

Introduction : Let's Get Started!

The purpose of Future Christian Homemakers is to teach girls the skills they need to become Godly homemakers.

In January 1998, I started Future Christian Homemakers (FCH) with a group of girls from my church. We met at my house to make banana bread, and what a fun time we had! It was the first time most had experienced the pleasure of holding a warm loaf of bread they had made “from scratch”. Our monthly classes went on to include the lessons you will find in this book.

I enjoy taking care of our home and I especially love to cook. My German grandma was a professional baker, my aunt a home economics teacher. From early years, grandma put dough into my hands and let me work by her side. My aunt always welcomed me into her home and never seemed to mind the endless batches of chocolate chip cookies and brownies we created in her kitchen. My mother bought me a children's cookbook for my 7th birthday so my love of cooking was nurtured from a young age.

Everyone benefits from that kind of encouragement. We learn best from hands-on experience, side-by-side with someone who will show us the way. This is the “**Titus 2 principle**” at work: older, or more experienced women teaching younger women (Titus 2:4-5). And that's what FCH is all about: mentoring or guiding others.

Whatever your age, I'm sure there are girls eager to learn what you could share with them. Reach out to girls in your church, your neighborhood, a homeschool group, your own family or friends. This book is full of materials to help you get started.

There are **five main sections to this book**: Devotionals, Cooking, Sewing, Homemaking Skills, and Resources. Teacher and Student Pages are included along with recipes, skill pages and Extending the Lesson ideas. You have permission to make enough copies of any of the pages you need for your group only.

The following pages tell you more about the program and **how to start an FCH group**.



Working in pairs, the girls mix dough for banana bread.



The girls proudly display their bread!

The FCH program is flexible! You can use these lessons with one girl or many, in your home, your church kitchen or any setting that meets your needs. How and where you meet will be unique for your group.

The age range is flexible. I began with girls ages 10-14 because that was the age range of the girls in our church who wanted to take part. This year, I have 9 – 13 year olds. I find that a multi-age class works well. When you think about it, families are multi-age groups. Older family members help younger ones, and we encourage this helpful spirit. It blesses young and old alike.

In churches and schools we tend to group kids of the same age together for most, if not all, activities. That can be helpful because they have similar abilities and interests and they enjoy being with their friends. But it can also be a limitation if they rarely have opportunities to work with girls older or younger than themselves.

Determine the age range that works best for your situation. Regardless of the ages, encourage helpfulness among the girls and try to provide mentoring opportunities. Consider inviting a few older girls to be your “assistants”.

Volunteers are a blessing! Some people cannot lead a class, but they may be willing to lend a hand. Make the need known in your church. Women who love to cook or sew might enjoy sharing a skill they know. FCH is an opportunity for empty-nesters to work with kids again. Young women who want to improve their own homemaking skills might be happy to help. Look for opportunities to involve women of all ages. Everyone is blessed from the experience and wisdom gained when different generations work together.

Can younger girls do these lessons? The curriculum was written for girls from about 3rd grade and above. However, many 6-year-olds are eager to learn to cook and sew! Most of the activities can be used with younger girls if you keep the group small and provide the extra help and supervision they will need. You may need to read the student pages to them. In many chapters, I’ve included some simpler activities. For example, the Puppy Dog Salad in the fruit chapter would be an easy recipe for younger children.

Can boys attend FCH? Homemaking skills are life skills that everyone needs to learn, but Future Christian Homemakers was designed specifically to train girls. They will be the mothers and homemakers of tomorrow and the responsibility of preparing meals, mending clothes and keeping house will fall mostly to them.

In a world that strives for “gender equality”, Christians need to celebrate God’s gift of gender uniqueness. In FCH, girls have a place and opportunity to learn some of the skills and values they need to grow to Godly womanhood. If you are teaching your own children at home, everyone can work together. But in other settings, boys need their own class to learn skills essential to Godly manhood.

How many girls are in a class? I limit my class size to 10, but you might feel comfortable only with one or two girls. That's fine! I have a large kitchen and I've been a teacher for three decades, so I'm comfortable teaching larger groups. You determine the class size that will work best for you.

The group should be small enough for you to personally get to know and work with each girl. Also take into consideration the size of your kitchen, oven space, and room for sewing activities. Do you have other adults willing to help you? If so, a larger class may be feasible. Whatever the class size, it's vital that each girl participates in the activities. No one should be a sideline observer.

Where do we meet? I prefer meeting in our home, but we've met at our church several times when we needed long tables for a sewing project. I know my own kitchen best and can set out materials whenever I have time without concerns about other groups needing to use the same space.

As the girls learn about homemaking, it's good to be in a home setting where I can show them how to vacuum, dust and clean. We even had a window washing lesson on my sliding glass doors!

You'll need easy access to a sink, refrigerator and stove. If you cannot meet in your own home, look for a volunteer who would open their home. Whatever the location, find a place that is convenient and comfortable for your group.

When do we meet? Family schedules are already very busy. My group meets one Saturday afternoon each month during the school year (September – May). Monthly meetings are manageable for most families. We meet from 1:00-4:30. That gives us enough time to comfortably finish our activities and have time to clean up.

I try to schedule each monthly class on a weekend when there are no holidays or long weekends. I look at the school calendar for the coming year and I check with my church and try to avoid potential conflicts with special activities. There will never be a "perfect time" for everyone, but do your best to avoid obvious conflicts. I print the dates for the coming year on a sign-up form, which is available in our church during May and June.

Schedule classes to work best for your group. A homeschool co-op might meet weekly. Another group might want to sponsor an FCH summer camp and meet every day for a week. If you're teaching your daughter at home, set aside special mother-daughter time on a regular basis.

What is the cost? Future Christian Homemakers is a ministry, not a business. You need to cover expenses for ingredients and any other special materials. That will vary in different areas of the country and depend on the lessons you are teaching.

Some lessons, baking bread for example, cost very little. You only need flour and a few other ingredients. Other activities, such as making a fresh fruit tray, are more expensive. I encourage you to keep fees as affordable as possible and yet cover the costs.

For the first two years, I collected \$2 per class from each girl. I soon realized it took too much class time to collect money every month. Our fee now is \$25/ year payable before classes begin in September. That gives me over \$200 to spend for the year. With careful budgeting, that is usually enough for my group. FCH should be a self-supporting ministry. If your church wants to help cover expenses, that's wonderful, but the families who take part should help contribute to cover the cost if they are able.

What materials do the girls provide? For every class, the girls need a ring binder with dividers to organize the recipes and student materials you will give them. For **cooking classes**, the girls bring an apron. If additional utensils are needed - cutting boards, hand mixers, peelers - the girls can bring these from home.

For **sewing**, each girl brings her own sewing basket, or plastic craft tote, with basic supplies: sharp scissors, tape measure, seam gauge, pins, needles and thread.

Some sewing projects are mostly hand sewn, others require a **sewing machine**. Before the school year begins, I ask mothers if they have a portable sewing machine their daughter may use. Most have one, but if not, several machines were donated by church members for the girls to use. When lessons require machine sewing, the girls bring their machine to class.

Depending on the sewing project, you may decide to purchase **fabric** using FCH fees, or ask the girls to bring their own. Most of our sewing projects are small and I prefer to provide the materials. Then I know everyone has exactly what they need.

What materials do you provide? A supply list accompanies each cooking lesson. Most require only basic kitchen items such as mixing bowls, measuring cups and spoons, spatula, paring knife, cutting board, basic pots and pans. If you have a larger group, you will need to divide the girls into small groups to make the recipe and you will need more sets of utensils. Girls can bring these from home if you give them a list ahead of time. You may be able to borrow some things from your church kitchen. I bought very inexpensive plastic bowls, measuring cups and measuring spoons from dollar stores and at garage sales. For extra bread and cake baking pans, I've used disposable foil pans which are very convenient for the girls to take home.

To practice homemaking skills, you need only the cleaning tools you probably already have on hand: broom, mop, vacuum cleaner, dust rags, paper towels, sponges, basic cleaning products.

For sewing, you will need your own basic sewing supplies (see the girls' list above), a sewing machine, iron and ironing board. The sewing books provide a supply list for each project.

If you need more bowls or measuring cups, fabric or notions, tell the women of your church. You'll find many are happy to donate things they no longer use.

What is a typical class schedule? After greeting the girls, each class session starts with prayer and a short devotional. Choose from devotionals in this book, use another devotional book, or share a Scripture and some thoughts from your heart. After a brief overview of the day's activities, I hand out the student pages for the lesson. You may copy any of the pages you need for your group, or students may purchase a book. We read and discuss the student page that provides background for that lesson, and then do the cooking or sewing activity. Some sewing activities may take more than one class session.

We stop at least half an hour before it's time to go home so there is ample time to clean up and review the day's activities. During most classes, I teach at least one homemaking skill. I like to demonstrate a kitchen cleaning skill when we are cooking, and some other homemaking skill when we sew.

How do I get an FCH group started? You may want to teach girls in your own family. Consider inviting a few of your daughter's friends to join you. FCH is a great way to reach out to families in your neighborhood.

I started my first group with girls I knew in my church. I spoke to my pastor and youth pastor first, then approached the mothers. The FCH program was announced in the church bulletin and application forms were available at church. We accepted girls on a first-come, first-served basis and occasionally placed others on a waiting list.

Homeschoolers may wish to start an FCH class with an established co-op group, or meet with other homeschooling mothers and daughters to pool your efforts and resources. Many of the cooking and sewing activities require 2-3 hours of class time to complete. Be sure to allow an adequate block of time.

Does the FCH program run one year? I ask the girls and their parents to make a commitment for monthly classes for one school year, September – May. At the end of the year, they decide if they want to continue another year. Many of the girls do.

Cooking, sewing and homemaking involve so many skills and activities. We never learn all there is to know! It has been a special joy for me to watch the

girls grow up in the program, becoming more capable and soon able to help the new girls.

There are enough different activities in this Handbook to provide material for several dozen lessons, at least! For example, in the Ground Beef section, you might choose to make meatballs for one class, meatloaf another time, and sloppy joes in the future.

At the end of each school year, I give each girl an **achievement certificate**. Our last class of the year includes some type of special activity. One year we held a luncheon at a fancy restaurant. Most years, we plan a special cooking activity and then invite the mothers to join us for refreshments and presentation of certificates. Do something special to mark the completion of the year and recognize the girls' achievements. You'll find sample certificates you may copy in the Appendix.

The curriculum allows you to choose which skills you want to teach. Since my group meets just once a month during the school year, that's only 8 or 9 classes a year. Usually 4 or 5 classes are devoted to cooking, and the others to sewing. At the beginning of each year, I choose which lessons I plan to teach, taking into account the needs and skill level of the girls. I also ask the girls what they would like to learn and include those activities if possible.

Class time is devoted mostly to either cooking or sewing, but I also try to teach a **homemaking skill**. Often that fits in with what we are doing, e.g. when we are cooking, I teach the girls how to wash the dishes, the countertops and the other activities they will need to clean up. When we sew, they may sweep or vacuum to clean up threads and scraps.

When you cook, I encourage you to do the first three lessons first - Egg Cookery, Introduction to Baking, and Quick Breads – as these teach basic cooking skills that are prerequisites for the lessons that follow. A Skills Checklist is included to help you identify which skills are emphasized in each lesson. **Sewing skills** are listed for each book in the sewing section.

Ho do I prepare for class? Read all of the materials for that lesson. Make copies of the student pages for the girls. Purchase any ingredients or supplies you need and set out the materials the girls will need. I like to set up the day before, but if that is not possible, be sure to allow yourself enough time to set up before the girls arrive. If you are teaching your own children at home, they can learn valuable lessons by helping you set up. Above all, pray for the girls and the time you will spend together.

What a privilege it is to teach these precious girls – enjoy them! Someday, they will use the skills you teach them to serve their own family. Biblical values, and practical skills will be passed on to future generations. Teaching shapes future generations and has eternal value. **What a priceless gift you give!**