

#22 Concluding thoughts

Finally, here we are at the last talk. Whew. If you've listened to all the other ones, we've spent several hours together. Thank you for taking time to listen. Maybe in the beginning you started listening because you wanted to pick up a few tips or ideas to use in your homeschool or to supplement what your children are learning in public school. Or maybe you love the arts as I do and you were looking for ways to cultivate your own heart. I hope you found something you were looking for.

But if you made it through all these little talks, you may have picked up an underlying message; the real desire in my heart that drives me to spend hours every day looking for ways I can help you. The last thing I'm interested in is developing curriculum I can market. I have bigger problems on my mind that are best expressed in these words I copied down from the introduction to an old book about the fifteenth century world of Henry V:

“Old faiths had lost their inspiration. Old forms of government were breaking down. The very fabric of society seemed to be on the point of dissolution.”

Does that sound familiar?

Our children are growing up in a world on the verge of economic collapse. Terrorism and senseless killing is no longer something that happens in lands far away. It happens in our schools and our shopping malls. Hateful rhetoric as well as sleaze and vulgarity fill our air waves. Corruption is rampant. Faith is under attack. Families are falling apart. Men's hearts are failing them.

Not that we're the first generation to face these things. Every generation has had troubles of their own, but listen to the words of hope that follow the statement from Henry V I just read:

“It is, however, part of the irony of history that a great ideal too often attains its finest expression only when the period of decline has already commenced.”

And then it continues:

“...the remedy for present evils was sought not in the creation of a new order but rather in the restoration of an old ideal. To bring back the Golden Past must be the work of a hero who could revive in his own person its virtues.”

“Henry of Monmouth, deriving his inspiration from the past, was the champion of unity against the forces of disintegration.”

There you have it. My husband and I do everything we do here at Libraries of Hope because we're hoping that from your home, 'champions of unity against the forces of disintegration' will emerge; that in your home will be found heroes who can 'revive in their own persons' the Golden ideals of the past: Faith, Family, Freedom and Virtue. I can't stop terrorists from killing. I'm

not smart enough to fix our economy. I can't reform corrupt politicians. But there is something I can do and so can you. As Confucius says:

To put the world right in order
we must first put the nation in order;
To put the nation in order,
we must first put the family in order,
To put the family in order,
we must first cultivate our personal life,
we must first set our hearts right.

Well educated hearts. That IS the solution to a world spinning out of control. "By small and simple means are great things accomplished." Many people are working hard to make sure our children have well-trained minds. That is good. But who is tending to their hearts?

These are the differences between mind and heart as I now understand them:

The mind is informed.
The heart is inspired.

The mind feeds on facts.
The heart feeds on Truth.

The mind asks, "Why?"
The heart wonders, "Why not?"

The mind is molded through questioning.
The heart asks its own questions.

The mind is verbose.
The heart relishes brevity.

The mind seeks pleasure, which is usually temporal and temporary.
The heart seeks joy, which is spiritual and eternal.

The mind clings to reason.
The heart clings to faith.

The mind often feels superior because of its vast knowledge.
The heart often feels humbled by all it doesn't yet understand.

The mind is critical.
The heart is compassionate.

The mind thinks.

The heart feels.

The mind seeks to be understood.

The heart longs to understand.

The mind is knowledgeable.

The heart is wise.

I have noticed a growing interest in classical education with its trivium of grammar, logic and rhetoric. The sponge of the young child's mind is used for memorizing facts. And then, students are taught to use those facts to logic and reason and finally, the highest stage is rhetoric where a student is taught to write persuasively so that he can convince others of the truth he has arrived at by means of his carefully trained logic and reason.

I would be more sold on the process if mankind hadn't demonstrated such a proneness to err in his calculations. I find few minds more narrow or less open to change than the mind that has arrived at a perceived point of truth by a process of reason and logic alone. Much of the contention in our world arises from opposing viewpoints, with both sides confident of their correctness. It seems our world would benefit by a little less persuading and a whole lot more seeking to understand the other's viewpoint, which is the function of the heart.

There is another way to persuade others of Truth, as demonstrated by One who has successfully influenced and led more people to Truth than anyone else. And He never wrote a single persuasive paper that we're aware of. His method for spreading Truth was very simple: He let his light shine and commended to us that we do the same. Our life, He taught, is the open book for all to read. How a person feels in our presence will be remembered long after our words have been forgotten.

The pathway for this kind of learning also has 3 parts: Faith, Hope and Charity. As I have said, our role as parents is to prepare our children's hearts to be inspired, give them good things to hope for, and teach them the right-use of all things in love. Everything I have presented to you have these three things in mind.

The rest we can safely leave in the hands of a Heavenly Parent, for true education, as noted before, is between a child's soul and God.

I know I'm a dreamer. But I'm hoping you're a dreamer, too. I copied these words about dreamers in my notes: "[Dreamers] are the chosen few—the Blazers of the way—who never wear doubt's bandage on their eyes—who starve and chill and hurt, but hold to courage and to hope, because they know that there is always proof of truth for them who try—that only cowardice and lack of faith can keep the seeker from his chosen goal, but if his heart be strong and if he dream enough and dream it hard enough, he can attain, no matter where men failed before.

“Walls crumble and the empires fall. The tidal wave sweeps from the sea and tears a fortress from its rocks. The rotting nations drop from off Time's bough, and only things the dreamers

make live on.”

So it only seems fitting to leave you with a dream I had that sums up what I’ve been trying to say. But it’s the kind of dream that it’s not really about me. It’s about you, too, and I hope you’ll place yourself in the dream. Only your heart will understand it.

I dreamed I was in a large, noisy hall filled with people. There were long rows of cafeteria style tables throughout the hall and my sense was life revolved around set feeding times throughout the day. At certain times, we were all expected to sit down and eat what was placed in front of us and we all ate the same thing. It didn’t feel like a bad thing. It’s just how it was.

In my dream, I noticed a door I evidently hadn’t noticed before. There were no windows in this hall so I didn’t know what was on the other side. Curious, I slipped over to the door, looked around to make sure no one was watching me, turned the knob and stepped outside into a thick fog. I could hear the sound of horse hooves coming closer, and soon a horse-drawn carriage broke through the fog and a tall, lanky man stepped out. He beckoned me to follow him, and I did. I had to practically run to keep up with him, but I remember how drawn I was to the features of his face. He smiled at me and his eyes were so warm, I didn’t feel afraid at all. At first, he didn’t say anything to me, but after awhile he introduced himself. He said he was Hans Christian Andersen. Just then the fog broke and I found he had led me to the most glorious meadow you can ever imagine! Everywhere, as far as the eye could see, were flowers of every color. White billowy clouds floated across a deep blue sky and I felt the warmth of the sun on my face. Butterflies fluttered among the flowers and the breezes carried the songs of hundreds of birds. I could barely breathe, it was so beautiful.

My friend held out his hand and motioned for me to lead the way along the path that now meandered through this glorious meadow. At first I was anxious—I was going to miss my 2:30 feeding time. What would the people say? But soon, the joys of the meadow so filled my heart, I didn’t care what they thought.

The two of us spent all afternoon in the meadow. My friend patiently waited while I stopped to take in every new site and discovery at every bend in the path. Then, just as the path ended, he said that he had to leave me. We were standing in a grove of tall trees and I told him that I didn’t know where to go from there. He simply smiled and looked heavenward: “God directs.”

Suddenly the scene changed and I was back in the noisy, crowded feeding hall. Immediately I was surrounded by angry peers. Where had I been? Didn’t I know I had missed my 2:30 feeding time? I told them I had just spent the entire afternoon in the most glorious meadow with Hans Christian Andersen himself. I wanted to tell them more, but they rolled their eyes at me in disbelief and left me to myself.

But it didn’t matter. All the joy of the meadow was stored in my heart—and I knew it would remain with me, always.

The dream ended and I woke up.

Maybe it was just coincidence, but a day or two later at a library used book sale, I happened to walk by a shelf of books and one title caught my eye: It was *The Fairy Tale Story of My Life* by Hans Christian Andersen. I didn't know anything about his life. I had only read his fairy tales and I don't remember having previously seen his picture, but there on the cover was an image of the friend of my dreams. I opened the book to read the first page, and at the end of the first paragraph, he had written, "The history of my life will say to the world what it says to me—There is a loving God, who directs all things for the best."

I, too, believe in a God who directs all things for the best. And as you turn to Him, He will direct and guide you as you lead your children through this glorious meadow of learning that has been prepared for us. May the ideas I've presented help to bring you closer to Him, that you, with your family, may live happily and joyfully ever after.