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Making the Most of Your Time

Erin Thiele

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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*

———— Introduction 1 ————

That Too Perfect Proverbs 31 Woman!

The words of King Lemuel, the oracle
which his **mother** taught him
—Proverbs 31:1

Let me begin by saying that the “Proverbs Woman” is entirely fictitious and this woman does not exist, but of course you knew that. Nevertheless, I felt it was important that we all agree that she’s simply not real. The reason we need to agree is also simple. It’s because this “woman” was my hero and I wanted to be just like her—so much so, that I patterned my life after her. Then I foolishly used her as a measuring stick to determine how well I was doing as a wife, mother and homemaker. And if I had to guess, you’ve been struggling with competing with this mythical character too.

So, I don’t know about you, but this woman has haunted me long enough. All my life, especially my married life, I desperately struggled and clawed through my days to be just like her so I would be “good enough” and “righteous enough” and “pleasing enough” to God.

What I found out only a few years ago was that this is *not* God’s measuring stick for women; instead, Proverbs 31 were guidelines that a mother used to instruct her son when **choosing** a wife—a wife who would be his queen. So it’s fine to encourage our sons to look for such a wife, knowing even more now than it was then, that this is a woman who is almost impossible to find, a rare and costly jewel. Thankfully, nothing is impossible with God, and as mothers we can trust He will bring the perfect helpmeet for our sons, as long as we are putting our trust in Him.

In this chapter it is my hope that you will understand the truth regarding the Proverbs Woman not being real. I hope it has already lifted a heavy burden and weight off of you, just as it did me, so that you will no longer *try* to be like her. Since now I am free from this burden, it has allowed me the freedom and ease of simply allowing Him to make me over. Though I still do, and will always desire to be well-pleasing to my God, and also my Lord, who is now my Husband, I no longer will believe the lie that I need

to measure up. Instead, by living drenched in His love, for more than a year now, I know that there is nothing, not-one-thing, I need to do to please Him—as long as He has my entire heart, that’s all He wants. Isn’t that delicious?

Now, because of this newfound understanding, everything that I do springs from that love. There is no effort, and no disappointment on my part because, as I said, I know I don’t have to measure up! Freedom at last: Freedom to love others and freedom to enjoy living my abundant life!

Forgive me, I just couldn’t go on with this chapter without first stating this foundational point again: Your Beloved is crazy about you, just the way you are. It may sound impossible, unreal, and too good to be true, but just remember this, “*while* we were yet sinners . . .” that’s when He died, laid down His life, for you and me. We did nothing, it was “while we were sinners.” He didn’t lay His life down *once* we repented or even *tried* to be good. That’s the point. It was when we were rotten, bad, and had no desire for Him at all that He showed His love for us—stretching His arms wide—those same arms He longs to embrace us with throughout eternity. So stop and take a moment and really ponder that truth for a while. There is no greater truth that exists.

Alas, it now seems a bit hard to just jump into what this chapter is all about when you’ve just peered so deeply into the depths of your soul, but another truth that’s freeing is this: Everything that involves us matters to our Lover—everything—even the mundane. So let’s turn our attention to a mundane topic, the state of our homes, and how we can enjoy creating a haven for us, our family and our friends. How to simply be the kind of bride our Husband wants us to be, a Husband who wants us feeling free of worry or burdens and inexplicably happy. A bride who feels fulfilled and accomplished—something that women today find impossible to obtain though *striving* for it daily. That’s because most women have accepted the lie that by emulating a man and copying what makes a man feel fulfilled will make us, as women, fulfilled. All the while the truth in Proverbs, and throughout the Bible, God has beautifully explained how He created us, different and unique, not at all like a man. “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female” (Matthew 19:4). So let’s focus on what does matter to us as women, where we live and read this passage:

*“She looks **well** to the ways of her **household**, and does not eat the bread of idleness” (Proverbs 31:27).*

This verse, which is also part of that Proverbs 31 Woman, is something that I always thought I had *at least* covered, because . . . I was simply never idle. So I felt like I must have both parts covered, I took care of it well because I was not idle. Not so. These are two separate areas that we can use to seek God’s help with by asking Him to transform us in this one area of our lives.

Again, there is nothing we can do in ourselves, remember He says, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in **Me** and I in him, he bears much fruit, for **apart** from **Me** you can do **nothing**” (John 15:5), but *with* God, He promises nothing is impossible “. . . but **with God** all things are **possible**” (Matthew 19:26).

So why not, using His strength, wisdom and anointing, ask Him to help us to accomplish the task of *looking well* to running our homes, with the desire of creating a haven for our family, our friends and for us to live as His bride? Again, if we *try* to do it within our own wisdom or strength or even timing, our efforts are nothing but futile and worthless. No amount of organizational books or plan of ours will work. Yes, books or articles or television shows are fine to gain knowledge, but only He can fulfill this (or any) aspect of our lives. Simply discuss this and anything with Him, so that He can make it happen—effort free.

Spring Cleaning

While I was flying home from Asia (I mentioned in my first book *Finding the Abundant Life*, I continue to travel for our church through our television ministry), I found I had so much time to think and talk to the Lord about lots of things. One thing that came to mind on this flight was a deep desire that I had to do “spring cleaning.” Confession, I have never really done spring cleaning before in my life, and for some reason I simply wanted to have my house just deep-cleaned and de-cluttered, including and especially the closets and drawers and cupboards. There is something so freeing about having a home that is free from everything that you don’t need and/or don’t use. It is like a huge weight has been lifted from you and your life. Maybe it was due to something someone had recently said about Erin’s *workers@home* book that I’ve loved and followed for years. Or

possibly it was due to something He had up ahead for me (and my family) and the spring cleaning and/or de-cluttering would be the first step.

Regardless of the real reason, I knew since I had been traveling so extensively over the prior year, my home really needed some deep attention. But there is one very important lesson I have learned this past year too, and that is I can do *nothing* at all in myself. Nothing. Prior to this year I put a lot of “me” in everything I did with just a little “sugar coating” from the Lord. But when you are put in a position of being thrust suddenly into become a single mom of big family, plus adding another teenager, then a special needs older sister who requires lots of your attention, then on top of it all, you’re sent off to travel around the world half of the time, well, then you find that you are forced to rely on the Lord one-hundred percent, or you simply will go under. That’s what He knew I needed to learn—to fully and completely rely on Him—to actually rest in Him even when there was so much to do that you felt that you would never make it or you were about to drop down dead from exhaustion.

So, while flying, I simply told the Lord that I would **love** to do “spring cleaning,” then simply surrendered it to Him, not once, but each and *every* time I thought of it. And think of it I did. When I got back home after being gone for almost a month, my home needed my attention, though everything was amazingly clean, even to any unannounced visitor. I thanked Him profusely for the confirmation that as a mother, I hadn’t neglected training my children. Yet, I was still determined to let Him do the impossible and provide the time and His plan for a deep-cleaning, if of course, that was His plan. Knowing again that whatever I could *try* to do, rather than waiting for Him, would be a tiny fraction of what He would—in His timing do—I allowed Him to fulfill the desires of my heart. So I waited to be swept into His plan and His flow.

Then suddenly, I saw it start to happen.

You know ladies, this is the way the Lord works—He wants us to wait, then *suddenly* He moves. It is kind of like children who have growth spurts. This is His way and we need to know and understand how He works, so that we can stop fretting when we don’t see *anything* happening: **promises fulfilled happen in spurts *after* we’ve waited.**

Right now I can't remember what room it started with; oh, I know now, it was my girls' room. I'd blessed them with new comforters, sheets, curtains, etc. after their cousin (my niece) left to go back home after living with us for a year. They were once again sharing a room and deserved to be blessed for showing such love to their cousin. God even gave me a head start because while I was gone: one of my children moved out of another room and actually folded their clothes neatly in their drawers. That's when I felt this surge of excitement and energy to make up my four containers and big labels to begin sorting what was in those drawers! Yes, I too purchased Erin's *workers@home* book and am led periodically to follow it as I said. Right then and there, God had put an anointing on or in me, coupled with the knowledge and wisdom that I had gained from this book and from watching all those organizational shows. We were off.

First, I sought the Lord for *where* those large containers were: buckets, baskets, and bags. Here's the thing, at that moment I could have taken over: me, my ideas—my flesh or me trying to follow the book, but I wanted to remain tapped into His anointing so I would be able to give all the “glory to God.” And more importantly, end up with the kind of results that makes you want to dance and shout!

Immediately God led me through the house and in the garage, collecting what I needed. I labeled the large sheets of paper: #1 throw away, #2 give away, #3 put away, and #4 store away. In both the #1 and #2 container, I put a large black trash bag to make it easy to move #1 to the trash and #2 to trunk of my car. (If you haven't read Erin's book *workers@home* bear with me or better yet get one; as what I say will make more sense as we go). These containers I lined up 1–4 and explained to my daughters that this is the method to clean *any* room, *any* drawer, *any* closet, or *any* car—*anything*.

So our goal, I explained, was to remove every *thing* from “wherever” they felt led to work: in a drawer, the closet or under the bed, and then ask the Lord, should it be:

#1 thrown away (is it damaged and not worthy to be given to someone?),
or

#2 given away (you no longer use it or need it or have outgrown it?), or

#3 put away (it doesn't belong in your room; it doesn't belong to you), or

#4 store away (it goes back in that dresser, or closet that you just cleared out; just not under the bed).

I told my girls that their goal was to try to put as much as they could in #1, then #2 and so on, so that #4 was left with only what God wanted them to keep—the rest, let go of.

To help my daughters I felt led to stop to have something to eat, when He began to speak through me foundational wisdom that I'll share in the next chapter.

~ Michele

Author of RMI's Abundant Life Series

———— Introduction 2 ————

Lessons in Wisdom

...Do not forsake your mother's teaching;
Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head.
—Proverbs 1:8.

As I said in the last chapter, the Lord wanted me to sit down and during a meal, take time to share some foundational wisdom with my girls. I began by explaining that so much of what we ALL have stored out of sight, like in our drawers and closets, are things we simply don't use or need. And the things we even consider giving away are often damaged and not worthy to be given to any poor soul!

In addition, I also explained that we also greatly overestimate the value of our *things* and feel we either need to #1) “make a buck” (which means make some money for those of you who outside the U.S. and are not familiar with that term) and sell them to a consignment shop or in a yard sale, or #2) we hold on to it until we can think of *who* could benefit from each *thing*, but really it just creates clutter and is buried in a drawer, cupboard, closet or even in a giveaway bag that sits there—never used by anyone, or #3) we simply hoard our things, forgetting that everything we have is His and if we're not using it, we need to ask Him what to do with it.

The bulk of what most of us own, I am convinced, are things that could bless someone else, but we choose instead to hoard it, withholding what could bless someone. I also asked my daughters to look up and mark these verses in their Bibles, “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor [or friend], ‘Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,’ when you have it with you” (Proverbs 3:27-28). “There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want” (Proverbs 11:24).

Hoarding is now considered a sickness, but of course like Erin says about most newly labeled illnesses, it's simply sin—like the sin of selfishness.

That is why I have come to look at these *things* hidden in our drawers and closets like the talents Jesus talked about that the one **unfaithful** servant **buried** that made Him so angry. Let's read it together:

“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

“Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

“And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’

“But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’

“For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer

darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 25:14-30).

We usually think of the talents in this verse to be our abilities or special God-given gifts that we could use as a volunteer or just helping our neighbor, but don’t.

We sometimes apply the hidden talent’s verse to when we bury and hoard the money that could flow in our lives if we weren’t so selfish or fearful and chose instead to bless the church, a ministry or people in need with an offering. But what I am talking about in this chapter are the actual *things* that we save and bury because we think *we* may need them for ourselves (or as I also thought, to *save* them for someone else who may want these *things* that are old and outdated “someday”). **No more.** Beginning that very day, my children and I vowed to let go of everything that could bless others: our time, our love, and also the things in our home we didn’t need or use. And this also includes any money that I don’t need this instant (all the silver and gold is His anyway, therefore, any money I need is right there, all I need to do is give when He tells me to give and use it His way as He leads me), which is why we also will not sell anything either.

Hey, this is amazing, I just remembered that I got a little note attached to a very sizable donation from a church member who said that she was saving the money she sent to me for when her husband came home so that when things went wrong, she could “save the day.” She said she’d instead realized that she was not her husband’s savior! Her restored marriage testimony just was mailed to me too, and I typed it and submitted it to RMI!

With the foundational plan laid out and all of us in agreement, I began to work with my youngest daughter as we tackled her drawers, then dove into the shared closet. Together, all three of us, removed each item from the closet and put it into *one* of the four containers. There were often temptations on the girls’ part to find something and want to take it to a brother (who had been looking for something) or neighbor friend (who they thought would like it), or even to just put it in another room or just outside the door. But I stopped them and explained that this is a common pitfall of most people and why they fail and never succeed in deep cleaning again. You must use #3 the “put away” container and resist leaving the room. You must resist this and every temptation of distraction

in order to *finish the course* of action or you will end up with a greater mess than you began with. Though some people would tell you to be sure that you choose a time or day to carve out enough time to tackle a job like this (I would have said the same thing about a year ago), I will now tell you that when the Spirit moves you it is the right time, even when your head reasons that you should do it later at a more opportune time.

Once again, in agreement, and also resisting temptations to leave the room, very soon, with all of us working together, we filled a #2 give away bag, which I closed and put it just outside the door being careful not to block the room's entrance. Each item of clothing that was on a hanger, we looked at and made a *quick* question asking the Lord, "Do I need this?" and then laid it neatly on the bed if we were supposed to keep it, or took it off the hanger and put it in one of the bags when He prompted us to give it away.

The greatest blessing ended up not being the end result of the clean room or what we were able to bless others with. This task turned out to be such a great learning experience for my girls: not just to be good "keepers of the home," but also spiritually: to learn to hear and respond to the Lord. They experienced how to speak to the Lord, rather than to ask themselves, and then respond to His promptings. They also were excited when they would see how He would draw their attention to a tear or stain on a garment that needed to be thrown away, or He would give them instant wisdom that it no longer was their style; therefore, they would never wear it. Sometimes He prompted them to try it on quickly to see if it still fit.

It also taught them to *let go of what they really didn't need*. This is a tremendous lesson in itself. All of us want to hold on and hoard when we need to let go: we won't let go of people in our lives, our money, our things, or even our obsessions that we know are wrong (because they take away time and devotion to the Lord). Another point I would like to make, if I had done this task myself, without including my children, they would have missed this spiritual lesson, and also, they would have missed making the choice to give or throw away things, but that is not all. Never make the mistake of going through other people's things without them so they do not become bitter or resentful when they later find something isn't there (that you gave away or threw away). This is especially true for your husband whether he lives with you or even if he does not.

If you are not living with someone (husband or a grown child), just gather up all their things and put them in boxes to give to them. You can kindly offer to help this moved-out family member go through their boxes, but make sure that they somehow get their things into their possession.

When my ex-husband was gone the first time, I hung onto *any* possession of his as an idol. Imagine. I just could not let go; hence, I had much pain that continued throughout his absence. Had I had enough of the Lord and His love, I would have been able to let go with my heart. This goes for women whose son or daughter (or even mother or father) is gone, for whatever reason: moved away, ran away, or even died through natural causes or suddenly taken from you. We need to let go so that God can fill that void, the void that we fill with *things*. It is like a tumor that is inside our hearts, it has to be removed for it to heal.

Miracle Dashed

Let me jump in here with a short story. Almost six months ago my sister was about to adopt her first baby. She had waited for this miracle for years, but right on the brink, the birth mother chose to keep her baby. My sister was understandably devastated. After I took a lot of time comforting her, I sought the Lord for His wisdom when one day I was convinced she would harm herself. When she begged me to help her, what came out of my mouth was just as shocking to me as it was to her. I told her that she needed to contact the birth mother and bless her with all the baby items she had purchased and gotten as gifts, that these were for *that* baby, and that God would bless her through it. As far as I know she never took my advice; and unfortunately, she hasn't spoken to me since. But this I do know, she is still hurting horribly and has been filling her life with more things, while the baby things gather dust.

Where to store?

Now back to things you have that you are storing for family who are not living with you: if they won't or can't get their things, simply ask the Lord *where* you are to store them. Don't assume you need to keep them. When you get a thought, or picture in your mind, or hear a word, then simply obey it. Don't worry that you may be wrong, He can fix it later; just walk out what you believe He is saying to you or showing you. This is the first step to hearing from the Lord.

Oh, one more benefit of having the person with you when you sort things to give or throw away, if they don't invest in the process, they will not keep it that way! As a mother, these are "train up a child" lessons that are normally not taught any more. You may have not learned them yourself, but that makes learning together even more fun!

Once we had the closet, dresser and under the bed completely emptied, then I asked my youngest daughter to vacuum the room and closet, while the other daughter followed behind and wiped off the closet shelf and wiped out each dresser drawer. Like my girls, you will be amazed at how you feel when everything is clean!! Then the process began to get even better. We then began hanging the clothes back into their very clean closet, clothes we'd laid on the bed, along with a few items in #4 store away (what goes back in that dresser, or closet that you just cleared out; just not under the bed). We then did the same with what went into their dresser.

And as before, I encouraged them to speak and **ask the Lord** to help them know what to do as they picked up each item—asking Him to give them wisdom, reminding them of the verse, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of the giving God [Who gives] to everyone liberally and ungrudgingly, without reproaching or faultfinding, and it will be given him" (James 1:5 AMP).

Amazingly, within the span of just a few hours, while we spent time together laughing, talking and singing, we finally walked out, turned and stood at the door of their beautiful new room! And the blessings didn't stop then either...

Over the course of one week, just before my children headed up to their dad's wedding, the Lord had us conquer so many rooms in our home!! Wow, it was so amazingly freeing!! One room that I never thought of—the bathroom—God had us do too! Like before, through a series of events (when I couldn't find the ear medicine for my son who had water in his ear), I immediately received an anointing that hit me.

As before, I asked my daughters to join me, beginning by removing *everything* from the bathroom into large buckets (and I mean everything). Oh my, what a wonderful Husband I have and awesome Father to my children. He knew how much this bathroom needed cleaning since there

had been three girls sharing that space for almost a year! And He added another facet to organizing this space, and that was: sorting “like-things” together. This was something the Lord led me to do while we were throwing most of our empty containers away.

On our kitchen table He led us to sit together then group “like items” together: hair items (shampoo, brushes, rubber hair ties); oral hygiene items (toothbrushes, mouthwash, floss, whitening products); face items (make-up, cleaners, etc.); body items (razors, lotions); girl things (as my girls refer to their *monthly* time); and first aid (bandages, alcohol, antibiotic ointment). And to keep the youngest daughter busy (she tends to wonder off), I had her standing at the sink, washing the plastic containers that help organize the drawers. If organizing “like-items” is not the way your drawers, closets/wardrobes, and cupboards are sorted, then this is how you organize them. Ask Him to be sure.

Once the sorting was all done and plastic containers washed so everything could be returned to their container, together we scrubbed and polished the bathroom—which is so much easier when it is empty—viola, it actually looked like a new home again! Then I had each of the girls take the personal brand of shampoo they each used and put it into the shower. Next, I asked each of the girls to gather their personal items and choose one of each of the four drawers. Then since there were drawers left over, we gathered all the electrically powered items (hair driers, hot curlers, and straightening irons) for the closest drawer next to the outlet and put the girl things (as my girls refer to their *monthly* time), discreetly in the bottom drawer.

Back in the kitchen, we gathered the rest of the items and put them in their groups on the bathroom selves (according to where they fit; based on their height) and LABELED each shelf. Wow, yes, this was “over the top” organization—all because He did it!! We labeled the inside edge of each drawer, too, so I could easily open to see who was not keeping her drawer clean and organized.

This, dear mothers, is something I’d encourage you to do daily: walk through your house “looking well to the ways of your household” and give each room, drawer and closet a quick look so that your children keep it clean. Then soon, you can do a follow-up task just once a week of just checking on everything, and then, soon, just once a month! Personally, I

like walking through with my cup of coffee just before everyone wakes up or is just stirring, so I can also dole out kisses to newly opened eyes!

At first, I thought of the follow-up as just another “chore” that I didn’t have time for. However, once I set it up as an office notification on my phone, I found that while following up, I experienced the same THRILL I got when we first got it done!! And as I said, with coffee in hand, and doling out morning kisses to waking children, it became something I looked forward to!

Ah, but what about those things that you do find that are out of place in their drawers or closets?

Well, at first, I just took care of it: folded it, put it where it belonged. In other words, it was I who took care of it. Until the Lord convicted me that this was the lazy way. So instead, I just left it and asked the children to fix their mess, as I watched, and you know what? That’s the *only* way to rid someone of a bad habit— not fix it yourself—but to lovingly *ask* the person to do it. If you clean or fix something, it won’t create a permanent change because there is no consequence. And something else...

The Lord began teaching me, as I have sought Him recently for training my children (since I am gone so much of the time), that unless I also **add** work to whatever they didn’t do, we are the ones with the burden, not where the burden should lie, on them. This is new to my child training, and it is working beautifully since this was wisdom from God.

What the Lord led me to do (when I finally got tired of re-doing and re-cleaning) was to pull those items out of the drawers or closets and then ask whomever to put them back neatly or where it belonged. Also, I know when you have more than one child sharing a room it is sometimes difficult to know *who* is doing the dirty stuff with some items left around, but that’s when you can call upon the Lord to direct you. He needs to be at the center of everything if we are to live a life of peace and ease! And should you make a mistake, and ask the wrong person, then you can claim double. Isaiah 40:2, “Speak kindly . . . And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of the LORD’S hand DOUBLE for all her sins.” And teach the principle to the person who was made to do something unjust, citing Isaiah 61:7-8, “Instead of your shame you will have a DOUBLE portion, and instead of

humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a DOUBLE portion in their land, everlasting joy will be theirs. For I, the LORD, **love justice**, I hate robbery . . . And I will faithfully give them their recompense and make an everlasting covenant with them.”

Oh, one part I forgot, not only should you take a moment to rejoice in what He has done, but you’ll also need to **take care of those containers**. Be sure to immediately tie up and throw away your trash. Put the bags of give-away right into the trunk of your car or somewhere you know will ensure it gets **out** of your home and into the hands of a charitable institution (the one HE brings to mind; and never second guess the Holy Spirit if you want to hear from God). The rule is, “Never leave containers **in** the room or it will be a magnet for more things to gather there or worse, someone will look through and take things out!”

IN and OUT Rule

Use the IN and OUT rule to keep each room you’ve just de-cluttered now clutter free: “one in, one out; two in, two out” when you buy anything. This simply means: if you buy two shirts, give two shirts away. If you buy a pair of shoes, give one pair of shoes away. This rule will keep you from hoarding or cluttering your home again.

Our homes should be a haven that it easy to keep clean and organized; however, apart from Him we can do nothing as John 15:5 says, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

If these two chapters have sparked a desire to change your life, please don’t roll up your sleeves and get to work. Instead, take a moment and simply talk to the Lord about your desires—then leave your desire with Him each and every time it comes to mind. Then suddenly, He will move and give you the desires of your heart along with the anointing—giving you a clean, clutter free, organized home while blessing others with the things you simply don’t need, and if you have children, a way to train them to always and forever rely on Him!

If you have a testimony of how the Lord has been dealing with you and your home, then either submit a praise report or possibly a What I Learned form to bless everyone who visits RMI! Don't wait, do it today to give glory to the One who so deserves all our praise!!

~ Michele

Author of RMI's Abundant Life Series

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 3:16).

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.

Suggested Reading

Clutter's Last Stand by Don Aslett. All of this man's books are wonderful, but this one is *must reading*. I kept jumping around this book looking for the quick tips for organizing, but there were none. I finally settled down and read the book from beginning to the end. It was enjoyable and funny, but most importantly, it changed the way I looked at what I owned. The unexpected side effect was that it changed my buying habits (I stopped buying what I didn't need). Check to see if this book is in your local library. Most bookstores carry it, or they can certainly order it for you.

Side-Tracked Home Executive by Pam Young. After thinking I was the only one using 3x5 cards to organize my daily tasks, someone said, "Oh, you must have read *Side-Tracked Home Executive*." It was their book (it's written by two sisters) that gave me the idea to color code my cards, and showed me how to work monthly chores into my system. It is very funny and well worth reading.

About the Author

Erin Thiele has been blessed to be the mother of four boys, Dallas, Axel, Easton, and Cooper, and three girls, Tyler, Tara, and Macy. Her journey to become the Wise Woman for her daughter began when Tyler was just two-years-old. In 1989, Erin's husband left and eventually divorced her. RMI was founded when Erin searched every denomination in her area but was unable to find the help or hope that she needed.

This book and the workbook *A Wise Woman* were originally one large book she wrote as the Lord led her to prepare her home for her husband's return. Later, this restoration portion of her book was taken out of *A Wise Woman* to help the many women the Lord sent to Erin who were in crisis.

Erin has written many other books with her distinctive style of using the Scriptures to minister to the brokenhearted and the spiritual captives. "He sent **His Word** and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Ps. 107:20).

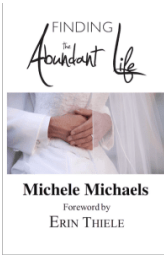
We have many resources for women to help you no matter what crisis you're in. To find all of her books, please visit: **EncouragingBookstore.com**, or in printed form through **Amazon.com**.

If God is moving in your life and marriage, come to our website and become a member: **RestoreMinistries.net** or **RMIEW.com**.

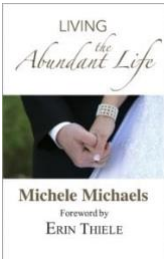
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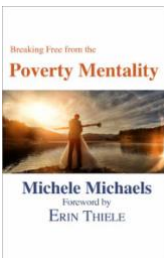
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Finding the Abundant Life



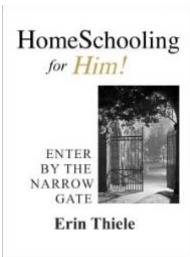
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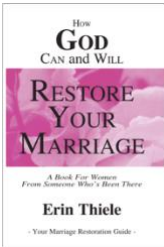


Home Schooling for Him: Enter by the Narrow Gate

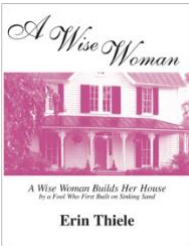
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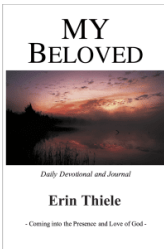
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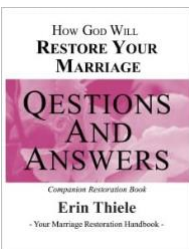
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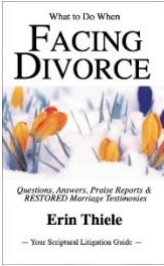
A Wise Woman: A Wise Woman Builds Her House By a FOOL Who First Built on Sinking Sand



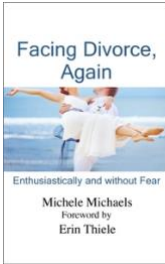
My Beloved: Daily Devotional and Journal Coming into the Presence and Love of God



How God Will Restore Your Marriage: Questions and Answers



What to Do When Facing Divorce

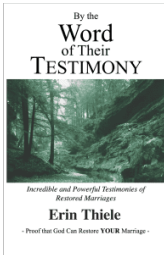


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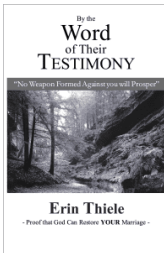
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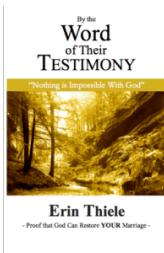
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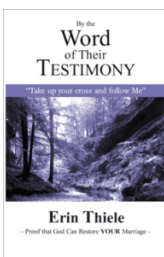
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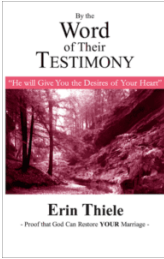
By the Word of Their Testimony: “No Weapon Formed Against you will Prosper”



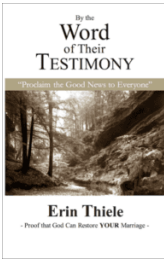
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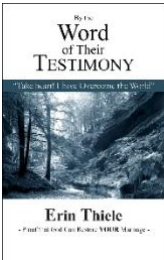
By the Word of Their Testimony: “Take up your cross and follow Me”



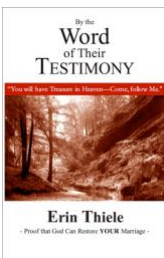
By the Word of Their Testimony: “He Will Give you the Desires of Your Heart”



By the Word of Their Testimony: “Proclaim the Good News to Everyone”



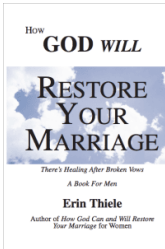
By the Word of Their Testimony: “Proclaim the Good News to Everyone”



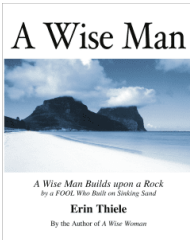
By the Word of Their Testimony: “You will have Treasure in Heaven—Come, follow Me”

Books for Men

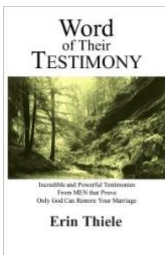
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How God Will Restore Your Marriage:
There's Healing After Broken Vows: A Book
for Men



A Wise Man: A Wise Man Builds upon a Rock
by a Fool Who Built on Sinking Sand



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