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## **Mommy Maneuvers**

by Michelle Miller

What do you do when there are vast differences in your children? I have previously mentioned that my son thinks Napoleon was probably too soft on people and is confident he would have held Europe in a firmer grip than Napoleon. Meanwhile, my daughter's happiest moment is when her stuffed animals "have babies." He races to find all the Easter eggs, while she dumps the treats inside the ones she happens to locate to make nests for her toy birds. Finding ways to engage and motivate both of these children is quite a challenge!

They do have one thing in common; both are very competitive. The fastest way to get their rooms cleaned is Michelle's Patented Announcement #43: "Children, when you've done your rooms, I'll have your brother/sister check them. Whatever is out of place, you will need to put right." Whirrrr, grrrrind, whizzzz! That gets their motors running, for they cannot abide the other putting them to work. Hey, a mom's got to do what a mom's got to do!

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When it comes to reading, I have some tricks. We looove living books, but I can't always get the kids to dig in quite as promptly, shall I say, as I would like. They have good intentions, but the cat's goofy tail, the inanity of our chickens, the basketball hoop's lure, the Lego loft's siren call, or any particularly fat snowflakes meandering past the windows turn them aside. You know what I mean.

So I have a few strategies. Of course, using "living books," ones that come alive through the power of story, is the most crucial component. These books don't just download sterile facts into their brains ("knowledge puffs up"), but they, instead, resonate with and raise up transcendent values. They nourish heart and mind. They breed wisdom, for whatsoever is true and of good report reflects the God who is Truth.

But even with our good living books, I still do some maternal maneuvering to keep the books flowing outside our regular homeschooling time. I plant them in a few strategic places in the house. I look for in-between times to say, "Hey, you can whip through that great picture-bio of Clara Barton while you aren't doing anything but waiting for Daddy." When they ask to do something, I say, "Great idea, as soon as you pop through one more chapter of your historical fiction book." That gets the pages turning! We are training them to grab a book on the way out the door (from my home library, not a borrowed

book) so they've enjoyed it by the time we get to Taco House (Yum!). We flip on the gas fireplace (embarrassingly true) to trigger a family reading time.

Hey, it doesn't hurt to be proactive. We can spark more reading with some clever intentionality. That's Mommy's privilege!

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