



Charlotte Mason's Short Synopsis

REFLECTION QUESTIONS PREPARED BY A DELECTABLE EDUCATION

POINTS 1-4 (Episode 201)

[1] Children are born persons.

1. In considering materials to use for lessons, am I more apt to think my child unable to rise to this level of challenge?
2. Do I expect my child to fail rather than succeed?
3. Do I make excuses for my child and preemptively avoid setting a challenge before him or her and avoid allowing them to struggle and grow in a new situation or task?

[2] They are not born either good or bad, but with possibilities for good and evil.

1. How can I direct my child towards developing his best potential--first, physically, second, intellectually, third, socially, and fourth, spiritually?
2. In what ways have I ignored my child's bad tendencies and allowed them to become bad habits that will affect him negatively in the future.

[3] The principles of authority on the one hand, and of obedience on the other, are natural, necessary and fundamental; but--

1. Of the three reasons for indulgence, which one is the greatest temptation for you? Do you find you don't have the energy to be as diligent as you should be? Do you overmuch long for your children's love and favor? Or is there something that is causing your time to be divided?
2. Do you have confidence in your authority and therefore expect your children to obey every time? Or do you sometimes think too little of your position and therefore let the children do what is right in their own eyes?
3. Considering the ways we must act as an authority, which one or two do you need to work on most? (Being confident in yourself or your child, being diligent and consistent, being alert, not giving arbitrary commands, showing humility, being pleasant to be around.)
4. Why is it important for parents to exercise great restraint, never giving a command that they do not intend to see carried out to the full?
5. Do you live in a way that your children see your own docility and obedience to God, to the law, to others in authority over you?
6. As this is a gradual training, in what two or three areas do you need to begin working on the habits of obedience with your children. (For example, implementing a bed time routine and expecting the children to go to bed at a specific time every night. Or expecting the children to read or narrate during school lessons without comment or complaint.)

[4] These principles are limited by the respect due to the personality of children, which must not be encroached upon, whether by the direct use of fear or love, suggestion or influence, or by undue play upon any one natural desire.

1. When I am correcting my child, am I appealing to their objective duty, or am I imposing my will on him or her by another means, such as fear, love, suggestion, influence?
2. Am I getting in the way of my child's pursuit of knowledge for its own sake? What motivators am I providing for learning?
3. Am I taking my child's success or failure too personally? Could I be using my love or threatening my child out of fear for my disappointment and abusing my God-given authority over their lives?

POINTS 5-8 (Episode 202)

[5] Therefore, we are limited to three educational instruments—the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit, and the presentation of living ideas.

1. Think about and even write down some of the things your children have learned or skills they have acquired without any help from you.
2. How have your anxieties about your child's progress caused you to supplement his effort to learn? Possibly through lecturing, assisting where you shouldn't, or by requiring them to use a curriculum that does either of these things?

[6] When we say that "education is an atmosphere," we do not mean that a child should be isolated in what may be called a 'child-environment' especially adapted and prepared, but that we should take into account the educational value of his natural home atmosphere, both as regards persons and things, and should let him live freely among his proper conditions. It stultifies a child to bring down his world to the child's level.

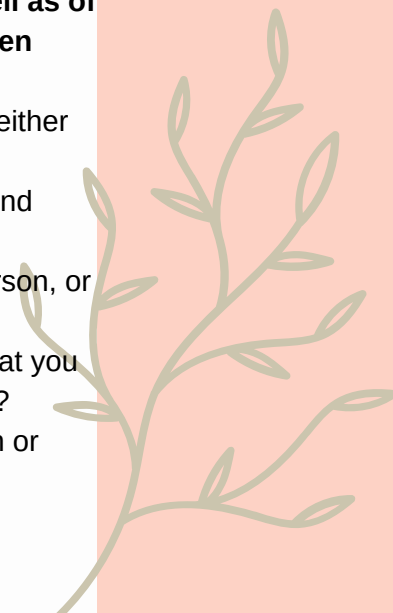
1. If someone were to observe, without my awareness, my mood each day, how would they describe the atmosphere of our home?
2. Am I giving as much thought to the atmosphere of relationships as I am to how to arrange our school room, or keep up with the housework?
3. Do I inspire my children by my own love of learning, as I continue to read and grow?

[7] By "education is a discipline," we mean the discipline of habits, formed definitely and thoughtfully, whether habits of mind or body. Physiologists tell us of the adaptation of brain structures to habitual lines of thought, i.e., to our habits.

1. How do habits help parents in the education of their children?
2. What are some necessary things to remember in habit training?
3. Name one habit you would like to establish in your child first, and describe how you go about introducing it and keep it going.
4. List three habits you need to establish in your own life. Cross out two. Write the steps you'll take to begin and maintain the remaining one.

[8] In saying that "education is a life," the need of intellectual and moral as well as of physical sustenance is implied. The mind feeds on ideas, and therefore children should have a generous curriculum.

1. Have you been surprised by the ideas your child has taken from a book that you either didn't notice or thought not important?
2. Can you think of a book you or your children have read that seemed to set the mind ablaze with thoughts and ideas?
3. Is there a book from your childhood that was instrumental in forming you as a person, or that set you on a path to the career or lifestyle you choose?
4. What curriculum resources have you added to your children's program of work that you suspect are not living and nourishing, but rather may fall in the category of sawdust?
5. What subjects have you left out of your children's program of work for one reason or another, causing their feast to be limited? How can you start adding those into your weekly schedule?



POINTS 9-12 (Episode 204)

[9] We hold that the child's mind is no mere sac to hold ideas; but is rather, if the figure may be allowed, a spiritual organism, with an appetite for all knowledge. This is its proper diet, with which it is prepared to deal; and which it can digest and assimilate as the body does foodstuffs.

1. Do you think your child needs a particular arsenal of subjects in order to become educated? What would you necessarily include?
2. Think of 10-12 things your child has learned that you did not deliberately show, explain, or instruct him in?
3. What are some questions your child has asked in the past week in his effort to know what was important to him?

[10] Such a doctrine as e.g. the Herbartian, that the mind is a receptacle, lays the stress of Education (the preparation of knowledge in enticing morsels duly ordered) upon the teacher. Children taught on this principle are in danger of receiving much teaching and little knowledge; and the teacher's axiom is "what a child learns matters less than how he learns it."

1. Do you enjoy teaching more than your children enjoy learning?
2. Are you worried over how you present lessons to your children, or do you spend a lot of time making sure the lessons are presented "just right" so your student has a successful learning experience?

[11] But we, believing that the normal child has powers of mind which fit him to deal with all knowledge proper to him, give him a full and generous curriculum; taking care only that all knowledge offered him is vital, that is, that facts are not presented without their informing ideas. (Out of this conception comes our principle that,--)

1. Are you providing your children a full and generous curriculum?
2. Does all of the material you use for lessons allow your child to do the sorting, arranging, selecting, rejecting, and classifying for themselves? Or have you assigned a book or other resource that does some of the work for your child?
3. Is all the knowledge being offered to your child vital, the facts presented with their informing ideas?

[12] (Out of this conception comes our principle that,--)"Education is the Science of Relations"; that is, that a child has natural relations with a vast number of things and thoughts: so we train him upon physical exercises, nature lore, handicrafts, science and art, and upon many living books, for we know that our business is not to teach him all about anything, but to help him to make valid as many as may be of-

"Those first-born affinities

That fit our new existence to existing things."

1. Am I using the Atmosphere of my home to cultivate relationships in as many directions as possible for my child/children?
2. Of the five directions in which to form relationships (with God, with men, with Nature, the dynamic relations of bodily movement, and with materials), which do I have the hardest time allowing my child/children to engage?
3. How might I be getting in the way of my child establishing relationships in that direction?
4. Am I limiting the relationships my child can make by choosing to eliminate certain age-appropriate subjects or fields of study from our curriculum?

POINTS 13-15 (Episode 206)

[13] In devising a SYLLABUS for a normal child, of whatever social class, three points must be considered:-

- (a) He requires much knowledge, for the mind needs sufficient food as much as does the body.**
- (b) The knowledge should be various, for sameness in mental diet does not create appetite (i.e., curiosity).**
- (c) Knowledge should be communicated in well-chosen language, because his attention responds naturally to what is conveyed in literary form.**

1. Am I supplying abundant mental food for my children in the form of excellent living books written with literary power?
2. Make a list of all the subjects each child is studying. Are there any areas of knowledge proper to each one that are missing? What about manual training, physical training? Ample exposure to the world around us and its ideas?
3. Am I providing variety within each subject of study? Am I exposing my children to a variety of voices and opinions? Ideas that differ from my own?
4. Do the books we are reading for lessons allow my child to read to know?

[14] As knowledge is not assimilated until it is reproduced, children should 'tell back' after a single reading or hearing: or should write on some part of what they have read.

1. You can know what your children are learning by what they tell you; What are some things your children have been telling you about lately?
2. Pick up a book and read a couple of paragraphs yourself, then close the book and attempt to say or write what you just read.
3. How can this method of telling back save time in the classroom and make short lessons possible?

[15] A single reading is insisted on, because children have naturally great power of attention; but this force is dissipated by the re-reading of passages, and also, by questioning, summarising, and the like.

1. Do you find your mind drifting off at times while you are reading a book?
2. Have you ever had to read a book that was definitely not a living book, such as a textbook or a manual of some sort? Did you find it harder to concentrate on it than a novel or another living book?
3. Do you have a student who needs to build up his or her power of attention? Can you identify any ways you may have prevented him or her from cultivating this power?
4. Which one of the boundaries mentioned do you tend to cross? (not insisting on a single reading, or questioning, summarising, and the like?) What can you do to prevent this behavior in the future?

POINTS 16-19 (Episode 208)

[16] There are two guides to moral and intellectual self management to offer to children, which we may call 'the way of the will' and 'the way of the reason.'

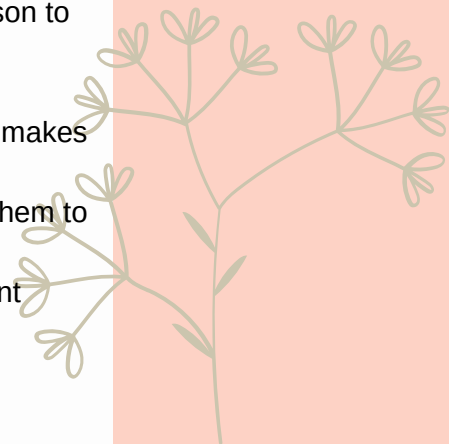
1. For a person to live their life by a creed they must believe each aspect of it is true. So far do you believe each of the points in Charlotte Mason's short synopsis (her educational credo) is true and worth adhering to?

[17] The way of the will : Children should be taught, (a) to distinguish between 'I want' and 'I will.' (b) That the way to will effectively is to turn our thoughts from that which we desire but do not will. (c) That the best way to turn our thoughts is to think of or do some quite different thing, entertaining or interesting. (d) That after a little rest in this way, the will returns to its work with new vigour. (This adjunct of the will is familiar to us as diversion, whose office it is to ease us for a time from will effort, that we may ' will ' again with added power. The use of suggestion as an aid to the will is to be deprecated, as tending to stultify and stereotype character. It would seem that spontaneity is a condition of development, and that human nature needs the discipline of failure as well as of success.)

1. Give a few examples you have observed of your child struggling between what she or he wants with what she or he knows he ought to do.
2. When your young child is at a crossroads in choosing, what kinds of things can you be prepared to do to provide a momentary break (diversion) from the decision at hand?
3. Think through how you can teach your child how to use the escape route of entertaining a pleasant memory or entertaining action for a moment when he is having a tough time making a decision he does not want to make.
4. In what ways can you teach your child to do what is right—obey God and love his neighbor as himself, in moments of selfish weakness before such moments arise?
5. What would be the negative effects of rescuing him from learning the way of the will?

[18] The way of reason: We teach children, too, not to 'lean (too confidently) to their own understanding'; because the function of reason is to give logical demonstration (a) of mathematical truth, (b) of an initial idea, accepted by the will. In the former case, reason is, practically, an infallible guide, but in the latter, it is not always a safe one; for, whether that idea be right or wrong, reason will confirm it by irrefragable proofs.

1. How confident are you of your own reasoning ability? Do you consider your reason to be sound, or do you see it as fallible?
2. Do you seek to understand the opposite point of view in every situation?
3. How are you doing with proclaiming math equations "wrong" when your student makes a mistake? Are you tempted to say they are nearly right to boost their confidence?
4. Choose an everyday object your children are familiar with. Make a point to ask them to describe how someone thought of the very first example of that object.
5. What character from your school books will you use to begin helping your student trace a logical argument to its conclusion?



[19] Therefore, children should be taught, as they become mature enough to understand such teaching, that the chief responsibility which rests on them as persons is the acceptance or rejection of ideas. To help them in this choice we give them principles of conduct, and a wide range of the knowledge fitted to them. These principles should save children from some of the loose thinking and heedless action which cause most of us to live at a lower level than we need.

1. Charlotte Mason said, "We find that, ... children are tiresome in arguing about trifling things, often for the mere pleasure of employing their reasoning power..." Do your children employ their reasoning power by arguing with you or with their siblings? If so, how have you responded? Should your response be different?
2. Are the books you are using in your school curriculum rich enough to provide material for contemplation and possibly conversation in these areas?
3. Are your children reading current events daily? Is the source they are reading from addressing the big issues of the day, or does it happen to be avoiding those in an effort to keep it light?
4. Are you finding the right balance between on one side, leaving your child "to work out the arguments in favour of this or that conclusion," and on the other side, "wasting time in discussing with them every idol and blasphemous proposition that comes their way"? Do you periodically ask a question after your child has narrated to get at a moral issue that was presented?

POINT 20 (Episode 210)

[20] We allow no separation to grow up between the intellectual and ' spiritual ' life of children, but teach them that the Divine Spirit has constant access to their spirits, and is their continual Helper in all the interests, duties and joys of life.

1. How does Charlotte Mason's insight into the fresco at Santa Maria Novella help us understand point 20?
2. In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit's work in your student?
3. What can you do to prevent a division being made between your child's spiritual life and intellectual work--think of some possible barriers you should avoid?
4. How can you "teach" your child about his own access to the Holy Spirit?