

The Joy of Homemaking

What does it take to “make a home”? Cooking, cleaning, picking up and putting things away, these are probably some of the things that come to mind.

Joy may not be your first thought! But turning a house into a home can be a wonderfully creative family experience. The results can give us a sense of deep satisfaction and joy.

For years our culture has tried to convince us that anything related to “housework” is demeaning drudgery not worthy of our time. In fact, the message of our day seems to be to avoid or ignore housework as much as possible.

We live in an age with more conveniences than ever: dishwashers, microwave ovens, washers and dryers, cleaning products for every task, frozen meals and convenience foods, closet organizers, and the list goes on! And yet that clean, well-organized home we yearn for seems more elusive than ever. Why? Let me suggest a few possible reasons:

- No one taught us homemaking skills
- We don't know how to manage all that needs to be done
- We never seem to have enough time
- We don't like cleaning, cooking, keeping house

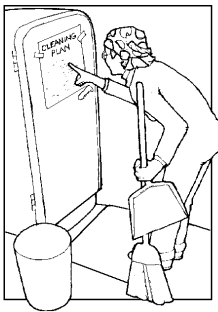
No one taught us homemaking skills. Fortunately they are not difficult to learn and teach to others. The lessons in this section will help you teach some of the homemaking skills girls need to learn to become successful homemakers. Certainly there are other skills to learn, but these are a starting place that will build a solid foundation for those who master them. Other resources are listed in the Resources section to help you. There are many excellent books, videos and web sites with loads of household tips and techniques covering every aspect of homemaking.

We don't know how to manage all that needs to be done. Once the skills are learned, we have to figure out a way to tackle them on a regular basis. My husband has a favorite phrase: “Manage the process” - excellent advice for any endeavor. I put it this way: Figure out what, who, and when. What needs to be done? Who can do it? When can it be done?



Rather than managing the work, it often tends to manage us. We run in all directions attempting to get everything done at once. An old proverb says, “If you chase two rabbits, both will escape.” Our homemaking tasks seem to multiply like rabbits and we’re continuously chasing herds of them! Nothing seems to get done and we feel defeated.

There is a better way. Apply the “what-who-when” principle. Make a list of what needs to be done. It may be easier to make a separate list for each room. Next to each task write the names of people who can do each one. Children can, and should, help! They learn important life skills as they assume household responsibilities. Most husbands will help if we calmly and clearly present the needs.



Plan the Work
Work the Plan

Then plan how to accomplish the household tasks on a regular basis. I once saw a poster on a factory wall that read: **Plan the Work, Work the Plan.** This is a good motto for the factory, the office, and the home. Planning time is an investment that reaps big savings. After we write down what needs to be done, priorities can be established and decisions made so we reach our goals. The work will be done much more efficiently with a plan. And here’s the real time-saver: A good plan can be used many times so that eventually it becomes a smooth routine.

We never seem to have enough time. I have a set of dishtowels my grandmother embroidered decades ago. Each towel portrays a task assigned to that day of the week: Monday Wash Day, Tuesday Ironing, Wednesday Mending, Thursday Marketing, Friday Cleaning, Saturday Baking, and... Sunday Rest.

This seems quaint to us today, but the principle is still sound: There was a time for everything. Today most of us can throw a load of laundry in the washer and dryer any time we want to and few clothes need ironing. We buy our bread and baked goods rather than make them “from scratch”. Many grocery stores are open 24/7. Because we can do household tasks fairly quickly, *any* time we want, we tend to be doing them *all* the time and there never seems to be time to rest.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 declares: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.” This applies to homemaking, too! The Lord gives each of us 24 hours in a day. That’s God’s part; our part is to prayerfully set priorities on how we will use that daily gift of time. A wise woman limits outside activities so she has time and energy to serve her family.

We don't like to cook, clean, keep house. Our attitude is critically important. For decades it's been fashionable to disparage homemaking and ignore the home. As a result, many homes are not a peaceful haven from the busy world. Why are many people so stressed today? Could it be there is no place for them to really relax? A messy, disorganized home with an over-committed calendar does not allow a time and place for family members to rest, relax, and regroup.

In today's frantically busy world, homemakers must be an anchor in the home creating a place where the family is nurtured.

We know our Lord has called us to be like Him. By God's grace, we grow into His likeness day by day. Jesus was a servant. He told us that by doing even small things – such as giving a cup of water to someone – we were doing it unto Him. (Matthew 25:40).

Here's the secret to joy in homemaking: Whatever you do, do it unto the Lord. Your hands become His as you serve your family. Your voice is His when you speak words of comfort and love to your husband and children. Viewed from heaven's perspective, everything you do in your home, every task - big or small - is a *sacred service* for the King of Kings Himself! If we adopt God's perspective, our homemaking becomes a loving, joyful way to serve our family, and our Lord.

The girls we teach will learn much more than just how to accomplish certain tasks; they will learn the attitudes that they observe in us. If we dread cleaning house, or ignore it, they are likely to pick up that same attitude. But, if we demonstrate diligence and joy as we care for our home and family, the girls will follow our example and adopt these Godly attitudes.

Our goal as a "home maker" is to create a comfortable home that meets the needs of our family. To be a "keeper at home" (Titus 2:5 KJV) is a noble calling and a vitally important role essential to our family and our nation.

Teaching Homemaking Skills



The girls wash and dry dishes after a cooking class.

Girls need training and practice to become successful homemakers. Most class time in Future Christian Homemakers is taken up with a cooking or sewing activity. Plan some time in each class session to teach a homemaking skill, too. Sometimes you might give a short demonstration, while other lessons are better suited to hands-on practice and will require more time.

The lessons in the Homemaking Section provide a starting place to teach the basics to keep our homes clean. Please add additional skills that you feel are important for your group. Be sure to give specific directions so the girls know exactly what to do and how to do it.

I learned that my directions were often too vague. “Clean your room” can mean many different things. If the room is a real mess, cleaning the whole thing seems overwhelming – even to an adult. It’s best to break the job down into manageable portions, and then focus on one specific task at a time. Clear directions foster success.

Let me share a couple of examples. When I first began teaching FCH, I would ask one girl to wash the dishes, another to clean the countertops, and so on. The dishes got washed – in cold water murky with batter from the mixing bowls. The countertops were wiped with a sponge dipped in the dishwater so they dried with streaks of dough all over! Class time ran out. The girls went home. The kitchen needed to be cleaned all over again.

Another day I showed my class a messy closet and asked the girls what needed to be done to clean and organize it. I thought it was obvious, but my question was greeted with silence. I persisted and finally someone said, “It looks good to me” and the other girls agreed! That was an eye-opener for me. I realized I needed to ask more specific questions such as, “How could I arrange the things on this shelf so I can find them more easily?” Then they began to get the idea. That’s when I started demonstrating how to do these household tasks.

For clean-up time, I wrote each job, with directions (kids are known to forget!) on a card and handed one to every girl at the start of each class. Here’s a sample: “Please wash the dishes. Rinse them first. Fill the dishpan with clean, hot soapy water. Wash them with a dishrag, then rinse and set in the dish drainer. Thank you!” Guess what? The girls did a great job and the kitchen was clean. They learned that “many hands make light work”. We all worked together, achieved our goals, and felt a sense of joy in our accomplishments.

Now I assign each girl one or two tasks and hand them the written directions at the beginning of each class. The expectations are clear and, at clean-up time, everyone knows what to do. Each girl needs to realize she has an important task to complete so that one or two do not end up doing most of the work.

Train the girls well. Not only is that helpful to you now, but the girls gain valuable homemaking practice.

Keep the girls' ages in mind. While everyone needs to learn to clean a sink, other tasks are more appropriate for older girls. Always supervise cleaning activities and avoid dangerous chemicals and any hazardous activities.

Teach the girls to be observant so they notice small tasks that need to be done and diligent to take care of them while they're still small. "An ounce of prevention" is surely worth a "pound of cure"!

The Skill Pages in the Homemaking section cover a variety of homemaking tasks. I suggest you begin with "Cleaning the Kitchen" since so much class time is spent there. The girls need to learn how to clean up in the kitchen. Never assume they know how to do any task. Give them a copy of the handout to keep in their notebook, then select just a few skills to teach at one time.

It's best to start with a lesson on washing and drying dishes and cleaning the sink and countertops. These are necessary tasks every time you cook. Ask the girls to read the directions aloud as you demonstrate each step.

Show the girls what cleaning items you want them to use and where they are kept. Every kitchen is different, with different cleaning needs depending on the type of surface to be cleaned. They may do things differently in their own home, and girls should check with their mothers to learn which cleaners are best for their home.

In Appendix A, I've included sample Task Cards for some of the clean-up tasks you may need the girls to do during class. You may copy these, cut them apart and use them with your class. Or, write your own to suit your needs. Review the skills until the girls can confidently complete each task. Confidence enhances our enjoyment of any activity!

SAFETY FIRST! Follow all directions and safety precautions on the labels of any cleaning products you use. Avoid bleach and other harsh chemicals. Always carefully supervise all activities. Store all cleaners out of reach of young children.