children is that God will reveal Himself in them, as His power in their lives rises like smoke, pointing to the Father.

## **EXTINGUISHING THE FIRE**

As with all fires, there are ways to extinguish the flame. I cannot think of any legitimate reason to intentionally do this, but I'm including some extinguishers in this book so that you are aware of them and can avoid extinguishing the fire in your children.

A sure-fire way to extinguish the flame of learning in your children is to allow them a great deal of time watching television, playing video games, or using the computer. These are passive activities and will sap your child very quickly of the desire to learn. I know this first hand. In a very short amount of time, my usually inventive children went from being always busy to not knowing what to do. It was horrifying for me to hear every morning, "Can we watch a movie?" They weren't watching "bad" things. They weren't just sitting in front of the TV indiscriminately watching a cartoon network or something. These were decent movies that we had approved. I was very busy doing some things, so I needed them to be occupied for about a week. The movies just seemed the easiest way to do that. Visibly however, the brains began to slow down. If you don't believe me, shut your TV off for a month and watch the transformation take place in your children. They will once again be enjoying life and wanting to learn.

We have never had a video game player in our house, but from what I've heard, they are also big fire extinguishers. I would urge you to use extreme caution with these if you have younger children.

Whether it's from television, video games, or computer usage, the massive doses of instant information desensitize a child's mind. After this dulling effect, children lose the ability to appreciate the struggle and the triumph of seeking out information on their own. Encyclopedias, books, and maps become boring since they don't move, dance, and sing for them. As the children grow used to information being fed to them in such active media, it steals the joy from the active pursuit of learning. The biggest danger may be that children learn to be dependent on someone else's talents of presentation, rather than taking charge of their own quest for knowledge.

You can quickly extinguish all the fires in your children by not spending time with them. A child left to himself will not flourish. There may be exceptions, but for the most part, I believe children desire and need the companionship of their parents to help fuel the fires within them. Therefore, if you remove that time and companionship, the fires will go out. Or, the fires will be replaced with the kind we do not want our children to be exploring. We must sacrifice of ourselves, in order that our children will become all that they are meant to be.

If you have a child that says, “Why?” with any frequency, you will know it is often difficult to constantly answer his questions. It is so very important though, that we take the time with them to help them discover the answers. Even when they have asked what seems to be five hundred questions already, and it’s only noon, we must be willing to stop whatever we’re doing and keep the fire going. I’m not telling you that you can never tell your child that you’re busy and cannot take the time to answer him or guide him right now; what I am saying is that parents need to avoid the point where we don’t hear the questions anymore. Pretty soon the child will stop asking the questions. He won’t stop because he has all the answers; he will stop because in our own selfishness, we have extinguished the fire in him. I used to carry a notebook in my van that I called the “I wonder why” book. If a child asked a question that I couldn’t answer and really wanted to help him find the answer, I would have someone write the question in the notebook so we could later go find the answer. You know that invariably the moment you would arrive home, you would forget the question. It also made the child feel good knowing that I was on top of his question and wanted to help him find an answer.

On those same lines, however, we can also extinguish the fires in our children by giving them all the answers to their questions. It is easier to simply tell your child what he wants to know. If your son comes to you while you are in the middle of doing the dishes and says, “Mom, how many legs does an insect have?” you will be helping to extinguish his fire by giving him the answer. It would be far better for Mom to dry off her hands and guide her child to the right book in which to find the answer, than it would be for her to simply say, “six.” Using insect as an example, if the mother is a fire-starting mother, she may guide her child to the dictionary. Here they will together look up the word insect. As they read the definition of insect, the child’s

eyes light up as the mother reads about the insect being segmented with a head, thorax, abdomen, three pairs of legs, and one or two pairs of wings. As the child gazes at the dictionary, he spies a picture of a grasshopper that is labeled with various parts. The child decides then and there that he would like to draw the picture and label the parts. Look back at the mother standing at the sink with her hands in the hot soapy water. If the mother had simply turned to her child and answered him, she would have been filling his bucket with tidbits of information, thereby quenching a possible ignition.

## **FIRE TOOLS**

As with every profession, we need to have some professional tools on hand. I will seek to explain many of the essential fire building tools in this chapter. Some will be self-explanatory. Others may be covered more in depth in another chapter. All are necessary.

### **Bible**

As soon as a child is beginning to read, he should have his own Bible. If the Bible is an integral part of your schooling, this may be the book he wants to read first.

### **Three-ring binders (the ultimate fun school)**

When I asked our oldest daughter what we did that was fun in school, she said, “nothing.”

Oh no! I thought. How could she think we don't do anything fun in school? I give speeches on this subject. When I asked her, “Well, how about notebooks?” she responded that those don't count. After further investigation I discovered she only counted doing math as “school.” All the rest was just fun stuff. She had learned that the word “school” meant sitting at a table with a workbook. “Life” is all the rest of the things we do.

Binders just have way too many uses to be left by the wayside. For instance, you can make a history binder of pictures. When you talk about or read a book about a certain time in history, have them draw a picture that would be relevant. Put these pictures in your history notebook. Eventually your children might draw enough to have multiple volumes on history!

You could also make a geography notebook using postage stamps as your theme. Get a package of postage stamps from around the world, place a stamp on the paper, and then find out about where the stamp came from.

David decided to draw every President of the United States. He filled his notebook with Presidential portraits that he drew. In addition, he would gather more information on each of the presidents and put them in the page protector sheets.

## **Paper**

I think this is self-explanatory but if not, I will elaborate a little. We buy paper in box boxes from warehouse stores. Better yet, find a printer who would be willing to give you “junk” paper. They make a lot of it. In the winter months we can easily go through fifteen hundred sheets per month. Paper is simply not a product that I conserve. I allow my children to color and draw, color and draw, and eventually they graduate to asking me, “How do you spell horse?” The whole process flows naturally from an abundance of paper!

## **Composition books**

There are several ways to start a child down the path of writing. Here are some ideas:

1. Have the child write a description for a blind man. Look out the window and describe what you see. Or, try to describe a color, or a smell, or a taste. What does an orange taste like?
2. Give your child a couple of sentences, like this: “I couldn’t believe it was happening. Right before my very eyes I was viewing the most amazing thing I had ever seen....” Sit back and watch where they go with it.
3. Have your child choose fifteen to twenty words at random, then have her write a story using all of those words. You could model this idea after the “Mad Lib” concept. Have her give you five nouns, five verbs, and five adjectives, etc.

**Pencils**  
**Pens**  
**Markers**

## **Paper punch**

Of course, when talking about paper punches, I must caution you that they make a great big mess...particularly in the hands of a three year old. Oh, but the joy on his face cutting little holes in everything! The dots do vacuum up fairly easily ... as long as the air isn't too dry...but then you could do a lesson on static electricity. So, you see, a paper punch is a multi-function device.

## **Duct Tape**

I believe the need for duct tape is self-explanatory. I will not delve further into this one. If you need more inspiration, rent some old episodes of MacGuyver.

## **Paper Towel, Toilet Paper, and Gift Wrapping Tubes**

Do not throw these away! Store them in your arts and sciences room. One thing you can do with them, besides tooting reveille when someone asks a thought provoking question, is make a rain maker. Tape one end shut and poke nails into the tube every  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch into the seam. Don't poke them all the way through, just to the other side of the tube. Pour a handful or two of beans or rice, tape the other end shut. Tape the nails into place, and there you have a rainmaker. These are great if you are doing a rain forest skit and want some good sound effects.

## **Juice Cans/Lids**

Again, just keep some handy for fostering creativity in your children.

## **Poster Board**

This has unlimited uses. The only limit is the imagination.

One use for poster board is to make board games. We had one child make a game like chess, but using animals instead. The pieces moved in relation to the type of animal it represented. A gopher could

burrow underground and come up anyplace it wanted. The kangaroo could hop forward three spaces. The sidewinder could only move one space up, but it could move sideways any number of spaces.

A more advanced game could also be a present for Grandma and Grandpa. We actually used a science project board for our game, but you could use poster board too. Have your child interview their grandparents. Then have them create a game that would be like Trivial Pursuit, or Monopoly. We made our game and called it Campopoly. We created history cards and memory cards. The history cards were bits of trivia that occurred while Grandma and Grandpa were alive. The spaces along the boards were all related to members of the family. For example one aunt is from Italy, so there was a space that said, "Lose a turn – eating spaghetti with Fulvia in Italy"

You could also make a game based on a book you've read. You could make a Lion, Witch and Wardrobe game. The players would enter the game at the wardrobe. One reminder here, you can "help," but don't "do" it. Let your children do most of the creating. You'll be astonished and think you have some of the most creative kids on the planet!

Beyond using poster board for games, one of our children likes to create foldaway scenes to play with. She created a barn with a tub of water, a bucket, some tack, a couple of stalls, a tack room, etc. She did all of this with poster board, glue, tape, and Velcro.

### **Books/Library Card**

Make reading to your children a priority. Also, listen to your children. If they don't like the book, don't make them sit through the whole thing. Choose another. And don't forget to put on a good show when reading to your children. Sometimes stop at the cliffhanger. No matter how much they beg for more, be strong. It may pay off when you see your beginning reader trying to figure out what happens next when he reads the beginning of the next chapter himself. I let our children work on their notebooks while we read. Even our younger children have notebooks. They just sit and color in them, or cut out pictures.

## **Set of Encyclopedias**

These do not have to be new. Have a red-letter day. The first day it is A. Go through the A encyclopedia together and find a person, a place, and a thing that starts with the letter A. An older child can make up a story with those three things. Talk about the different sounds the letter A makes. Talk about the different phonograms that have the letter A or that make the A sound like “eigh.” Think of things that start with the letter A. Have A’s for breakfast. Live the A day!

Often a library is giving away older sets of encyclopedias. I called libraries in the area and they would give me their old sets. We had extras that we would use to cut pictures from for our timeline notebooks. The Book of Knowledge is a great set with awesome pictures!

## **Spiral Notebooks**

The nice thing about spiral notebooks is they can go anywhere without losing the pages. My kids like to take these in the car and write in them while we go on a trip.

## **Material, Needles, and Thread**

You do not need to go out and buy new material. Just give your children some basic lessons in sewing and let them have access to the material. You may be surprised what they create. One of my kids began making tack for her play horses.

## **Pennies**

These are great for games and counting. Our twenty-month old doesn’t talk much yet, but one of the few words he knows is “Money!”

## **Money, Cash Register, and Products**

Play store. Even my big kids like to help with this. Let them be the store manager! Again, you don’t have to go out and buy pretend food.

Just use the empty packages that you've already used. (provided there is no "food" in them)

## **Muffin Tin**

Play the muffin tin reinforcement game discussed in the sparks chapter. Use letters, words, numbers, etc. Just the other day I had a mom tell me that her kids loved the muffin tin game and that they had learned many of their multiplication facts the very afternoon they learned of the game.

## **Felt**

In addition to being good for color-coded memorization games, felt is pretty cheap and can be used by children to create whatever their imaginations will allow.

## **Velcro®**

This is my all-time favorite invention! I buy huge rolls of it. The kids use it for everything from tack for their play horses to clasps on their fold-up scenery.

## **Ping-Pong Balls**

Cover them with Velcro and use them to throw at felt pieces. If you have a little one learning letter sounds, you could create a letter sound toss game. Write the letters on a half piece of felt. Mom can say the sound and your little one throws the ball at the right letter. Just an aside comment here, little ones need to move...not sit still.

## **The Good Kids Box**

This is a box that I keep stacked with small items like pencils, erasers, Velcro, candy bars, gum, etc. I allow the children to pick out of it when they do something extraordinary. If they help another child with their JOYS, if they clean up a room without being told, if they are working on a specific character trait problem and I see them making progress, etc., all are reasons to be allowed to pick an item. I also have a Blessed Kids Box. This box contains smaller items like hard

candies, pieces of gum, etc. They are mostly candies. If a sibling gets to pick out of the Good Kids Box, the other children are allowed to pick out of the Blessed Kids Box because they are blessed to have such a special sibling. At various times I may walk up to someone and say, "I'm sure blessed to have children like you guys." That's their cue that they are allowed to pick out of the Blessed Kids Box.

### **Index Cards**

Make your own flash cards. No, have your child make his own flash cards! Play Hide the Flash Cards. It's fun to do this at night with flashlights. Hide the cards around the house and when they find one, they get to say what it is. You could give one M&M with each correct answer.

### **Black Markers**

I'm not sure what possessed me to want a supply of permanent black markers, but I have since found them to be indispensable. Oh well, some day I may learn.

### **Dry Erase Markers and Dry Erase Board**

These are great for playing Pictionary, writing messages to each other, drawing, etc. Oh yea...you can even use them to explain math problems. ☺

### **Roll End Paper**

This is particularly fun for drawing your children. We learned body parts by having the children lie down on the paper as we traced around them. Little kids labeled the easy parts (arm, leg, etc) big kids drew in the esophagus, kidneys, and heart.

### **Yardstick Measuring Tape**

Kids love to measure stuff. Give a five-year old a measuring tape and he will go around measuring everything in sight. No need for the worksheets that ask them to measure a pencil and a paperclip. Just

give him the measuring tape! Measure their wingspan, then measure their height. How does it compare?

## **Field Guides**

These are great to take with you on your nature hikes. Some children really thrive on nature. These are a good way for them to learn about the world around them.

## **Backpacks for Nature Walks**

Have the backpack ready and packed for each child. Include a nature notebook, colored pencils, a field guide (a different one in each child's bag), plastic bags (one for gathering trash and one for collecting specimens), a snack, bottle of water, and a whistle.

## **Animals**

Ducks, hamsters, chickens, dogs, cats, horses, cows, and dinosaurs, oh my! While some of these you can own as pets, teaching the children a great variety of stewardship skills and responsibility, others you may have to settle for the toy versions. You may find that one of your children will seemingly fall in love with a particular animal. That's really okay!

**Tape**  
**Glue Sticks**  
**Scissors**

## **Nature Friend Magazine**

This is a family favorite! You can order by phone (877) 434-0765. The cost is only \$36.00 a year.  
<http://www.naturefriendmagazine.com>

## **Jars**

Every kid needs some good insect or treasure keepers.

## **Glue Gun**

Obviously you don't give this to your little kids.

## **Cuisenaire Rods**

These are must in our house. We use Miquon Math with the younger children. They often will do thirteen pages in one sitting just because it's so much fun.

## **Funtivities**

We get these kids from the county extension office. They provide hours of fun!

## **Straws**

Kids can do a lot of things with straws. Give them a half glass of milk and let them make bubbles. Or straws and marshmallows can make some terrific geometric shapes. Instead of straws you can use pretzel sticks and make it all edible!

## **Food**

Food is a great medium for teaching a lot of concepts. Make mini pizzas in different shapes – circles, squares, triangles, etc. Cut them into the same number of pieces, six for example. Show the principle of fractions. Pizza is also a great way to help learn geography. Sugar cookies are also great for learning and cutting out shapes.

Literature and food are a great combination. Green eggs and ham! We often have book feasts, using a meal in the book while reading the book.

## **Walking Shoes**

These are to remind you to take walks with your children. Pack a lunch, some treats, your nature books, colored pencils. Have everything ready to go.

## **Mathematical Compass**

Have your child draw lots of circles. Then have them draw the radius and diameter. They will be clueless that they are learning.

## **Protractor**

Make a sundial with a compass and a protractor. Go outside at 12:00 and place the sundial. Speaking of sun, build a solar cooker. You might even get some solar cells and build a small (matchbox size) solar car. Have a contest to see whose car wins.

## **Cookbook**

Assign the older children one day to be resident chef. Before shopping day, have them plan the menu and then let them go shopping with you. Don't just let them do desserts – have them plan the whole meal.

## **Balloons**

## **Paints**

If you have an assigned place for kids to paint, you will be more likely to allow it. I know... paint IS messy.

## **Shoe Boxes, Oatmeal Containers, Cracker Boxes**

Use for mailboxes etc. Your kids will find a lot of uses for them.

## **Envelopes**

Kids love sending mail or pretending to send mail. Be liberal with the office supplies.

## **Puppets and Puppet Show Theater**

We made a puppet show theater out of PVC pipe and old curtains. The total cost for a two-tiered theater was under \$20.00. Have your kids create biographies for their various puppets and act out their lives. Take them to a real puppet show so they can see that there is a story line.

## **Plastic Sheeting**

You can purchase this on a roll or in a package at a fabric store or the fabric section of the large super centers. One way to use it is as a table protector. But, beneath the plastic you can put things they need to learn. So, when they are eating breakfast, they are also learning.

Make a giant batch of cookie dough and frosting of different colors. Make a relief map cookie. Require the kids to come up with three or more facts about the state (or whatever rules you come up with) in order to eat that state. Whenever we do things like this, we try to make just the primary colors and mix them to make the colors we want. However, for relief maps, it is helpful to have a good brown color to use.

## **Maps**

We buy cloth maps at Wal Mart and fabric stores. They have bright colors and are washable, which makes them perfect for under a clear plastic table cover. You can do many things with these. You can post a map on a board with a light between the board and the map. Put pinholes in places where there are missionaries that you know of or have written to. This illustrates how we are to be the light of the world.

Make a FamMap. Plot on the map where all of your relatives live, or have lived. You could do a “the travels of Mom” map. Or perhaps you’re going to take a cross-country trip vacation. Or maybe you have a map that lasts through the years and marks all the locations you go to together. Maps have so many uses that will make them come alive for our children.

### **Globe**

Have one child locate a place on the globe. She then tells the other children what she has found and they try to find it. If they can’t find it she can give them hints like...what hemisphere is it in, closest to what ocean, or the actual latitude and longitude? Don’t count this as school...it’s just fun.

### **Teacup**

This is an essential component to a well-rounded education. A proper teatime should include a snack, a drink, and some delightful conversation with a mixture of poetry. This is up to you of course, but I prefer teatime with animal crackers and fruit juice than to not have it at all.

## **FUELING THE FIRE WITH PROJECTS**

Special projects further fuel the fire of a love for learning in your children. I will mention many projects in this chapter. There are, however, far more projects than I could ever think of on my own. Give your children the option of coming up with their own projects. They have great minds --- let them use them!

### **Project Night**

You might begin using projects by announcing that there will be a project night three weeks from last Friday. When we have a project night, we require the project to pertain to the subject we are currently studying. Children will use their talents to customize their own projects. If you have a child that is an auditory learner, they are likely to create a multimedia presentation. If you have a child who is kinesthetic, they are more likely to create a hands-on project. That's okay too. You might set some guidelines, or you might not. I think it's a good idea for the children to have an audience. You could invite Grandma, Grandpa, or other relatives to come. You could video it to send to families far away. You could invite the pastor and his wife to come. Or perhaps you might just want them to do the first few project nights for their dad and siblings. Your children may even decide to work together on their project. That's fine too.

### **Family Night**

We have also instituted family night. This is along the same lines as project night, except it is on a weekly basis and the projects or presentations are strictly for the benefit of the rest of the family. This is one of the single most inspirational projects we have begun. The children work well into the night on their projects for family night. As each week passes, the projects get better and better.

## **Web Sites**

Some of the projects your children work on may be one-time affairs, like one for project night, while others might be continuing projects that they work on for an extended length of time, gaining new knowledge and information as they go along. For example, our children have created their own Web sites. These are ongoing projects. I give them very limited computer time, but the children solve this problem by working on their websites through the use of their notebooks first. This teaches them many things. Among the most important aspects they learn is that of planning. They also learn patience.

Often their notebook has a lot more content than their web page. They therefore learn to prioritize. They also learn that sometimes there is more work than time available to do it.

## **Just Create Something**

I have been known to tell the kids on a dreary wintry day to go into the arts and sciences room and create something for me. When we were reading *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch*, I had the children create a ship out of garbage materials. This inspiration launched the infamous boat-making contest that we discussed earlier. They learned a lot by trying out their newly created vessels in the bathtub.

## **Biographical Sketch**

If your child is doing a biography, it is fun for the child to “play the part” of the person in the biography. When we studied the Vikings, Ashley dressed in a fur coat, made a sword, a helmet and some meager armor. We also purchased red dye for her hair so she could really be Eric the Red. It was memorable!

## **Dough**

Of course, dough is a marvelous project medium. You can make salt dough maps. One daughter recreated a famous Revolutionary War battle. She made the ocean, many English soldiers and American soldiers. She painted their clothing to resemble the uniforms (or lack thereof) that they wore. She had boats loaded with soldiers coming to the land. It was an incredible work of art, and she was only nine at the time!

## **A Play**

A cooperative project the children can do is producing a play. We have a puppet show theater that our children thoroughly enjoy using. The children can make puppets that go along with the topic they are studying. Or they could just make up a play with characters you already have.

## **A Game Show**

Your children can create a game show with questions that are relevant to the topic they are studying. It could be called something like, "Stump the Mom" or "Fool Father." This is a fun way to learn the facts about their topic.

## **Family Quilt**

If you like to sew, you could make a family quilt that tells the story of your family.

## **Family Newsletter**

If you did a unit on newspapers, you could begin a family newsletter. Your children could write letters to all the relatives asking them for stories about a particular area. If the first issue is on family pets, your children could request pet stories, then the children would compile

them and create a family newsletter. You might want to be careful with this one; the family might declare your children the official newsletter creators on a regular basis. Then again, that wouldn't be so bad, would it?

### **Create a Song**

One project could be the creation of a song to help memorize some facts. If they are trying to memorize the Presidents of the United States, they could try to create a rhyming song with a catchy tune.

### **Foreign Meal**

If you are studying another country, you could have the children's project be a meal from that country. They would have to figure out what kind of food to make, how it is prepared, and if they can get the ingredients. Then, as a team, with the help of mom, they create an authentic dinner.

### **Authoring a Book**

Creating their own books, not to be confused with their notebook, also has a strong appeal to some of my children. If we're studying Pearl Harbor, they might create a book depicting the events of December 7, 1941.

While I'm working on this chapter right now, my son David is sitting behind me working on his own book. He is writing it for his younger brothers and sisters to enjoy. The process is even giving him spelling and handwriting practice.

### **A Diary**

Speaking of World War II, if you are currently studying the Holocaust, have your children write a diary in first person, as if they actually lived through the event. First, you might have them write from the

perspective of a German soldier who is just following orders. You might have another child write from the perspective of a German citizen, or a Holocaust victim. You might even choose to read them aloud on family night. This is a great way to deepen the understanding of history, and strengthen creative writing skills.

Don't stop with just WW II events. Write diary entries from Civil War Soldiers, Alamo fighters, Great Depression families, civil rights marchers, whalers, astronauts, Presidents, or whomever you want your children to gain an in-depth understanding of. It really challenges them to think, explore, and process, while being fun all at the same time!

#### General Tips on Projects:

1. Projects really fuel in my children a desire to learn more about a subject. Encourage your children to discover new information to be used for their projects. Soon they won't want to base a project simply on what they already know, but will seek out resources to make their projects as unique and interesting as they can.
2. When your children work on projects, you should set aside time for them to do the work. At our home, we have a block of time set aside in the afternoon for the children to work on their projects. Give your children that opportunity to give their project undivided attention.
3. I do not plan to do a project for every subject we study, and we usually cut back on the number of projects we do in the summertime, but the children will often do a project all on their own.
4. I often keep doing the same kinds of projects. That isn't too bad, but it's a good idea to try to come up with different types of projects. If "variety is the spice of life," imagine what it can do for education!

## **CONCLUSION**

When home schooling using the Fire Philosophy, it is important not to leave out the vital components.

First and foremost, we must allow God to be the leader in the lives of our children. We must train them to look to Him for all their needs, including their education needs. Through Him, we will be led in the right direction for our children.

Since God created our children with specific gifts and passions to use in His service, the education of our children should be fanning those gifts into flame. In the Fire Philosophy the notebooks, projects, and sparks develop these passions so that our children will better serve the Lord and fulfill the purposes for which God designed them.

Finally, don't forget to pray for your children as you follow the Creator in their education.

It still amazes me when God shows that He is leading our family in the area of education. Often He will use one of our pastor's sermons to drive a point home with us that we have been working on in our home schooling.

Recently, we had been studying South America. I have been trying to find missionaries in South America for the children to pray for as we studied the countries. I was wondering the children should write to the missionaries and take the study a bit further. The ideas were running thin, and I was beginning to feel like it was time to put an end to our study. I eventually decided that I wasn't going to do any more after our study was over in a couple of weeks. Then the Lord spoke to me.

I was sitting in our pew at church. Pastor was talking about spiritual warfare and the need to pray for certain regions of the world. He even talked about the need to know geography in order to pray effectively for those regions. He specially mentioned Argentina. When he mentioned the country, Ashley and I both looked at each other with that "knowing" smile. She, too, knew that the Lord was asking her to pray for the very country she had been studying. It was obvious to me that God had planned more for our study of South America. I may not

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know the extent of God's plan. I may not know the twists and turns.  
But I do know my children's education is better in His hands, than in  
mine.