

workers@home

Making the Most of Your Time

Erin Thiele

Tenth Revised Edition



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by Erin Thiele



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She looks well to the ways of her household,

And does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up and bless her;

Her husband also,

and he praises her saying:

“Many daughters have done nobly,

But you excel them all.”

Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,

But a woman who fears the LORD,

she shall be praised.

Give her the product of her hands,

And let her works praise her in the gates.

—Prov. 31:27–31

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the many young women in my life, especially my three daughters, Tyler, Tara, and Macy. It is my prayer that the ideas, methods, and suggestions in this little book will help you as you partake in the most important career in this world—a homemaker! It is a job that I have found to be more rewarding, more challenging, and more fulfilling than being a public speaker or an author. I am not a housekeeper, nor are you. We are homemakers. We are what “makes a house a home.”

Whether your house is clean and tidy, well-organized and smooth-sailing, calm and tranquil, happy and joyful, will depend entirely on you. Most young women I talk to haven’t a clue as to where to even begin. As I began the third revision of this book, I kept you in mind as you begin to tackle this wonderful and powerful position as a . . .

Worker at Home!

*. . . be sensible, pure, **workers at home**, kind,
being subject to their own husbands,
that the word of God may not be dishonored.
—Titus 2:5*

*She looks well to the **ways of her household**,
And does not eat the bread of idleness.
—Prov. 31:27*

*Give her the product of her hands,
And let **her works** praise her in the gates.
—Prov. 31:31*

Chapter 1

Making the Most of Your Life

Let Her Works Praise Her!

*Many daughters have done nobly,
But you excel them all . . .
Give her the product of her hands,
And let her works praise her in the gates.
—Prov. 31:29–31*

Anyone who knows my background would think it hilarious that I am now known for organizing and keeping a home neat and tidy! It just shows that God does have a sense of humor, and that with God, all things are possible!

When I married, I could not cook, nor did I know how to keep a home! No one taught me, nor did I have an example to follow.

My mother, bless her heart, loved her children (all seven of them), but since she grew up in a wealthy home with servants, and as an only child, she never learned how to **do anything!** When she was very young (just 16 and still in Girl Scout camp), she eloped with my father, who also came from a wealthy upbringing!

My mother's mother (my grandmother), never allowed her to be in the kitchen or to spend time around the servants. She never put away her clothes or even dressed herself! Her meals were served to her. My father had his meals in the dining room of a hotel where his family lived in the penthouse.

By the time I came along (I am their sixth child), my mother had years of disorganization and burnt meals. My father hired help often, but they were soon dismissed because my mother felt they were an "intrusion," and they only reminded her of her unhappy childhood.

Our laundry room, when I was growing up, was piled high with laundry that was done "maybe" monthly. Meals were always late and always burnt. My mother would cook a dozen meals that were repeated over and over again. Most of us (her children) tried to get invited to a neighbor's house for dinner, or would eat a bowl of cereal!

However, my mother really loved us—we all knew that! It was because of her love that we all turned out more than all right. Maybe we were a bit traumatized by the home we grew up in, but thankfully, most of us can laugh about it now! My sisters, unfortunately, never learned how to keep a home. All of them cook better than my mother, but their homes—well, that's another story.

My brothers married women who kept nice, clean homes (well, at least two of them did). As for me, it was a "God thing" that my home is clean and well-organized with good home-cooked meals. As with every area of my life, God has brought me from tragedy to triumph. I should have followed in my mother's footsteps, but God set me free and He is about to set you free too! Thankfully, today my home

is always clean and tidy! We have meals on the table at the same time everyday, and thankfully, I have not burned anything in years!

To break this cycle even further, I continue to train my daughters so that when they marry, they will be well-prepared to keep their own homes. All of them (even my sons) have learned to do laundry, to clean, and to cook. It is my desire to encourage each of you to become true older women who will teach and encourage what is right and to help at least one young woman to learn how to make a house a home. Would you do that? If you have daughters, hopefully they are willing to listen and to learn from you. If not, pray and see whom the Lord would have you sow into.

And for those of you who have never been properly trained, I am your older woman! My start proves that no matter where you are, or where you have come from, God can set you free to actually enjoy making your house a home! This book will give you guidelines, but it will be GOD who will transform you and His Holy Spirit that will guide you as you seek Him continually!

My ministry is encouraging women in every area of their lives. Besides my own testimony, my mission is to share principles that will literally change your life, once you embrace them. Here is the first:

“Looking at them, Jesus said, ‘With people it *is* impossible, but **not with God**; for **all things are possible with God**’” (Mark 10:27).

If your problem is keeping a clean home, it may seem impossible with your busy schedule, but not *with* God—all things are possible *with* God!

If your problem is staying organized, it may seem impossible with your personality, but not *with* God—all things are possible *with* God!

If your problem is keeping up with the laundry, it may seem impossible with all the children you have, but not *with* God—all things are possible *with* God!

If your problem is cooking, it may seem impossible because you never liked being in the kitchen, but not *with* God—all things are possible *with* God!

Enter God

No matter what the problem area of your life is, when God enters into that part of your life, it will change! Most of us never rely on God or ask for His help, but instead, we struggle to do things in our own strength by leaning onto our own understanding of what we think we should do. It isn't until we are at the *end of ourselves* that we cry out to Him. Why wait?

No matter how big or how small your problem is, the Lord *wants* to help **you**. He *longs* to be gracious to us! Awesome! “Therefore the LORD **longs** to be **gracious** to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long for Him” (Isa. 30:18).

The Bible says that He is actually looking for hearts that are totally sold out to seeking Him, so He can strongly support us in our efforts! “For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the whole earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His . . .” (2 Chron. 16:9). He wants to give us all of the desires of our heart, from a clean house, to clean clothes, to a home that is running efficiently. “Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it” (Ps. 37:4).

God loves to show Himself strong on our behalf, especially the most hopeless cases like mine (and maybe yours), so that He can get ALL the glory! “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?” (Jer. 32:27).

So how did someone like me learn to be known for organization and keeping a well-run home, *while having* seven children of my own and a ministry that operates from our home? By **seeking Him and through humility**.

Seeking Him

When I was quite young (maybe twelve years of age), I remembered the frustration of not being able to find clothes to wear. My mother would hand us a huge pile of laundry (about once a month), and then we would just put it in *any* drawer where there was room. As I prayed through my frustration (I had accepted the Lord as my Savior when I was seven, even though I was raised in a Catholic home), the Lord gave me a wonderful idea! I thought, “Hey, wouldn’t it be a great idea if there was one drawer for tops, one for pants, one for underwear and socks, etc. . . .?” So I organized my drawers, always thinking that I had thought up a new idea! It was years later when I discovered that this is the way most people live!

When I married my husband, he told me that his mother cleaned the bathrooms regularly. I was astonished! “Really!” I said, “How often?” He replied, “I think, once a week.” Then he explained about vacuuming regularly and other daily, weekly, or monthly “chores” (a word that I had thought only applied to people living on a farm).

The knowledge was helpful, but since I didn’t grow up in an environment like that, I didn’t know how to incorporate working it into my everyday life. As I prayed, the Lord brought to mind a system that my brother taught me about using 3x5 cards that helped me to get straight “A’s” in college. That’s how my 3x5 card method began. (You will read about the method in a future chapter.)

Humility

Humility was how I learned to cook. During the two years, when I was seeking God to restore my marriage, I did a LOT of fasting. It says in Scripture that fasting humbles the heart.

It was easy to begin learning to fast during this period of my life, because I really *couldn’t* eat! I hurt too much since my husband was living with another woman and I was left with four little children to care for alone. In our ministry, we call this the “infidelity diet.”

So, since I “couldn’t” eat, I thought I would make good use out of it and fast for a purpose. While fasting, I found myself excited for the first time about cooking and feeding my children. This had to also be a “God thing”—I found pleasure in watching *them* eat!

In addition, for the first time, I admitted that I was not a good cook. I had already begun my ministry to women, and during the meetings, I would often say that I couldn’t cook. The result was that so many women came to my aid to help me to learn! They gave me easy recipes and even stood next to me to show me how to do simple things like peel an apple to make an apple pie.

By the time God restored my marriage two years later, God had transformed me into a good cook!! My husband returned home to a wife who could cook (with many other changes). God was even faithful to change my husband, who, because of the many trials he had while living with the OW (other woman), which God tells us will happen to a man in adultery, he learned to fix things in the house and in the car!

Isn't God so faithful?!

The lack of humility was not the only thing standing in my way with regard to cooking. The root cause was the belief and acceptance of a lie. I will tell you honestly that I never wanted to be a good cook, because I believed all good cooks were fat! My mother was a large woman, and I didn't want to add "being a good cook" to my genetics that leaned toward obesity.

If that is your concern, then let the truth set you free—that is a lie from the pit of "you know where!" There is NO curse that can touch you because that was broken when the Lord died on the cross for you and me. If you are a child of God, the curse has no effect on you, unless you accept it! Here's proof:

A few years ago, actually right after my 40th birthday, I began to have trouble with my weight. When my seventh child was born, and after our eighth (whom I sadly lost), I was unable to lose the weight that I normally could lose after a birth or a miscarriage. That is when my brother and sister began to insist that I accept the curse that our family has with a metabolism and thyroid disorder. They were right, I did have ALL the symptoms, but I refused to accept it!

One day, I stood in front of the mirror and ***cried out to God*** to make me thin. I repented of all the times that I did not have compassion on women who were overweight, and for not giving God the glory for being able to remain thin with so many children (I went over 200 pounds with all but one pregnancy!). By the grace of God, I was able to be very thin by the time each baby was just a few months old. After I had repented of everything that the Lord brought to mind, I then gave my weight and size to Him!

The hardest part was not trying to *help* God to do it. Thoughts of different kinds of diets, drinking more water, exercise, etc., etc. would run through my mind. For three to four months, I was "tempted" to try to help God when suddenly, things just started to *happen!*

I began to crave different foods, and I started to feel that my jeans were looser. I NEVER got on the scale again, so I wasn't tempted to get excited with my weight loss and celebrate with overeating. Nor did I want to feel depressed if I had gained weight. I left my size to the Lord, for Him to do it and to give me the desires of my heart—which was to be a "*loose size 10.*"

Honestly, I cannot tell you how God did it. Things changed from day-to-day, but one thing is for sure—He was in control! There was no worrying, no fretting, no hard work. There was no counting carbohydrates or calories. There was no hunger and no denying myself, which usually resulted in an *obsession* for food.

Only four months later, I was a loose size 10. I started at a very tight size 16, which for my height of almost five foot ten isn't *that* bad, but it wasn't me, nor was it the "desire of my heart"! But did you know that God LOVES to give us above and beyond what we could ever hope, think, or ask for? He does! I continued to shrink, and found myself at a size six! This was the size that I was when I accompanied my husband to his high school reunion! Isn't God so good?!

May I just add a short epilogue to give my Beloved even more praise? It was at my ex-husband's high school reunion that sparked an old flame with his high school sweetheart whom he married within the year of divorcing me. Though I have had conversations via email, I have yet to see her again after she became involved with my husband. The last time she saw me, I was tanned, gorgeous, and a size 6!! Isn't the Lord just too good to be true?

I am telling you this to encourage you to TRUST God to do it! ***Cry out to Him***, and then stand back and let Him do it! That is probably the hardest part!! No matter what area of your life you are struggling with,

if you cry out to God, surrender the problem to him, and then *resist* trying to help Him (which usually lasts through about four months of temptations and testing)—God will do it *for* you, and with no sweat! Instead, all, and I mean ALL, the praise and glory will go to Him!

As I said earlier, this book and all my books give you guidelines, wisdom, and knowledge—but it will be God who will do all the changing. Then, give HIM the glory!! That’s all that He wants for blessing you!!

However, I hope you noticed from the beginning of my weight loss testimony that the first step was repentance. God would not move in this area of my life until I first repented of lacking compassion for women who were over-weight. Secondly, I needed to repent for not giving God the glory for what He had done by keeping me thin after each pregnancy.

When asking God “why” there are so many homes with chaos and untidy tendencies, God has brought one Scripture to mind as the root cause. It is not only a lack of knowledge, or a lack of humility (or believing a lie, as it was in my case), but it is also rooted in a common sin that is rampant in our feminist and “me first” society!

Selfish Ambition

Is there really *anyone* who would not want to have a home that is clean and runs smoothly? However, most homes that I see are not so blessed. As I said in the dedication, whether or not your house is clean and tidy, well-organized and smooth-sailing, calm and tranquil, happy and joyful, will depend entirely on **you**.

Some of you have chosen a life that is much too busy with outside activities. Your home reflects the rat race with chaos and disorder! The root cause for many of us can be found in James 3:16 when it says, “For where *jealousy* and *selfish ambition* exists, there is **disorder and every evil thing**.”

When “my own agenda” is first and foremost in my life above God’s plan, which gives me the responsibility to keep my home clean and running efficiently, then that is selfish ambition. Anytime this creeps into my life (usually brought on by selfishness or self-pity), then my life and my home are disorderly and evil runs rampant!

Most women who work outside the home do not have a well-run home, instead, it is usually filthy! But surprisingly, even stay-at-home moms can have a home that looks the same way: untidy, unclean, and disorganized.

It could also be the unconfessed sin of jealousy or envy that keeps your home and your life in constant disorder. Again, the verse says, “For where *jealousy* and *selfish ambition* exist, there is disorder and every evil thing” (James 3:1).

We see someone who has what we think we should have, instead of what God wants to give us. This causes us to be involved in activities that will make our lives, our children’s lives, and our family’s life just too busy to keep up with!

Are you trying to keep up with your friends or to impress your family, rather than trying to simply rest in the Lord? If you are a man-pleaser, trying to gain the approval or praise of others, **you will be worn out**. Know who you are in Jesus. Know His unconditional love. You don’t need to do ONE thing today to gain His love—the Lord and His love is there for you unconditionally!

God is NOT a God of confusion. We know God is not a God of confusion; therefore, He does not want

us to live in confusion or disorder. First Corinthians 14:33 says, “For God is **NOT a God of *confusion*** but of peace . . .”

The most important thing you can do to be a happy and contented “worker at home” (whether you also work outside your home, or whether you are blessed to stay-at-home) is to find the peace in KNOWING that the Lord is happy, pleased, and in love with you, no matter what you do or don’t do today. Find that peace, and rest in His love for you. Once you feel His love and His peace, then everything will begin to fall into place.

You will find that your life will begin to change. Some things will go and will be replaced with other things. Everything will begin to get into the proper order, and with it, PEACE will remain. Your joy will overflow to your family. Your contentment will strengthen every area of your life and each of your relationships.

As I conclude this first chapter, I pray that before you read any more, you will read and re-read this foundational chapter. As you do . . .

Write Your Thoughts Down

At the end of many of the chapters, there is blank paper. I designated this area for your “notes.” While you are reading the following pages, write the thoughts or plans that God gives you as He brings them to your mind.

Also, you can use a crayon or colored pencil (neither one will bleed through the pages) as you read to highlight those things that quicken your spirit or that may be an answer to your prayer. Feel free to write in the margins, and make notes to yourself. Most importantly, enjoy!

Write down your thoughts from this chapter. What has the Lord been speaking to you about your life? Has He been gently trying to encourage you to let some things go, or to surrender to Him? Write down the thoughts from your heart.

Notes:

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