

Help! My Child is Reluctant, Frustrated, Wore-Out, Extremely Resistant and HATES Writing!



By Cindy Rushton

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

Matthew 11: 28-30 (Amplified Bible)

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Let's go back in time....

My son was 8 years old. It was a really tough time for him AND me. In fact, it was one of the most difficult times of our homeschool years--and, if you fast-forward, you know that Matthew is now a homeschool graduate who is currently serving the U.S. Army as a Green Beret. He is now successful in his work and he is a husband and a father. Not only did we make it, but he is a great success. However, as we go back in time, you have to get in the "atmosphere" of my home. Matthew and I were about to pull each other's hair out! (FOR REAL!)



I had gone to the public schools, so all I knew was what I had been taught about writing from my teachers. I didn't necessarily like writing in school--actually detested it--but, I did learn how to write there in my public school classroom. Since it was how I learned to write, I naturally brought those techniques into our homeschool without ever asking God if HE might have a different plan...until...

Well, as I saw my little boy dread each and every day of school, much less writing, I knew that there had to be a better way. My whole testimony revolves around the miracles that God performed to breathe new life into our homeschool.

Of course, before THAT. You have to get a "visual" of what things were like. I cried. I stressed out. Nothing could have been worse for me than my precious little darling's HATED of writing! I was living in the midst of my worst nightmare. I was terrified that he would never learn to write if I taught him. I was so afraid of messing him up. He was so smart, but nothing I did was reaching him. Nothing I tried seemed to change things. There were more days than I could recount that I just wanted to quit. Although I have never been a "quitter" in anything, it seemed that quitting was my only answer. But, God was not finished with me (or Matthew) yet.

I remember the day that was my turning point like it was this morning. The day had started like so many others around that time. We got up. We got moving into our day. Then, as soon as Matthew sat down to work on his workbook, it happened. He just shut down. Melted down is more like it. I was so tired and weary that morning. This was ANOTHER one of those days. I left him at the table to "work" on his lesson while I went into the bathroom to just cry and pray to God. Then, it happened. I looked up and saw that my Bible was turned

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to a passage of Scripture that literally JUMPED off the page. No one else in the family knew why the Bible was on the shelf turned to that page, but I knew! It was the breakthrough that I had been needing. I just did not have any idea of how much this moment would radically alter the course of our homeschool and family life.

The passage of Scripture was in Matthew 11: 28-30. Take a moment to read it with me...

Amplified Bible (AMP)

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

This passage just POPPED for me!

First, I was working so hard to try to reach Matthew and make writing fun for him. I was definitely "heavy-laden." I felt the weight of the world on top of me. Over-burdened--yep! That too! I was so frustrated that homeschooling was burdening every area of my life. No doubt--I wanted ease, relief, and refreshment! If we couldn't get there soon, I saw no other alternative but to step back and go to the next option for my child's education. I wanted for my children to have an excellent education. But what we were going through was not going to get us where we wanted to be. Yes, my whole method was quickly becoming harsh, hard, sharp and pressing for not just Matthew, but also for me. It HAD to change.

As I sat there with tears streaming down my face, I KNEW that this was a word from God FOR ME and this situation in particular. It was my answer! And, boy was it!

God began pulling me away (kicking and screaming!) from the methods that were passed down to me from my public school education. He began teaching me how to relax and enjoy the journey. It was amazing. As soon as I surrendered this area to Him. He began to show me easy ways to reach my reluctant, frustrated, wore-Out, extremely resistant young writer. Bit-by-bit, He began a process of teaching me how to teach my little ones. The rest is just history!

My sweet friend, I have no idea where you are in your journey at this time. Your child may seem to have an "allergy" to pencils. Or, your child may detest writing assignments yet live to write sequels to their favorite Sci-Fi movies. Your child may be doing great with their daily copywork lessons, but squirm (or melt-down) from the thought of spelling ANYTHING on his own. Or, your child may love writing but you want to be sure to keep it that way.



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•: Yep! We all meet here at different places in this journey. But, some things work for all of us and help us to encourage our young writers.

•: So, want some practical mom-to-mom ideas to help encourage your most reluctant writer? Want to know some tips that can help you to encourage your child to not only learn the skills needed to be a great writer, but also develop a passion for writing? The following are some of the tips that I have jotted down that have made all of the difference in our journey...

Give your children a PURPOSE for their writing.

•: Our children need a purpose that transcends merely working through a workbook, completing a school lesson, making a grade, preparing for college, or getting a diploma. There HAS to be more! Children demand it! If writing is taught artificially with pages and pages of diagramming sentences...filling in the blanks...writing fake letters, we cannot expect our children to see a point or purpose in writing.



•: There are so many great ideas for teaching Language Arts in much more natural ways—nothing is as great as notebooking--more on that in a bit. However, so many of the best ways to teach Language Arts are rooted out by all of the busy-work that is presented as "THE WAY" to teach our children to write. We end up running out of time and energy before we get around to those "easy" ways to teach children. Those tend to wait for another day. And, in the meantime, we begin to lose our young writers. They become more and more reluctant, frustrated, wore-Out, extremely resistant.

•: My dear friend, the pen wields a mighty power! Each of our children have the power within them. As we teach our children that writing carries a mighty responsibility, they are free to place importance in their own creations. As our children see the challenge to be faithful to learn the skills needed to share their ideas, the things that they know, and the answers and truth that our hungry society is looking for, they will find a purpose for their writing.

•: So, want to reach that reluctant, frustrated, wore-out, extremely resistant, young writer? Let's get beyond the busy-work and give them a purpose for writing. Let's dare to get back to the "old paths" that teach them how to write but value what they know or want to know. Let's get and instill a bigger vision for their projects. Let's teach them to be faithful to write all that they write for God and His glory! Talk about sweet, sweet purpose!

Get back to the "old paths" that helped to develop the greatest writers throughout history.

•: My dear friend, writing has not always been taught the way that it is taught today. Also, if you will take a peek, you will find that never in history have we had fewer classics pouring from pens of our writers. There is a very strong correlation between the two. Want for your young writer to develop their own style and become an excellent writer? Why not get back

to the "old paths" that will train them step-by-step: copywork, reading great literature, narration, dictation, real life learning, notebooking, and creating homemade books. These are not "extras" to try if you get the time. These are keys to taking that reluctant, frustrated, worn-out, extremely resistant young writer where they need to be. Just try ONE old path today. It can be as easy as investing in a new notebook and beginning to use notebooking in all of your studies. NO! You don't have to throw away all of that curriculum. You can use notebooking with whatever curriculum you have got. It will breathe life into your homeschool. You will be amazed! You AND your child will develop a passionate love of writing.

Read, Read, Read!

Encourage your children to become CONSTANT readers. Begin at infancy reading to your children daily. As they begin to read on their own, encourage them to read as much as possible.



If we want for our children to become great writers, they must become constant readers. One cannot know what others like to read unless they themselves are avid readers and know exactly what they like to read. Plus, reading will give lots of ideas to write about, which will blossom into great works of their very own.

Encourage a deep love of reading. Give them access to a wide variety of great books. Give them the freedom to read for "reading's sake" and not always on "assignment." Encourage reading as a LIFESTYLE and you will encourage your most reluctant, frustrated, wore-out, extremely resistant, young writer!

Guard against criticism.

Oh! This is a biggie! Probably most of us were educated in the public schools ourselves. A "teacher" can be critical and a student may not take that very personal. However, as a homeschool mom, we are so much more than a teacher--we are mothers. Soak that in--WE ARE MOTHERS. We cannot afford to let criticism creep into our homes. It will steal the joy and life in writing!

I know that it may seem to "help" them. Many of us had to endure the criticism of our teachers but criticism has a way of discouraging and frustrating the very best young writer. You will know criticism by its fruits--over-analyzing every little detail, stifling children from writing with a heart of delight (if not at all!), a strong focus on the mechanics instead of the ART of Language Arts, and papers filled with RED corrections.

Oh! Dear friends, let's try a different method! Let's come alongside our children as their biggest cheerleaders. As we become their biggest encouragers, we will find their desire to write begin to grow. Actually as we encourage them, we find that they are unleashed! Then watch out!

•: **Encourage your young writers to develop a deep interest in one area (or MORE!).** :•

•: I always suggest that children be encouraged to develop a deep area of study which brings them the greatest interest and joy.

•: My son began his first notebooks (which led to his first books) from his deep love of anything about the military, military history, and the Civil War. Our daughter Elisabeth began to dig into totally different topics than Matthew. She loved anything to do with art, usic, fashion, and the human body. As years went by, we found that giving our children time to pursue their personal interests was time that actually helped them to develop their writing. Funny thing, this is EXACTLY what most professional writers attribute to their own success.

•: Often the area of special interest is the one that God uses in their writing to minister to the hearts of others. As the subject area of interest is pursued (collecting information, studying intensely, gathering interesting information), sharing that knowledge and love through conversation or writing comes naturally.

•: It was amazing to watch my children. Both of them have HUGE notebooks on the topics that they were really interested in. The funny thing--most of the content in those notebooks was not really from "school-time." Most of the things that they added to their notebooks were added during their "free time" when they had a large window of time each afternoon to pursue those interests deeply. They didn't even know it was "SCHOOL" because they just wanted to know more about those topics!



•: Oh! Let your kids dig into their topics of interest. Then, watch out! Those reluctant, frustrated, wore-out, extremely resistant, young writers are transformed into addicted, excited, young writers who beg for time to write MORE! Encourage your children to dig into studies of topics in areas of their interest. Let them use those topics to practice their writing skills. They will LOVE it!

•: **Encourage your children to take get to know different authors.** :•

•: This ONE thing will make a world of difference for every young writer.

•: Through our school years, we spent a lot of time digging into biographies. We tried to keep a biography going at all times. I alternated biographies about authors, artists, composers, politicians, world leaders, theologians, scientists, inventors, missionaries, etc. We loved biographies! There was just something special about the writers that we got to know in biographies.

•: Elisabeth became a HUGE fan of Beatrix Potter. Matthew's favorite writer was "Stonewall" Jackson--are you surprised? As my children read the biographies, they were drawn even deeper into their writing. We found incredible pieces that are "off the beaten path." As we did, my children were drawn to develop some of the same disciplines that made those writers great. It was soooo much more than just completing a workbook or finishing a class. It

became a lifestyle.

Why not encourage your children to get to know writers behind the scenes? Why not encourage them to take a good look at the writing style of different writers--what do they like about their writing? Is it meaty, deep, funny, light, short, long? What do they want to imitate...conversational, peppy, serious, teaching, intelligent, formal, informal? Teach them to model their writing after their favorite type of writing. It will be easier for them to write like what they truly enjoy reading. Teach them to continue to be a student of the great writers. Their own style of writing will develop in a way that you just cannot get from a textbook.



Develop the discipline of journaling.

Journaling is completely neglected in most study courses of our day. However, journaling is a vital discipline for those who want to develop their ideas and writing.

Journaling tempers our writing. It helps us to brainstorm ideas for our writing projects. Journaling helps us to see a logical flow and order. It helps us to eliminate the fluff in writing, develop our thoughts fully, and challenges the thinking process. Inside journals, the

writer has an outlet for their heart as it fills with ideas, emotion and spirit. Journaling help the writer to continue thinking so that great thoughts can be developed. Journaling always pays off as it teaches our young writers that they have many great thoughts that need to be written down to preserve for the future. Want to unleash that reluctant, frustrated, wore-out, extremely resistant, young writer? Invest in a journal, let them loose to THINK inside of it without GRADES, and watch to see what happens with their writing.

Focus on getting what they do know AND love on paper.

The alternative is what we commonly find in writing courses—testing to see what the children do not know! There is a big, big difference in these mindsets. Which do YOU think will bring the results that you are wanting?

Want to know my greatest secret for encouraging my young writers? I learned it from going to conferences for professional writers and I think that it will make a world of difference for you too. Professional writers are told continually to write what they love, what they know, or want to know.

Just think of the topics that most children are assigned in their writing lessons--oh, I remember the ones that they gave me! I hated writing in school. It was one of my most frustrating subjects. As a student, I would have NEVER guessed that I would get such joy and delight from writing. It was because the topics were never based around what WE LIKED or what we were interested in. No wonder it was such a bad experience.

It doesn't have to be that way.

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Think back to your school years. Think about those topics. I love to write today, but I would die if I were assigned a topic such as those most commonly assigned to children! Remember those topics such as "What I Did During Summer Vacation" or "Butterflies" from your grade-school years? Although I love life, I would never choose to write on bland and meaningless topics like those. If I am writing, it HAS to be a topic that I love or talk about an instant case of "writer's block!" Even though I write constantly, I also do not like looking at a blank piece of paper without a thought on my heart.

I think it is only right to require that our children do as we are able to do. Just as I do not write on anything that I am not fully passionate or convinced about, neither can children. Just as we cannot write with confidence and boldness if we do not know enough about a topic to "write what we know," neither can our children!

The best way to help children to have plenty to put on paper is to simply read widely on lots of topics, copy great models, get out in real life, narrate and discuss great literature, and spend lots of time brainstorming their ideas and writing outlines.

It may take a lot of input over time, but the output is well worth the time spent in waiting! It took 5 years of study before Matthew detected a need to write about. After that time, he was overflowing with a passion on that topic. It never ended. Years have come and gone. His studies naturally yielded fun writing projects. Even his High School research assignments developed into deeper writing projects such a books or professional articles for magazines. Now, some of those same interests are the very ones he is pursuing in his career and teaching to others through writing. It has been a blast to watch!



Got a reluctant, frustrated, wore-out, extremely resistant, young writer? Why not change your focus--challenge them to write what they know A LOT about. Turn them loose to pour out their knowledge on paper. Watch the transformation!

Produce!

If you want for your children to become great writers, then you must begin by requiring them to write. Even if it is letters, articles, book critiques, research, notebooks, stories, how-to sheets, booklets, books, tip sheets, so on. Write something every day!

We required our children to write every day, all year round in every grade of school. Not only did I require them to write daily, but I also modeled this same discipline before them. I still do it even though both of my children graduated long ago from our homeschool. If I am not busy around the house, I always have a book or notebook and pen in hand! I keep notebooks just like I encouraged my children to keep through the years.

When I was only nineteen and had not ever heard of homeschooling much less Notebooking as a technique for teaching Language Arts, I began a notebook collecting verses and information on what the Bible has to say about Godly Womanhood. I now have binders on all kinds of topics of my interest. Any one of them could be developed into a book, many of

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◦: them have already developed into books—including my huge notebook including my ideas for creating student notebooks with children! ◦:

◦: Because my children have always seen my passion for study and collecting information into a notebook, they naturally began to compile their copywork and information into notebooks on topics of their interests. Those notebooks are much, much more than just "records" of their school studies--they are heirlooms that they can now share with their own children. Talk about benefits now AND later!

◦: Our children are designed by God with a need to be productive. Everything that they do in these school years needs to respect that need. If it is just busy-work, it needs to go. Busy-work only destroys their love learning and frustrates them. They need to produce something of value with the work that they do. Invest in notebooks and all of your notebooking supplies so that they can get busy producing a precious heirloom that they can carry with them through the years.

◦: **Share what they KNOW!**

◦: Oh! One of the best ways to transform those reluctant, frustrated, wore-out, extremely resistant, young writers is to instill in them the value of what they know and find ways to encourage them to share it regularly.

◦: Soak this in!

◦: It is so important! Every child has something inside of them that they love deeply and know volumes about, even your very young students. You have probably heard it as you travel to town and they share their overexcitement about THAT topic.

◦: It kinda makes me think of Audubon. I wonder if his mother got sick and tired of hearing him talk about birds and animals? I wonder if she got tired of the mounds of sketches? I wonder if she ever got scared that he might not EVER be able to make living. Relate?

◦: My son had his topics that he knew better than most texts, books, or documentaries. Really! He just spent so much time digging into military history, the military, and the Civil War. He loved it. He lived it! Naturally, he became so knowledgeable about it that it does not surprise anyone that this was perfect preparation for his career path today.

◦: Each of our children are just like this. You can use this natural love to encourage them as young writers. Let them write on the topics that they know a lot about. Teach your children that others may not know about their topic and would really love to.

◦: I used Matthew's passion for history to encourage him to put what he knows on paper. He really wanted others to know ALL ABOUT IT! :) This was a perfect way to get those ideas out of his head and onto paper. It was also a perfect way for him to learn the skills of writ-



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ing without having a limitation in the area of content at the same time.

This is a big problem in many of the approaches to writing.

Matthew had a wonderful and inexhaustible supply of material. All he needed to use it in his school lessons was the ability to develop it and share it. We simply taught him that he had too much valuable wisdom about too many areas to keep it to himself. Your children do too! Teach your children to share what they know. This will serve them all of their lives!

Finally, teach them to write from the heart.

This is probably the biggest hole in American education in our day. There is such a focus on "standardized" education and testing that the child has long ago been sacrificed in the name of "education."

There is such a disrespect for the minds and hearts of our children. I have followed the teachings of Charlotte Mason since my children first began homeschooling. The first ideas that I applied in my homeschool were not really the academic ideas, which I later applied. One of the first ideas that I brought into our homeschool was one that I am STILL learning and applying now as an empty nester and that is to respect the child.

Oh! There is a lot written about teaching children to respect parents, but respecting the child is rarely a thought, much less a discussion then we wonder why we find them reluctant, frustrated, wore-out, extremely resistant to learning.

Respect is key!

It comes from taking time to get to know THE CHILD--their bents, their interests, their heartbeats, their struggles, their passions, their thoughts, and their HEART.

Want to encourage your young writer? Take time to get to know them and to let them share more about what is going on inside of their mind and heart. Let them loose to write with passion in an area that they want to be or already are pros.

Turn them loose to write on those topics that just make their heart just flow. Then, writing will be totally different. Well, go back to that Bible passage that the Lord led me to all of those years ago--it will be easy! You will find rest--ease, relief, refreshment for YOUR MIND. Homeschooling will be comfortable, gracious, and pleasant. The burden will lift and will be light and easy to be borne.

Ok...you now have the practical tips to get you on the road to encouraging your young writers! Ready? Let's homeschool the easy way and write for the glory of God!



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