



The Atmosphere of Home

Now, that work which is of most importance to society is the bringing up and instruction of the children—in the school, certainly, but far more in the home, because it is more than anything else the home influences brought to bear upon the child that determine the character and career of the future man or woman.

Charlotte Mason, *Home Education*

We often talk of ideas in the classrooms at Ambleside, but what about the ideas in our homes? We want our children to love learning, but does our home life foster this love?

Charlotte Mason says that every parent holds their breath when they hear that their children take direction and inspiration from all the casual life about them, and that even the parents' words and ways form the starting point from which he develops.

There is no way of escape for parents; they must needs be as 'inspirers' to their children, because about them hangs... the thought-environment of the child, from which he derives those enduring ideas which express themselves as a life-long 'appetency' towards things sordid or things lovely, things earthly or divine.

Charlotte Mason, *Parents and Children*

It has been said that a child is either moving to a higher place or sinking to a lower place all the time. Our work in the classroom is only effective as it finds support in the home.

The duty of parents is to sustain a child's inner life with ideas as they sustain his body with food.

Charlotte Mason, *Parents and Children*

These thoughts beg some questions about home life. Is our life so full of *going* that our children have no time for *being*? Is our focus on developing the physical body (sports, activities) with little space for growth of the spiritual? Are the allotted times for video and television really "mindless" activities, or are they creating an appetite for 'junk food' and dulling the appetite for ideas?

Even if the circumstances of your home life do not have the peace you long for, you can still be an agent of peace and nourish your home atmosphere with ideas. You can offer a simple thought of God to your struggling child or place a bracing hand on his shoulder to show support as he works to break a bad habit or overcome a weakness. Charlotte Mason says it is the part of the parent to deposit with the child some fruitful idea of God, and "the immature soul makes no effort towards that idea, but the living Word reaches down and touches the soul and there is life, growth, beauty, flower, and fruit." For all of us, there is new hope.

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