

Many of you have heard me tell the story about the time I asked my family what they wanted for Sunday dessert. Every single person said, “Coconut dessert!”

I remember thinking, *Yay—we finally all agree on something!*

So I made a coconut dessert.

But when I served it, every one of them had imagined a *different* coconut dessert.

No one was wrong.

I simply gave them something different than what they were expecting.

I’m afraid **Well-Educated Heart** has become a little like coconut dessert.

So today, I want to tell you clearly what *kind* of coconut dessert I am serving—so there won’t be confusion or disappointment.

Let me frame this with a story.

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As a young boy, **Samuel Pierpont Langley** used to lie on the grass and watch birds flying overhead and wonder, *Why can’t people fly?*

Adults told him it was foolish.

“People don’t fly.”

“Gravity exists.”

“If God had meant for man to fly, He would have given him wings.”

Langley mostly kept his dream to himself, but he had a deeply curious mind. Everything he observed led him to question, compare, and wonder, *Why not?*

He grew into a respected scientist and eventually became head of the Smithsonian Institution. As he studied the laws of nature, he became convinced that human flight *was* possible.

When he finally received funding to test his theories, public pressure forced him to attempt a flight before he was ready.

The machine was launched—and immediately fell into the Potomac River.

The next day, all the newspapers printed long articles describing the spectacular failure of the man of learning who had left the safe and sane ways of scientific investigation to attempt the impossible. They called it “**Langley’s Folly.**”

There was such a public outcry, Congress refused further funding of flying machine ventures. Public opinion drowned out supportive voices.

Two years later, Langley died—some said of a broken heart.

But while the world laughed, two young brothers—the **Wright brothers**—were quietly dreaming too.

They later said that knowing a respected scientist believed in human flight gave them courage to carry on the impossible dream. Dr. Langley recommended books to them as they continued to watch the birds fly overhead and study the experiments and calculations of the long line of dreamers who had tested flight before them. And at long last—they succeeded where others had failed.

Langley's ideas helped pave the way.

For ten years, the ill-fated aerodome hung suspended among the curiosities of the National Museum. Then, in 1914, a Mr. Glenn Curtiss obtained permission from the government to make some test flights of Langley's Folly, and with some corrections, it sustained itself perfectly in the air.

So why am I telling you this?

Because I've been studying a different kind of flight.

Not airplanes—but people.

People who seem to soar above despair.  
People whose souls feel light, rooted, joyful, alive in God.

Where are our Shakespeares, our Dantes, our Michelangelos, our Beethovens, our Joan of Arcs, our Saint Pauls.

I keep asking:

*If they can fly... why can't we?*

And no, we aren't all going to raise Beethovens or Rembrandts, but on a personal level, I want my children to hear God's voice no matter what they face. I want them to know they are never alone. I want them to feel God's love and trust His presence. I want them to feel that God can make more of their lives than they can ever imagine or do on their own.

So I began asking:

**What are we doing that is grounding our children?**

And since education fills most of childhood, that's where I turned my attention.

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I started spending time with “heart educators”—people who believed education cannot be separated from the spiritual without serious loss.

One of them was **Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi**, who wrote, “...ever since my youth, has my heart moved on like a mighty stream...

“In the midst of scornful laughter, in the midst of the loudest taunts of the men who rejected me—“You poor wretch, you who are less able than the meanest day laborer to help yourself, and do you fancy you can help the people?”—in the midst of these jeering taunts, which I read on all lips, the mighty stream of my heart ceased not, alone and lonely, to struggle towards the purpose of my life—to stop the springs of the misery in which I saw the people around me sunk..

“As I was attempting the impossible, I found the possible which I had not expected, and as I pushed through the pathless thicket that no one had trodden for ages, I found footprints in it leading to the high road, which for ages had been untrodden.”

He tried to share what he was learning by writing a book, but he said, “The effect of my book was like the effect of all my doings on those around me; nobody understood it...”

“I raised myself daily more to the conviction that it might be possible to reach the end...namely to educate mothers for that to which they are eminently designed by nature.. The purest love opens her mouth for all that the child sees through her... she shows him the All-oving in the rising sun, in the rippling brooks, in the branches of the trees, in the splendor of the flowers..in everything she shows him God and wherever he sees God his heart rises, wherever he sees God in the world he loves the world. Joy in God's world is interwoven with joy in God. [The child] includes God, the world, and his mother in one and the same emotion.”

He believed children possess an innate moral and spiritual sense that education should *draw out*, not crush. You might say he believed true education was between a child's soul and God, and mothers were the connectors.

He came to see that heavy reliance on words weakens understanding.

The world eventually adopted parts of his methods—but missed the love that made them work.

He wanted joy.

The world wanted test scores.

He died thinking he was a failure. He had failed to achieve flight. Pestalozzi's Folly.

But his ideas landed in the heart of **Friedrich Froebel**, who also believed mothers linking children's hearts to God would lift humanity. His kinder-gartens—his training grounds for mothers—were starting to lift when they were abruptly shut down by the government for fear mothers were gathering to subvert the authority of the government. It broke his heart.

He, too, failed to “achieve flight.” Froebel's Folly.

Similar ideas landed in the heart of **Bronson Alcott**, another dreamer of higher ways. He opened a new school about the same time as Froebel was opening his kindergartens. It was called Temple School in Boston. There had never been anything like it in America before. It didn't even look like a school room—pictures on the walls, the statues of gods and goddesses from Greek myths along the floor, and curtains at the windows, and chairs in a circle, instead of lined up like an army.

Learning was natural. No drill, no memorizing, no drudgery. Instead, conversations and songs and stories. There was picture drawing and modeling in clay and working with wood and with cloth, cutting and sewing and painting. There were long walks in the park.

Children were encouraged to keep journals and reflect on their own thinking.

It wasn't the government that shut his school down. It was parents who said, this will never do—imagine education being fun. So, they took their children out of Mr. Alcott's school and sent them to schools where learning could be tested and measured and they could learn important things like spelling long words and conjugating Latin verbs.

He tried again—he created a community called Fruitland that embodied his belief that education should be inseparable from the way one lives. It, too, failed. Alcott's folly.

But many of his ideas lived on in the writings of his daughter, Louisa May Alcott who wrapped them in stories like *Little Women* and *Little Men* that continue to reach hearts today.

And then the ideas landed in the heart of a British educator, Charlotte Mason. She discovered the ideas in the Four Gospels of Jesus Christ—the same place I originally found them.

She, too, concluded:

True education is between a child's soul and God.  
Mothers are the connectors.

Her deepest vision was not about methods—it was about the soul's direct encounter with Christ. She captured her philosophy in 6 volumes of books called *The Saviour of the World*. Her understanding was too deep for mere prose, so she wrapped it in poetry. Here was the ideal of education—it is personal, spiritual, relational. There are no lesson plans. No strategies. No outcomes to measure. Just the soul awakened by Truth.

But Charlotte was also deeply realistic. She was teaching an ideal to exhausted mothers who just wanted to know: How do I do this? What does this look like? They wanted the method. Her Home Education volumes, which is where most encounter Charlotte Mason today, were about methods and practical guides.

So we hear about her methods: narration, living books, short lessons, nature study that have grown into a movement of Charlotte Mason communities that often provide detailed book lists, rigid rules for narration, and strategic methods that I don't believe Charlotte would have approved of because they keep us grounded.

Those practices were never meant to replace the heart and spirit of the philosophy. She knew well-meaning adults have a tendency to interfere. We talk too much. We explain too quickly. We replace wonder with information—lots of information. Charlotte was interested in soul formation, not information.

So her methods were largely put in place as fences to protect something that was holy. They were designed to restrain adults from interfering too much and thereby, replacing the Spirit in learning.

As the public schooling movement grew, she had to further adapt her methods to please the growing demands of that community and the spiritual roots were largely squeezed out by the methods. Her schools died not long after she died. Charlotte's Folly.

When her ideas were resurrected in the 1980s, it was largely the method books the mothers were interested in. But, I would say, the method itself will not give us flight.

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That realization led me to pause our Facebook group and reflect. Were the methods I was offering mothers because they asked for them squeezing out the spirit of this work?

If you've been through *Catch the Vision*, you may remember I said from the beginning that I was on a journey to learn God's methods and purposes for education, following in the footsteps of Charlotte Mason and other educational dreamers like I just mentioned. I wanted to know His ways because I believed if I could align myself to those ways, lives would be lifted and blessed.

The big answers came early in the journey:

God is deeply interested in our joy. He wants to help us break free from the pull of the world and fly above it. We can't teach our children to fly because we don't know how. But He does. What is impossible to us is very possible to Him. So what He asks of us as Mothers is to connect the souls of our children to Him. That's our job.

So my focus has never been primarily on reading programs, math strategies, or academic outcomes, although they are important.

Like Charlotte Mason, I am far more concerned with **soul formation than information**.

Have I arrived? No.

I may leave behind nothing but *Marlene's Folly*.

But perhaps something I discover and share will inspire someone else...  
who will inspire someone else...  
until lift-off comes.—that moment when all our children shall be taught by the Lord and great  
shall be the peace of our children.

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So here is the course correction.

If you came here mainly for homeschool tips, curriculum advice, or academic troubleshooting, I understand if you feel disappointed.

That isn't the coconut dessert I am serving.

The coconut dessert I *am* serving is for those who want to learn, with me, how to better connect the souls of our children to God so **He** can teach them.

I don't see you as customers.

I don't have a product to sell you.

I only have a vision of a higher, and yes, a holier way of educating our children.

I'm trying to learn His way. And I feel He is very much interested in teaching us.

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So this is what I'd like to offer you if you are interested in my flavor of coconut dessert. We have created a space under Mothers of Influence in the Belle Ame community called Marlene's Front Porch. I know it will take a little effort to find me there.

Think of it like coming to grandma's porch at sunset—rocking and talking about things that really matter in a place that feels safe and inviting.

I'll be offering a series of chats called **Sharpening the Vision** on my Front Porch.. These chats are not meant to replace *Catch the Vision*, but for those of you who are wanting a deeper dive, I've learned a lot of things in the last ten years since sharing *Catch the vision*. We'll talk about them on my front porch.

I know I kind of tried this before, but the time wasn't right. Let's test the waters again.

And then I'd like to set up some live Zoom chats from time to time where we can talk in real time and I'll be happy to answer any other questions you have in person. There will be space in

the front porch area for you to share your own insights as we talk about the things we'll talk about.

My first chat will address this question:

**What do I mean when I say: True education is between a child's soul and God?**

If all of this feels a little fluffy and vague, I understand.

Matters of the heart don't translate neatly into words.

To the world, they will always look foolish.

But God delights in working through the foolish—those of us crazy enough to believe it's possible to fly.

So if you feel foolish enough to dream such dreams, perfect.

Let's hang out together.

That is the coconut dessert I'm serving on my front porch.

I hope to see you there.