

I am

a child of God.



I can

*do all things through
Christ who strengthens me.*

I ought

*to do my duty
to God and others.*



I will

choose the right.

I Am, I Can, I Ought, I Will: Charlotte Mason's Motto Explained for Upper Elementary Students

by Dawn Elizabeth Garrett

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

Charlotte Mason set such a beautiful challenge before her students in their motto, "I am, I can, I ought, I will." She expanded it slightly by defining different characteristics as related to God and the child's relationship with Him.

My children and I have come to a Charlotte Mason education a little late. We're facing what would be traditionally grades 3-5 in the United States: Upper Elementary. If we had learned this motto as young elementary, I would have let it go as is, but I wanted to help my children see how to flesh out the ideas. When I searched for someone who had done the work for me ... well, I found I had to do it myself. And, now, I want to share it with you.

This booklet was designed to be spread out over ten weeks. Our family spent two weeks learning the slightly extended motto and two weeks (10 meditations each) on each statement. I have used it during our morning Circle Time, each meditation should take somewhere between 2-5 minutes and I haven't required narration.

Our family uses the [English Standard Version](#) of the Bible, but all references are clearly marked so you could look up the passages in your preferred translation. We are also Reformed in soteriology and subscribe to the Westminster Standards. To that end the [Westminster Shorter Catechism](#) (<http://opc.org/sc.html>) and the [Catechism for Young Children](#) (http://www.reformed.org/documents/cat_for_young_children.html) have been referenced in this work, but I think the reference(s) are general enough that any Christian could agree with them. Word definitions are either from [Google](#) or [Merriam Webster](#).

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I am
a child of God.



I Am Day One

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10 ESV)

Miss Mason began her motto with a gospel message. All of the ideas following "I am" in her motto are based on the truth that we are -that we can be- children of God. In order to be children of God, we are saved by grace. This grace gives us the faith to believe in Jesus Christ. We can know ourselves to be Christ's and because we are His, we have work to do.

This Bible passage could be repeated throughout the weeks we study the motto. Jesus gives us the ability to do the work He sets before us if we will but do it. The challenge of the motto is to remember that our identity, our who we are, sets high expectations for who we will be and what we will do.

I Am Day Two

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (1 John 3:1a ESV)

I love the translation of this passage that says “the love the Father has *lavished* on us.” To lavish means expending or bestowing profusely, in abundance, in excess. His love is so great that we are lovingly adopted to be His sons and daughters. He calls us to be co-heirs with His Son, Jesus:

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:16-17 ESV)

It is because - only because - of His great love for His people that He calls us His children. Do you know this of yourself? The idea that you are His should lead you down the path the motto lays out.

I Am Day Three

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.

And God blessed them. (Genesis 1:26-28 ESV)

It always comes back to creation, doesn't it? We are created in God's image, after His likeness. Our traits are but reflections of Him, and, after the Fall, those traits are flawed. Yet, we have the ability to work and create (though not from nothing). We have the ability to reason. We have the ability to love. According to Jesus, the Father has been accomplishing His work and will throughout time:

But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (John 5:17 ESV)

When we know this, because we bear His likeness, we ought to imitate Him.

I Am Day Four

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul tells us to

“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

As people made in God’s image, we can imitate what others do. To imitate means to copy, or to make or do something the same way someone else does. *As people, we do this by nature.* How did you learn to communicate? You learned words from listening to Mommy and Daddy and copied us. How did you learn to dress, eat, draw, write, read, do anything at all? By copying what others did.

We must be careful, though, to imitate what is good and right and leave behind what is not. Paul says to imitate him as he imitates from Christ. I think we can infer that we are to imitate what he is imitating from Jesus. Can we learn from copying the artwork of great artists? Yes! Should we learn by copying all of their behavior? Certainly not! The same can be said of anyone you imitate. We must be cautious and remember to glorify God through our imitation.

I Am Day Five

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14 ESV)

When God named Himself to Moses, He gave Himself the name, "I AM WHO I AM." "I am" is the conjugated version of the verb "to be." This name for God implies His eternity, unchangeability, and infinity. It implies His self-sufficiency; He needs nothing outside Himself. The Westminster Shorter Catechism answers the question "What is God?" this way:

God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

He *is* being. He *is* existence. We are none of these things. As children of God, we can only imitate and rely upon His character; we can provide none of it for ourselves. We need Him.

I Am Day Six

If we can say "I am a child of God," we imply, then, that God is our Father.

Jesus taught us so, in the Lord's prayer:

Our Father who art in heaven

and then He taught us to praise Him and ask from Him. For the biggest, seemingly impossible things to the smallest, seemingly meanest things. His kingdom, His will, our food, forgiveness, *forgivingness*, freedom from temptation. Jesus teaches us about the goodness and generosity of our Father who lavishes on His children:

... which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:9-11 ESV)

He teaches us to trust our Father in the immediate and for the future.

I Am Day Seven

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:14-17 ESV)

These verses were mentioned earlier in our study of "I am a child of God." We are co-heirs, fellow heirs, with Christ. God has adopted us. When someone is adopted, they become fully a part of the family. They have all the rights and privileges of any children in the family. They have all the responsibilities of children in the family. When God adopts us into the kingdom of His glorious Son, we gain both the rights and responsibilities Jesus has.

We have the right to inherit heaven and eternal life. We have the right to call on our Abba, Father. We have the right to no longer be slaves to fear and death.

But, we also bear the responsibility to show Him forth to a weary world searching for a savior. We bear the responsibility to suffer for Him.

Rights and responsibilities because of our identity; the pathways to "I can" and "I ought" are becoming clearer, aren't they?

I Am Day Eight

As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him.
For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:13-14 ESV)

Do you remember when we talked about God creating man in His own image? Today, I wish to discuss from what He made that man. In Genesis 2, the Scriptures explain in greater detail,

... then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.
(Genesis 2:7 ESV)

Did you catch that? God formed the man of *dust from the ground*. A collection of mud. With God's breath inspiring - breathing the breath of life - enlivening that collection of mud. Have you been to a funeral? Ashes to ashes and dust to dust. That is what man is.

I love John 9:6-7 where Jesus heals a blind man:

... He spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then He anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So He went and washed and came back seeing. (John 9:6-7 ESV)

Jesus made *mud*. And fixed a man's eyes. Because the man was made of mud and Jesus is God.

The Lord is a Father to us and shows compassion to us because He knows we are dust.

I Am Day Nine

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(Philemon 1:3 ESV)

The New Testament epistles are full of greetings and benedictions like this. The Apostles offered grace and peace from God to those whom they were writing.

Grace is lovingkindness, but beyond that, it is God's lovingkindness to those who have un-earned His favor. I like the definition of grace that says it isn't unmerited favor but *demerited* favor. We didn't just not earn it, we actively un-earned God's love. Yet, God loves us because He would love us (cf Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

The concept of peace in the Bible has similar depth. It isn't always just the absence of war and hostilities. No, the peace that God offers,

... the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7 ESV)

is a sense of completeness, of being whole. This can only come from God through Jesus.

The Apostles could offer such assurance *because* God is a Father to us, because He would love His people. This grace and peace - love and completeness - is yours in Christ Jesus.

I Am Day Ten

In Volume 6 of her Home Education Series, Charlotte Mason says,

"A sort of correspondence school was set up, the motto of which,—"I am, I can, I ought, I will," has had much effect in throwing children upon the possibilities, capabilities, duties and determining power belonging to them as persons."

Because you are a person, a child of God, you have many possibilities thrown before you. There are choices you can make, vocations to which you may be called, people you may befriend and imitate, actions you may take, thoughts you may think, loves you may love.

Know yourself first. *Know yourself to be a child of God.* Trust in Christ Jesus and His work of redemption. If your identity doesn't begin there, the choices, vocations, people, actions, thoughts, loves will be directed away from Him and your paths will lead you astray.



I can
*do all things through
Christ who strengthens me.*

I Can Day One

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.* (Philippians 4:11-13 ESV, emphasis mine)

Here Miss Mason quotes Scripture directly in her motto. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Note, please, what circumstances Christ enables Paul to do all things. He can be content when he is brought low, when he is humbled because of sin or poverty. He can be content when he has a wealth of money or good things in abundance.

He says in "any and every circumstance." What circumstances face you? Are you tempted to sin? Are you tempted to take charge over a sibling? Is a sibling taking charge over you? Are you being praised for excellence? Are you being encouraged to improve your work? Are you trying to avoid chores? Are you proud of slipshod work? Are you hungry? Are you tired?

Christ gives the strength to do all things: avoid temptation, avoid puffing oneself up, bringing glory to God alone. There are a wealth of ideas in this passage: what is meant by "all things;" what does Paul mean by "through Him;" how does the Lord "strengthen me?" Let us consider them.

I Can Day Two

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." So let no one boast in men. *For all things are yours*, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—*all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* (1 Corinthians 3:18-23 ESV, italics mine)

In the ESV translation, there are 80 references to "all things" and they can be found in books from Genesis "The Lord blessed Abraham in *all things*" (Gen 24:1, italics mine) to Revelation "Behold, I am making *all things* new" (Rev 21:5, italics mine). They are good examples, like Abraham. There are bad examples, like Amaziah and Joash, wicked kings of Israel. Thirty-five of the references are from Paul's letters. Jesus encourages us that all things are under His purview.

Paul, though, goes above and beyond. He ties the idea back into that idea of being co-heirs with Christ. If Jesus is heir of all things and our identity and union in Him makes us co-heirs (Romans 8:14-17), all things become ours through Him; all things in heaven and in earth and in school and in chores and in death and in anything else you can name. It is all belonging to Jesus, and due to our relationship with Him, to us.

"All things" are ours in Christ, and we can do the work He sets before us because of that.

I Can Day Three

And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw Him, were greatly amazed and ran up to Him and greeted Him. And He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" And someone from the crowd answered Him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And He answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to Him. And when the spirit saw Him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "'If you can! *All things are possible for one who believes.*" Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had entered the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And He said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." (Mark 9:14-29 ESV, italics mine)

"All things are possible for one who believes." Jesus tells us that. Here he is emphasizing a work that needs to be done. A desperate man is approaching Jesus, begging Him to save his son who is convulsing to the point of being tossed into the fire. He is truly out of control. The disciples have even had no success helping this poor man and his son. The man has lost hope that anyone - even Jesus - can help his son. Jesus consoles and almost reprimands him at the same time, "All things are possible for one who believes." Belief is key to getting things done. Remember that belief is also key to becoming a child of God.

The man responds in belief, a hesitating, faltering belief, but belief nonetheless. Jesus works. He gives us the ability to do those things He calls us to do when we believe and sometimes He simply takes the work upon Himself. Why could the disciples not cast out the demon? Only the work of God, through appealing to Him in prayer, can accomplish this particular work.

I Can Day Four

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (2 Corinthians 4:7-10 ESV)

Previously, we talked about being dust. Here, Paul tells us we are jars of clay. Gather some dust, add some water, and shape a vessel out of it. It likely will be crumbly and breakable. Even if it is professionally made, it will be easily breakable and can shatter into many pieces. This breakable, shatterable vessel is the metaphor Paul uses to describe God's people (He knows we are dust!).

Yet God uses our weakness to show His surpassing power. The word surpassing means, "greatly exceeding others." His power that greatly exceeds is stored within fragile vessels such as we. That power, and that power alone, keeps His children from being crushed, despairing, unforsaken, whole. In every circumstance, we can represent Christ's death so we might live. To what purpose do we live? To show forth the life of Jesus in our walking day by day; to show forth the life of Jesus in all the things we do.

I Can Day Five

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11 ESV)

Paul prays that God's children will grow, will abound, in all sorts of good work because those children are filled with Jesus. Note carefully, this good work flows out of their status as God's children and does not earn them that status.

What is the work? Loving better. Knowledge and discernment to choose rightly. Purity. Blamelessness. Righteousness. You can do all these things only because of Jesus.

What is the purpose of this work? The glory and praise of God, your Father, to whom all things belong.

Such an all-encompassing prayer to pray for others and ourselves. Such a comforting prayer, that when we are His, Jesus is at work in us already.

I Can Day Six

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10 ESV)

God's power is made perfect in our weakness.

I can do all things - suffer insults, weakness, hardship, persecution, calamity - because of Christ Jesus and His power. Those things are as nothing compared with the power of Christ showing forth.

Paul goes so far as to say we are strong when we are weak. How can that be? Because of the all-surpassing power of God shining through our fragile, cracked earthen vessels.

I Can Day Seven

The LORD is my strength and my shield;
in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped;
my heart exults,
and with my song I give thanks to Him. (Psalm 28:7 ESV)

The Psalms are full of reminders that it is God who strengthens His people to do what is set before them. When David says that God is His strength and shield, we are reminded that it is God who provides protection and power. When we trust in God, He helps us.

There are so many enemies who assail us, and not just people. Temptation, sickness, trial, and sin are all enemies we face. God strengthens us to face them. God shields us from their power. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1).

Let us exalt and praise Him!

I Can Day Eight

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Ephesians 6:10-20 ESV)

The children of God will face many things that can only be defeated by Christ Himself. Paul teaches us to take up the armor and armaments of Christ. Look at how Paul describes God's armor: truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, and salvation. All of those are gifts from God Himself. God's weapon is His very Word, which elsewhere is described as sharper than a double edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). This, too, is a gift to His people.

He then tells us to be alert, pray, and persevere. He clothes us with strength and provides for our defense. He provides a means to attack as well. He is our strength so that we can do all things which He calls us to do.

I Can Day Nine

I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to His service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. (1 Timothy 1:12-17 ESV)

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. Paul restates that idea here. He was wicked, but God called him a new creation and named him a child of God. God appointed him to service. That means that God gave Paul the job to serve the kingdom.

But God does not appoint without equipping. Remember how we read about God arming and armoring the believer? Paul thanks Christ for giving him the strength to accomplish the work he was given.

When God makes us new, when He removes us from our former ways, He sets work before us. All of us have much to learn, whether that's math or grammar or prayer or evangelism or turning our backs on sin. He gives us that all-surpassing strength in Christ to render Him service.

I Can Day Ten

Back to Charlotte Mason:

"A sort of correspondence school was set up, the motto of which,—"I am, I can, I ought, I will," has had much effect in throwing children upon the possibilities, capabilities, duties and determining power belonging to them as persons."

You have been given the capability to do what is before you. There may be much before you, and we've looked at some of that.

So many of our struggles are against circumstances from within ourselves. But as children of God, we are given the ability to face and defeat them in Jesus' strength or to leave them in His hands.

But circumstances, you remember, are not all hard providences. Many times circumstances are blessings, and we are given strength to bear them as well. We are able to remember that all circumstances are opportunities to glorify God and not ourselves. Talk about needing strength.

You may have many possibilities and opportunities thrown before you during your lifetime. As children of God, in all things rely upon His strength and the gifts He gives to resist evil. In all things rely upon His strength and gifts to render the glory due His name.

I ought
*to do my duty
to God and others.*



I Ought Day One

If we are children of God, if He provides all we need to do all He calls us to do, the next part of the motto explicitly tells us what to do: our duty to God and others.

The word “duty” means a moral or legal obligation, a responsibility. We talked about the responsibilities we have as co-heirs with Christ at the beginning of this study, do you remember?

The Scriptures are very clear as to our responsibilities. The Lord laid them out clearly to Moses on Sinai and Jesus confirmed and summarized them in His teaching:

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that He answered them well, asked Him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” And the scribe said to Him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that He is one, and there is no other besides Him. And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that He answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask Him any more questions. (Mark 12:28-34 ESV)

In such a way, Jesus summarized the two tables of the Ten Commandments; the first four are specifically about loving God rightly, the last six about loving man. Sometimes this teaching is so ubiquitous as to become tedious. Over the next couple of weeks, we will consider carefully how the Decalogue is a beautiful responsibility the Lord prepares us, His children, to desire to fulfill.

I Ought Day Two

And God spoke all these words, saying,

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

"You shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20:1-6 ESV)

The Catechism for Young Children tells us that these first two commandments teach us to worship God alone and then to worship God in a proper manner and to avoid idolatry.

Our duty to God begins with recognizing that He, alone, is God. That He, alone, is worthy of our worship. That all things are subordinate, underneath, subject to Him.

In all things, we must be certain to put them in their proper place. It is appropriate to learn science as studying God's creation and handiwork, it is not appropriate to submit God to the rules of science and claim there is only nature, no supernatural. It is appropriate to see God's providence in history, not to see Him as surprised by events in time. It is appropriate to learn to communicate clearly because God is the author of all things by His Word.

If we place our knowledge ahead of God, we have put ourselves ahead of God and become idolaters, breaking the first two commands. We often think idolatry is only worshipping a statue, but the command makes it clear that *whatever we put in God's place* in our hearts, minds, souls, or strength is an idol. He is to be first in my heart; and yours.

I Ought Day Three

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." (Exodus 20:7-11 ESV)

The Third Commandment, according to the Catechism for Young Children, instructs us "to revere God's name, word, and works." The dictionary says that when we revere something, we feel deep respect or admiration for that thing. I find that definition almost too light. I would say that we hold the highest, deepest, most profound respect, admiration, or esteem. Nothing ought to be held above or beyond the reverence we feel for God and His name, word, and works.

He gives us, then in the Fourth Commandment, one whole day per week, set apart to revere His name, word, and works. A day to rest from our labor to provide food and shelter and to glorify Him for His very holy otherness; the wisdom He has spoken and made knowable; His creation and the laws He established for its maintenance; and His providence in its history.

Modern scholarship has shown that time at rest allows us process and integrate new ideas. How good it is of God to set aside times of rest! He knows what is best for His children. We ought to enjoy them to His glory.

I Ought Day Four

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you." (Exodus 20:12 ESV)

Paul tells us that this is the first command with a promise (Ephesians 6:2). Why do you suppose the promise is attached to honoring your parents?

I think it is because parents have a responsibility here too. We are not to exasperate our children. Parents are to know the capabilities, limitations, and understanding of their children then to require and stretch as appropriate. As children grow in those capabilities, limitations, and understanding, what is appropriate becomes greater and fuller.

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.* You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ESV italics mine)

If parents and children walk together, submitting humbly to one another, teaching and learning about the Lord from one another, your days will be long in the land - peace will reign and God will continue to bless.

The Catechism for Young Children says this commandment teaches that we are "to love and obey our parents and teachers." Children, love and obey your parents and teachers. Parents and teachers, be lovable and obeyable. All of us, talk together, walk together day by day in love.

I Ought Day Five

The next several commandments seem as though they might not have anything to do with schooling or learning, but as we consider more closely what the commandments teach, we see that murder, adultery, stealing, lying, and covetousness do all affect our attitudes, learning, and day to day lives.

“You shall not murder.” (Exodus 20:13 ESV)

Sometimes we may feel murderous, but we never actually kill anyone, so we get a pass here, right?

Wrong.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matthew 5:21-22 ESV)

Oof. Anger.

You’ve never felt angry during your work, right? Never at your instructor(s). Never at your pupil(s). Never at yourself. Frustrations have never caused a pencil to fly across the room. No screaming matches, ever.

The catechism tells us to “avoid angry passions.” We must ask our Father to send the Holy Spirit to teach us to exhibit the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control (Galatians 5:22-23). He will help us to control our emotions rather than allow our emotions to control us - remember we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Even when we’re sure that cannot be accomplished.

The other thing that can help? Remembering to honor your Father and your Mother - and Mother and Father being honorable in our walking and talking - will help us keep peace and avoid angry passions.

I Ought Day Six

"You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14 ESV)

The seventh commandment teaches us "to be pure in heart, language, and conduct" according to the Catechism for Young Children. The Scriptures often equate idolatry and adultery, where idolatry is worshipping that which isn't God and adultery is indulging in impure actions because we put our own wants and desires ahead of God - we worship our own flesh.

We are called to be pure in heart. We are to love that which is truly loveable:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8 ESV)

We are called to be pure in language. We are to speak and read and think that which brings God glory:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:16-17 ESV)

We are called to be pure in conduct. We are to act that which is righteous:

He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8 ESV)

Do these things affect what you read and study? How you act? How you behave while in the process of learning toward other students and teachers?

I Ought Day Seven

"You shall not steal." (Exodus 20:15 ESV)

God wants us to be "honest and industrious."

We are to be honest with ourselves and others. When you don't understand, don't pretend you do. When you gain an idea from someone else, cite them properly. When you are wrong, admit it. When you are right, stand by it. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Be trustworthy in your dealings with others.

But why is "industrious" a part of not stealing?

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.
(Ephesians 4:28 ESV)

God has called us to six days of labor, and a seventh as a Sabbath, right? We are called to work and use our time for God's glory. Be industrious, really use the time allotted to you. Don't steal from your siblings, friends, or teachers by wasting their time. Don't steal from yourself by dawdling. Be industrious and hardworking, redeeming the time.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16 ESV)

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered Him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." (John 8:31-38 ESV)

Those who follow Jesus are the ones who know truth, and knowing the truth can be free from sin. If we lie about ourselves or others, we cannot be walking in the light, and are therefore shackled as slaves in sin.

Do you see how lying to ourselves and others breaks all of the other commandments? We put ourselves before God; we are impure; we do not love; we cause anger and resentment; we steal others' good opinion of us.

They answered Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did." They said to Him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but He sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. *When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." (John 8:39-47 ESV, emphasis mine)

Jesus' great enemy is called the Father of *lies*. If we lie, we follow the enemy, not the Triune God. We must be people who tell the truth. Jesus said He is "the way, *the truth*, and the life." (John 14:6, emphasis mine) If we are imitators of Christ, and He is truth, we must also be truthful.

I Ought Day Nine

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's." (Exodus 20:17 ESV)

You shall not covet your neighbor's iPad. You shall not covet your neighbor's library. You shall not covet your neighbor's parents. You shall not covet your neighbor's schoolbus.

We are called to live a peaceful, quiet life; to be "content with our lot."

The New Testament writers talk a lot about contentment. Being content with our wages (Luke 3:14). Being content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities (2 Corinthians 12:10). Being content in excess or in need (Phil 4:11). Being content simply with food and clothing (1 Tim 6:8). Being content with what you have (Heb 13:5).

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. (1 Timothy 6:6-7 ESV)

Contentment does not mean that we don't labor, though. Being content with what we have, we are called to use what we have for God's glory.

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. (Luke 12:48 ESV)

What has God given you to use for His kingdom? Intellectual aptitude? Artistic talent? Musical skill? Physical abilities? Financial wealth? Three books on an island? Be thankful. Rejoice. Stir up your gifts to the best of your ability; work hard; bring glory to God. It will be enough.

I Ought Day Ten

"A sort of correspondence school was set up, the motto of which,—"I am, I can, I ought, I will," has had much effect in throwing children upon the possibilities, capabilities, duties and determining power belonging to them as persons."

We have duties, responsibilities, "oughts" as God's children. Jesus promised to send us a helper, the Holy Spirit, to give us power to fulfill those responsibilities. The responsibilities were laid out plainly for us in the Ten Commandments.

So much more could be said about these commandments than we have said here. There are more implications, repercussions, and connections than can be explained in these short meditations, or really in any study of the Commandments.

Think about these things, talk about these things, when you rise up, when you walk along the way, when you lie down. Do this together.

One final encouragement. Jesus is the only Man ever - in all of human history - who obeyed the law perfectly. He knew, understood, followed, and fulfilled the law for our sake. When we are children of God, we are united to Him in His perfection. Like contentment, this doesn't mean we don't have work to do, but we can rest in Christ and his work applied to his people. Out of love, reverence, and gratitude, we must seek to imitate Him to the best of our ability, but *we do not have to - we cannot - earn his love or forgiveness*. Those are gifts freely given.



I will
choose the right.

I Will Day One

When we discussed “I am a child of God.” we learned that being children of God means we have both rights and responsibilities.

When we discussed “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” we learned that those rights and responsibilities are enabled, powered, supported and sometimes accomplished through the strength of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

When we discussed “I ought to do my duty to God and others,” we learned that God has told us what we must do unambiguously in the Ten Commandments.

And, only now, after we know the who and the how and the what does Charlotte Mason’s Motto tell us to actually do the who, how, and what. To make decisions. To choose.

In the Biblical account, Joshua led the children of Israel across the Jordan into the Promised Land. They already know they are God’s people and He is their God. They have seen His power to free them (from bondage in Egypt), lead them (in the wilderness), teach them (the Law at Sinai), conquer for them (at Jericho and other cities in the land), and give them rest (vineyards they did not plant).

It is the end of his career as leader of God’s chosen people and Joshua is giving his farewell address at Shechem to all of the people who have been gathered there. Joshua retells all of the wondrous things God has done for the people and then he challenges them:

“Now therefore fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, *choose this day whom you will serve*, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. *But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*” (Joshua 24:14-15 ESV, italics mine)

This example follows the pattern of the motto. God adopts, equips, and instructs. Then He counts on us to choose to follow, to choose the right. Oh, but He continues to equip and nourish along the way. Let’s choose, as Joshua did, the right.

I Will Day Two

*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have *put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self*, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (Colossians 3:5-11 ESV, italics mine)*

Put off the old man and put on the new.

We have seen how interconnected the law is and learned how breaking part of the law is breaking all of the law. Paul wants us to remember that when he lists different facets of the sin which once entangled us. What he is reminding us to do is to choose to not be enslaved to the person we were, the sinner entangled and in bondage to our sinful self. He wants us to purposefully stop being that person and purposefully clothe ourselves, identify ourselves, present ourselves in Christ, who is making *all things* new. A new creation, a newly restored humanity.

Choose you, this day, to put on the new self in every application of your will. Does it seem easier to tell Mommy the little white lie? Or to tattle? What word pops out when you drop something on your big toe? Did so-and-so really do such-and-such? Did your sibling steal your Lego piece? Which is more important to you the sibling or the Lego?

No. Choose the right. Put on the new man who puts such pettiness behind.

I Will Day Three

In the Reformed tradition, the Means of Grace are the Word (preached and read), prayer, and the Sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper). We will not going to discuss the Sacraments in this study. The Means of Grace we will discuss are the Word and prayer. Today let's think about how the Word enables us to choose the right.

Paul says we, "put on the new self, which is being *renewed in knowledge* after the image of its creator." (Colossians 3:10 ESV)

In Romans, he tells us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but *be transformed by the renewal of your mind*, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2 ESV)

In Philippians, he tells us, "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with *knowledge and all discernment*, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (Philippians 1:9-11 ESV)

Finally, he tells Timothy how to renew our minds, knowledge, discernment, "*All Scripture* is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV)

When we listen carefully to the Word preached (during worship, do not neglect to meet together (Hebrews 10:25)); when we read and study it; and meditate upon it and its implications we are transformed, choosing to put on the new man day by day and walking in the light, turning our backs on the old man groping in the dark.

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105
ESV)

I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your rules before me. (Psalm 119:30
ESV)

Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but *his delight is in the law of the LORD*,
and *on his law he meditates* day and night.

He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers. (Psalm
1:1-3 ESV, italics mine)

I Will Day Four

Jesus taught us how to pray,

Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil." (Matthew 6:9-13 ESV)

The Catechism for Young Children says that "Prayer is asking God for the things He has promised to give." He has a kingdom, will, nourishment, forgiveness, and preservation to give us. And He wants us to come to Him for these things.

Talking with the Lord in this manner changes us. Have you noticed that when you spend time with friends or family, you become like them in ways? Sometimes in speech patterns, sometimes in behavior. Spending time in prayer with our Father (and the Holy Spirit who prays when we cannot, and Jesus who intercedes on our behalf) changes us. He helps us to put on that new man, helps us to desire that which he desires.

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*" (Hebrews 4:14-16 ESV)

The Lord uses prayer that we might receive mercy and find grace. It helps us to choose rightly because Jesus can sympathize with us, was tempted like we, and was sinless - He chose rightly each and every time. He is the embodiment of the new man and the one we are to emulate.

I Will Day Five

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV)

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:12-17 ESV)

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3:23-24 ESV)

Paul tells us over and over to put on Christ and that new nature which he has given to us. He tells us to find our identity in and to imitate Christ Jesus. He instructs us to daily put Christ's nature on, because it isn't natural to us. We must make an active decision to put on and carry out our days with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and love.

We have learned how God has given us the gifts of the Means of Grace in order to put these new ideas into our minds and hearts. We have learned that we, like Joshua, must make a choice to drape ourselves in God's character daily. Let us remember that the purpose of becoming Christlike is to bring glory to our God. He has changed us by making us his people, let us glorify Him by desiring to be like Him. Let us seek out Truth, because He is truth; Goodness, because He is the way; and Beauty, because He is the Life.

Let us work heartily, seeking excellence, because we are serving our Lord. And let us never forget that even when we fail (which we all do and all will until heaven),

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"therefore I will hope in Him." (Lamentations 3:22-24 ESV)

I Will Day Six

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24 ESV)

The Law teaches us to love God with all we are and others as ourselves.

We, in that old man we're putting off, want to put ourselves first in everything - just like Adam and Eve did. As we put on the new man, we put others first by *choosing* to deny ourselves - just like Jesus did. We deny our desire to be seen as first. We turn away from idolizing ourselves through our selfish desires. We deny our need for glory, for attention, for approval from others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8 ESV)

But it is even more than that, we *choose* to take up a cross. We *choose* difficulty, struggle, pain, and suffering. The Christian life, the life of a disciple, the putting God's way ahead of our own way isn't easy. I know that choosing what is right is hard. That's why I lose my patience, why I avoid my chores, why I don't love others how I ought, etc.

With his strength and aid, though, I can begin to choose to follow Him, to do what's right. With His aid, I can choose what is right more and more often.

I Will Day Seven

Charlotte Mason teaches, “an act of the will is ... an impulse that gathers force from Reason, Conscience, Affection.” (Ourselves, Book II, pg 165 as quoted in Consider This by Karen Glass) We are going to talk about Reason, Conscience, and Affection for the next three days.

“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be eaten by the sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isaiah 1:18-20 ESV)

To reason means, “think, understand, and form judgments by a process of logic.” God asks us to reason with Him. He wants us to understand what He will do for us: wipe out the record of our sins and make us pure.

But as we continue to utilize our reason through our will and obedience, there are consequences. If we refuse, there are consequences, too.

How do you use your reason? Do you make snap judgements without counting the cost? Are your choices purposeful and reasonable? Do you think rightly, but not apply it to your actions? It’s easy to assent to an idea that you don’t act upon. There is a difference between knowing something; knowing you ought to do something; and knowing you ought to *and* acting upon that knowledge. And there are consequences that the Lord promises, promises for your good or for your punishment.

Choose to know *and* do what is right.

I Will Day Eight

Yesterday, we used our Reason as we considered making choices. Today, we're going to see how the Bible teaches us to use our Conscience.

All men are born with a conscience. The conscience is, "an inner feeling or voice viewed as acting as a guide to the rightness or wrongness of one's behavior." Paul tells us in Romans that,

They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:15-16 ESV)

So our conscience becomes the law we are under and God will judge us by.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9:14 ESV)

The writer of Hebrews shows us that God purifies our conscience with the blood of Christ applied by the Holy Spirit. When our conscience is purified we are enabled to move away from dead works - those things we do to earn our status as child of God - to true service as His children. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to his followers:

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:25-26 ESV)

Miss Mason reminds us to rely on our conscience as taught by the Holy Spirit. We are to listen to Him and act on his influence.

I Will Day Nine

Today, we'll consider the third of Charlotte Mason's will influencers: our Affection.

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in Him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:7-11, 15-17 ESV)

What do you love? For many of us, those things we love are the most influential of Charlotte Mason's three will influencers. What we love, what we care for, what we desire are those things we act upon to see realized.

John is so insightful here: if we love the Father, we will love the things He loves. If we love the things that He loves, we will do God's will.

Are your affections aligned with God's? Are mine? How do we love rightly? What is love and what does it really look like? We love not as the world loves.

Again, we choose the right when we order our affections with what God teaches. We must learn to use our Affections in conjunction with our Reason and our Conscience before exercising our will in choosing what is right.

I Will Day Ten

"A sort of correspondence school was set up, the motto of which,—"I am, I can, I ought, I will," has had much effect in throwing children upon the possibilities, capabilities, duties and determining power belonging to them as persons."

I hope during this study you have seen how Charlotte Mason's motto is deep and wide, deeper and wider than this study. I hope you have seen how it covers your identity, your strength, your duties, and your work, or as Mason says, "possibilities, capabilities, duties, and determining power."

I chose butterflies to illustrate the motto and pages because they undergo change during their lives and become what God has for them to be. Paul tells us that we are part of, we are that new creation! (2 Corinthians 5:17) Butterflies have always symbolized that for me, changing from one thing to another and living in the new. They are an example from nature we can follow.

In this life you must make decisions. Some of those decisions are big and some of them are small. They range from what to have for breakfast to what to watch on tv or internet to what profession to enter to who to marry. The decisions you make affect how you see yourself, how others see you, and your relationship with the Father.

Exercise your will now on small things. Your will is the "mental powers manifested as wishing, choosing, desiring, or intending" and "the power of control over one's own actions or emotions." (m-w.com) You can strengthen your will through exercise - by making right decisions as a habit. You can strengthen your will through study and renewal of your mind with the Means of Grace. You can strengthen your will by remembering that it is strongly influenced by your Reason, Conscience, and Affections.

We are also told

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13 ESV)

God adopts us as his children, strengthens us to work, tells us what to do, and then expects us to do the work. To work out our salvation, not *earn* it, but to will and to work for his good pleasure in cooperation with the work He is doing.

It is my prayer that you will continue to think on these things and plumb their depths - 'that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight' (Philippians 1:9-11) - and use them to conform yourself to Christ Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2 ESV).

Other Resources for “I am, I can, I ought, I will”

Simply Charlotte Mason has a helpful series on the motto:

<https://simplycharlottesmason.com/blog/series/i-am-i-can-i-ought-i-will/>

AmblesideOnline has a page with different formulations of the motto:

<https://www.amblesideonline.org/CM/CMMotto.html>

Braveheart Education blog post on the motto:

<http://www.bravehearteducation.co.uk/i-am-i-can-i-ought-i-will/>

Willow Tree Community school posted some ideas on teaching I am and I ought:

<http://www.wtcschool.org/blog/archives/09-2014>

There are different formulations for the motto floating around from other schools, too. I particularly like this one from Perimeter School:

I am a child of God.
I ought to do His Will.
I can do what He tells me.
By Grace alone I will.

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