

In Honor of Home

Reflections on a Home

by Carolyn Mahaney

Nicole was nine, Kristin eight, and Janelle four when we first moved into our home on a cold February day in 1986. Chad wasn't even born yet. Today, a sunny one in June, twenty-two years later, I'm boxing up (and sometimes throwing out) two decades worth of memories.

Of the more than 8000 days I spent in this home, there were a few dramatic ones: the day I announced to CJ that "surprise, you're going to be a father again!" or the day Kristin fainted and we had to call the ambulance, or when Mike serenaded Janelle outside her window at 6am, or when Nicole returned from the hospital after life-saving surgery.

But most of my days looked pretty much the same.

I got out of bed each morning so that I could do everything I did the day before.

I washed the dishes so they could be dirtied again.

I ironed the clothes so they could be worn and wrinkled again

I wiped noses so they could run again.

I picked up toys so they could be played with again.

I mopped the floor so mud could be tracked on it again.

I cooked meals so that I could go to the grocery store again.

I made beds so they could be slept in again.

Some days I wondered: *if I do all I do, only to have it undone, am I really doing anything?*

Today, as I pack up my home in June of 2008, I can see the answer more clearly than I did in February 1986. Each of my daughters is married to a wonderful, godly man, Chad will be a sophomore in high school this fall, and we'll welcome our seventh grandchild at the end of August.

I realize that all of the mundane, repetitive days were actually full of significant, enduring work. A home was being built. A family was being knit together. Four souls were being shaped for eternity.

This home has spawned three more homes where the same tedious yet momentous work goes on day in and day out. And God willing, many more homes will one day be built, day by day, so “that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2:9).

Where Home Is

by Nicole Whitacre

Each time I’ve visited Mom’s house recently, it looks different than the time before. Another room sits bare. The living room is stacked higher with more Dole fruit boxes, appropriately labeled.

The house has undergone a lot of changes over the years. In fact, although my parents lived in the same house for twenty-two years, our house never stayed the same. Mom’s daily effort was to make it more beautiful, comfortable, welcoming, and useful.

We aren’t a terribly sentimental family when it comes to stuff. My parents never spent too much time living in the past—there is so much to do in the present! So our home wasn’t about preserving memories so much as making more.

The peach bedroom I once shared with my two sisters (bunk beds and a trundle—but Janelle would always sleep with one of us!) eventually became Janelle’s bright red room. It was Janelle and Mike’s when they lived there the first time and now it is Chad’s (sometimes messy one) for a few more days.

The living room where as little girls we sat on the couch and read *Grandma’s Attic* books with Mom and slept under the Christmas tree became the dining room that could sit all the sons-in-law and grandkids.

The kitchen table where Dad read us many a dinnertime story is long gone. Actually, it was our first kitchen table. A lot of my parent’s old furniture was (and is) in our house now.

The spare bedroom in the basement used to be Dad’s office. But it has also been home to Josh Harris, Brian and Kristin, Mike and Janelle, Steve and me (when I was recovering from surgery), then Mike and Janelle again, and now Dad and Mom are using it for the last few weeks.

The kitchen got a much-needed remodeling after I moved out. I still can’t find the drinking glasses.

Amid all these changes, and even with boxes piled high, that house still feels like home for one reason: Mom is there. In fact, when I stop to think about the house I grew up in, that is what I remember most—not the wall color or the knick knacks or the furniture, but how Mom’s love of beauty, her devotion to her husband and children, her work ethic, her pursuit of cleanliness and order, her peace and joy, her constant presence permeated the entire house. I can relate to a little boy who, when asked, “Where is your home?” replied, “Where mother is.”

So if you were to ask me if I am sad about my parents moving out of the house I grew up in, I’d say, not at all. Home is just moving down the street. It is, and always will be, where Mom is.

My New Old Home

by Kristin Chesemore

My parents are busy packing to move out of their home. The boxes are piling up and the pictures are coming down from the walls. Actually, it’s still strange for me to think this way, but legally it is my home now and they are renting back from me.

A story is ending and a story is beginning. The door is closing on my life as a daughter in this home and opening to a new role as wife and mother in this home.

I still remember riding with my dad in the big moving truck from our old home in Silver Spring, MD to our brand new home in Gaithersburg. I was eight years old. And as I walk into each room of my new (for the second time) home, so many wonderful memories come to mind....

Mom waking us up each morning with a special song.

Dad leading in morning devotions at the breakfast table.

Birthday celebrations with the “You are Special Today” plate.

Reading and talking long after dinner was finished.

Watching the Redskins with Dad on Sunday afternoon.

Sleepovers with friends.

The surprise graduation party Mom threw for Nicole and me.

The night Brian asked my dad if he could court me.

Trying on my wedding dress in the bedroom.

Rolling my luggage down the hall on my wedding day as I prepared to leave home (for what I thought was the last time!).

And, while almost all of the memories are fond ones, I also remember arguing with my sister in the bathroom each morning over who got to use the hairdryer first! (Love ya, Nic!)

My oldest son Andrew is eight years old—the same age I was when I first rode to this home in the big truck with my dad. He’s going to share the same room with his brothers (yep, bunk beds and a trundle!) that I shared with my sisters. In fact, I’ve found myself planning to arrange our furniture much the same way it was when I first lived here twenty-two years ago. God-willing, I hope Brian and I can make as many wonderful memories for our children as my parents did with us.

Most of all, I pray God will give us grace to carry on the legacy of a loving, joyful, gospel-centered, kingdom-minded, home for His glory.

At Home With Humor

by Janelle Bradshaw

Our home was always full of laughter. My dad inherited a quick wit and hilarious sense of humor from his dad. He taught us to laugh—laugh at ourselves and laugh along with each other. To this day, whenever we get together, our conversation quickly turns humorous, and we often laugh until we can’t breathe.

While the trip down memory lane over the last few days has brought tears to my eyes and a smile to my face, it has also brought that familiar laughter. I laugh when I remember the time my Mom was out of town and Nicole and I impetuously sold all of our bedroom furniture at my aunt’s yard sale. It has taken Mom ten years to laugh about that one.

I laugh when I think about my dad attempting repair jobs around the house while carrying on a running conversation with his tools. Not so funny to Dad, but hilarious for the rest of us to listen in as he blamed the leak on his faulty wrench.

We all can't help but laugh when we recall how Mike came over to the house weekend after weekend to "hang out with Chad." He wasn't fooling anyone, not even Chad.

Oh, and let's not forget the time a certain sister left the top on the hamster cage open, and four baby hamsters spent several weeks roaming the basement.

Laughter practically sent me into labor the other day while I was watching my brother mow the lawn. He ran into a few technical difficulties (which were all the fault of the lawn mower, of course) and, well, you had to be there.

We all laugh when we remember Nicole and Kristin's poodle perms, my lime green baseball hat and Chad's endless collection of soccer cleats.

In all this laughter, we learned humility. My dad led by example as he always laughed the loudest when the joke was on him. But whenever we did something silly (or can I say stupid?) he taught us to laugh rather than withdraw in pride. While it took the sons-in-law some time to adjust to our family culture, they now lead the way in pursuing humility through laughter.

Although I'm sad to leave this house where we have known endless hours of laughter, I'm glad that when we move, my dad will be around to teach his granddaughters the same lessons of humor and humility.

In Honor of Home

by Carolyn Mahaney

Tomorrow the moving truck comes to take our things to the new house (CJ and I will be staying here until renovations are completed on our room). In *Feminine Appeal*, in my chapter on "The Honor of Working at Home" I reflected upon the memories of living in this home and being a homemaker. These thoughts seem especially appropriate to post today.

"The Best Job in the World"

When I reflect upon my past twenty-nine years as a homemaker, a virtual collage of memories floods my mind: Family Night every Monday. Reading with my husband by the fire. Tucking my children into bed at night with a song and a prayer. Waking them up for a surprise "pajama

ride” to Dunkin Donuts. Reading Little House on the Prairie to my daughters or Paddington Bear to my little boy.

Counseling a newlywed couple through their first disagreement. Evenings of fellowship, food, and laughter with friends. Throwing a baby shower for my unsaved neighbor. Extending hospitality to overnight guests. Praying with other women in my living room.

Long talks with C.J. over a cup of coffee. Enjoying sweet forgiveness after resolving a family conflict. Extended family dinnertime conversations. Sharing with our children the good news of Jesus Christ.

And I’ll never forget this memory: I was standing at my kitchen sink, washing the breakfastChadblogoo8 dishes when Chad entered the room. Only four years old at the time, he began running in little-boy circles in front of the refrigerator. He was singing a song he’d made up, and it went like this: “You’re the best mommy in the whole world! You’re the best mommy in the whole world!”

Though his song had only this one refrain, he continued singing for a full five minutes. I stood there with the dirty dishes, watching my son and thinking. I have the BEST JOB in the whole world!

I hope, my fellow homemakers, that you agree!

Homemaking is Not a Holding Pattern

by Carolyn Mahaney

Boxes Phew! Moving is an all-consuming, full-time project: Collecting boxes, packing boxes, dismantling furniture, removing wall hangings, patching, sanding, and painting the holes left by those wall hangings, sorting through everything – deciding what to keep and what to get rid of, collecting and packing more boxes, holding yard sales, cleaning...

And that was only the moving out part.

Saturday was the big move and now that my stuff is in the new house I need to start the whole process over again—albeit sort of in reverse: Cleaning, unpacking and getting rid of boxes, putting furniture back together, hanging pictures on the walls (and of course making new holes in the wall), creating a place for everything...

In the midst of all this packing and unpacking I've found myself thinking, "When I get through this move, then I can get back to more important things."

This is not the first time I've succumbed to such faulty thinking. Throughout my career as a homemaker I've been tempted to look past the duties of the day to the more "important," "significant," or "exciting" work of tomorrow.

"When the baby sleeps through the night, then I can begin to..."

"When the children are a little older I'll have more time to..."

"When this sports season is over then I can turn my attention to..."

"If they ever graduate from high school, then I can finally..."

But there are no holding patterns in God's kingdom. As homemakers, we are not simply circling the skies of life, waiting for God from His control tower to call us to real kingdom work. No, we're doing that important work today. As Dorothy Patterson observes: "preparation and care of the family shelter are important enough for God himself to assign that responsibility" (e.g. Titus 2:3-5, Pr. 31).

If God himself has assigned me the task of caring for my home, then I don't want to half-heartedly perform the duties of today, reserving my best efforts for "tomorrow." Rather, I want to follow the advice of missionary Jim Elliot: "Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the hilt every situation that you believe to be the will of God." I want to unpack boxes and scrub my new bathtub and run errands for the new home and take my son to the soccer scrimmage for the glory of the One who saved me and who, by His grace, called me to this wonderful work.

Homemaking is Not a Hindrance

by Carolyn Mahaney

I recently heard a young woman confess that she struggles with not being able to "use her gifts" because she is primarily at home, caring for small children. She is not alone in her struggle. I can remember occasionally battling similar thoughts in those early years of nursing infants, changing diapers and child training, and I know other women have as well.

It's easy for us to look around and see "everyone else" playing a productive and meaningful part in the church's mission and feel like we are the "only one" languishing on the sidelines.

Now, it is good and right for us to want to invest the gifts and talents God has bestowed on us for the good of the church; but when we view homemaking as a hindrance to using our gifts, I think we're missing a vitally important truth.

You see, the gifts God has given to each of us are not only for the "common good" (1 Cor. 12:7) of those outside our family, but they are first and foremost for the good of those within our family. In fact, I would argue that there is no place where our gifts and skills should be more heartily put to use than with the family God has given to our charge.

Are you creative and artistic? Then make your house a fun and beautiful place to be. Are you organized and methodical? Then apply your skill in the management of your home. Are you a skilled counselor? Then be the woman of understanding who draws out the "deep waters" of your family member's hearts (Prov. 20:5). Can you sing? Then fill your home with music. Whatever gift you have been given or skill you have acquired turn around and invest it in your home.

Be like Susanna Wesley, "the incomparably brilliant and well-educated mother of sons who shook two continents for God" who wrote: "I am content to fill a little space if God be glorified" (Dorothy Patterson, "The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective").

Let us be content to use our gifts, energies, talents and skills for the good of our family to the glory of God.

To Be All There

by Carolyn Mahaney

It is not only homemakers who need to remember that their current season is not a holding pattern or a hindrance. Two of our single readers also see that it is important to apply these truths to their lives and "live to the hilt" of what God has called them to today:

Thank you so much for your encouraging post which reminds me to try to serve God in whatever I do. I have the opposite problem to the young woman described in your post!

I'm a woman who isn't married yet and who works, and I look at my married friends with children and am envious of all the opportunities they have to share the gospel, serve their husbands and children and glorify God in a way which seems better than the situation I am in. But then comparing

isn't the point is it? It is to be as Susannah Wesley says! I've been very struck by Col. 3.17 recently and am asking God to help me to do this whatever I do in work, in my church life and most particularly (this is where it has really hit!) in my courtship. Which is revealing to me just how sinful and selfish I am! But how great of God to save me, so I must keep that in mind!

Emma

I think the mindset that we are not using our gifts as homemakers can also apply to single women waiting to be married or married women waiting to have children. We are waiting for that season where we think God will really start his plan for our lives and for our service to Him, but like you said earlier this week, we should imitate Jim Elliot's words and whatever season of life we are in, be all there for the glory of God!

Rachel

Heralding the Homemaker

by Nicole Whitacre

Women who invest their gifts in the home don't usually get much attention, so today I want to highlight two of them. They are not the only women I know whose gifts and talents are utilized for the good of their family. In fact, I am privileged to know many such women. These two happen to be the most recent examples I have observed.

The first is my friend Emma. A kindergarten teacher before she came home to raise her two children, Emma also studied art at college and is a gifted artist. The other day, her husband honored her at one of our small group meetings. He shared how grateful he is that Emma uses her many gifts in the home: "No one else sees how you plant flowers on the front porch or work hard to decorate our home" he said. "But I'm grateful for the way you quietly serve and use your gifts for the good of our family." Makes one think of the Proverbs 31 woman whose husband praises her.

The other humble, hard-working homemaker is my sister, Kristin. Always better in math than me (not that that is saying much!) Kristin worked in accounting before she became a mom. It's been neat for me to watch her use her skills, knowledge and general "intuition" for numbers to help her family secure a loan in order to move into their new house. She demonstrated such an aptitude for the numbers process that the mortgage broker said he'd rarely worked with someone so savvy. He even told her

she could come work for him if she ever wanted a job! But Kristin already has the job she wants, caring for Brian and her boys.

Emma and Kristin, and countless other women I know (you know who you are!) are living proof of Dorothy Patterson's insistence that:

“Homemaking—being a full-time wife and mother—is not a destructive drought of usefulness but an overflowing oasis of opportunity; it is not a dreary cell to contain one's talents and skills but a brilliant catalyst to channel creativity and energies into meaningful work; it is not a rope for binding one's productivity in the marketplace, but reins for guiding one's posterity in the home; it is not oppressive restraint of intellectual prowess for the community, but a release of wise instruction to your own household; it is not the bitter assignment of inferiority to your person, but the bright assurance of the ingenuity of God's plan for the complementarity of the sexes, especially as worked out in God's plan for marriage; it is neither limitation of gifts available nor stinginess in distributing the benefits of those gifts, but rather the multiplication of a mother's legacy to the generations to come and the generous bestowal of all God meant a mother to give to those He entrusted to her care.”

The Homemaker's Secret of Fulfillment

by Carolyn Mahaney

Recently, at the end of a conference session where CJ and I fielded questions, a woman approached me with a query of her own: “So what do you do on the side?” she inquired.

“On the side?” I echoed, not fully comprehending her question.

“What do you do for personal fulfillment?” she sought to clarify. “You see I'm happy my husband has his ministry because that provides him with personal fulfillment. But I pursue my own hobbies because they provide personal fulfillment for me. So,” she repeated again, “What do you do?”

I was unprepared for her question. And I'm sure my answer was insufficient. (How often I have an eloquent answer after the conversation is over!) If I had it to do over again, I'd tell her about Dorothy.

Dorothy was a woman who knew the secret of true “personal fulfillment.” A single mom whose husband left her with a son to raise, Dorothy didn't spend time worrying about herself. Instead, she was always serving and

caring for others. I knew her because she was my Sunday School teacher. And Dorothy was one of the most joyful women I knew.

At my bridal shower everyone wrote down a piece of advice on a slip of paper. I only remember one, and it was Dorothy's. Her secret to a fulfilled life? *"Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"* (Matthew 10:39).

Our culture is constantly telling us to find our life; that we're the center of our world, and as such, we need to take care of "me" first. We need to find what fulfills us and not let anyone or anything (especially a husband or children) get in the way.

But when I'm the center of my world, my world becomes very small—because I'm the only person in it. When I try to find fulfillment in anything besides loving Christ and serving Him, I will only end up more frustrated and completely unfulfilled.

Now, don't misunderstand. I think we as women should express our creativity, and even more importantly get sufficient rest. But the purpose of creativity should be to glorify God with our gifts, not to find "personal fulfillment," and the goal of rest should be to strengthen us for service, not to carve out "time for ourselves."

If we want "personal fulfillment" as women, we must not follow our culture's prescription of selfishness. Rather, we must lose our life for Christ's sake. Then, amazingly, we'll find that our world expands. We'll know the thrill of seeing the fruit of our sacrificial service in the lives of those around us. So for true "personal fulfillment," let's follow Dorothy's example as she followed Christ.

Dealing with Distraction

by Janelle Bradshaw

Today I want all of you to benefit right along with me from this testimony of one of my friends. She is serious about making sure that her desires for personal fulfillment don't distract her from her most important calling. May we all seek to emulate her example:

There are a thousand things warring for my attention throughout the day... as if the necessities of cooking, cleaning, and child care were not enough... I have the internet... blogging, reading blogs,

flickr, and the endless supply of information available at my fingertips...

I have always struggled with diligence in discipline (don't we all!), and the internet has certainly not encouraged growth in that area. Maybe for you, it's relationships, or house decorating, or reading, or shopping, or even keeping a clean house. Whatever the issue, it's inevitable... we have much vying for our attention.

Oh, how I've had to wrestle through this... I've been living with the mindset that as long as I maintain my life, home and family, I am free to pursue what I enjoy: namely decorating, design, and photography. Not that any of that is wrong... not that it can't be pursued. But for me, what a preoccupation it can be! And, it's not just a matter of how much time is actually invested in these activities, it's my thoughts. It's how distracted I can be throughout the day by thinking about these pursuits.

I have been helped by the "evaluation" standard of: IF my relationship with the Lord, loving my husband and training my children is my highest calling, THEN how (and when) does [.....] fit in? At this point, I don't plan to cease my blog, checking in on other blogs, taking pictures, decorating my house, or using the internet... but I do know, that the amount of time I invest in those things is going to be considerably less.

Not Her Best

by Carolyn Mahaney

As homemakers, we can be keenly, and somewhat painfully aware of our lack of specialized skill. Many of us trained for a specific field of work only to leave it behind to come home with our baby; and then the field left us behind as we raised our children. We may see our husband excelling at his career, and observe other women who seem to be "the best" at something, and because we haven't distinguished ourselves in some way (we've been too busy cleaning toilets, running errands, reading children's books and pouring bowls of cereal), we wonder if we are really good at anything.

Twentieth century British author G.K. Chesterton has liberating insight for all homemakers who feel pressure to excel in something besides homemaking. In an essay entitled "The Emancipation of Domesticity" he observed that woman is a "general overseer" in the home, and as such, she

must be able to do many things well—she shouldn't have to worry about being "the best" at something.

“In other words, there must be in every center of humanity one human being upon a larger plan; one who does not "give her best," but gives her all.....

The woman is expected to cook: not to excel in cooking, but to cook; to cook better than her husband who is earning [a living] by lecturing on botany or breaking stones....the woman is expected to tell tales to the children, not original and artistic tales, but tales-- better tales than would probably be told by a first-class cook.

But she cannot be expected to endure anything like this universal duty if she is also to endure the direct cruelty of competitive or bureaucratic toil. Woman must be a cook, but not a competitive cook; a school mistress, but not a competitive schoolmistress; a house-decorator but not a competitive house-decorator; a dressmaker, but not a competitive dressmaker. She should have not one trade but twenty hobbies; she, unlike the man, may develop all her second bests.

This is what has been really aimed at from the first in what is called the seclusion, or even the oppression, of women. Women were not kept at home in order to keep them narrow; on the contrary, they were kept at home in order to keep them broad” (emphasis mine).

My fellow homemakers, let's embrace the “larger plan” ordained by our Creator. Let's not worry about being the best, but eagerly give our all to the broad calling of serving in the home.

More Like Christ

by Nicole Whitacre

The girtalk conversation begins with the four of us, but we love it when you jump in! Tina sent us the following excerpt from Noel Piper's inspiring book *Faithful Women and Their Extraordinary God* that fits and expands perfectly on the G.K. Chesterton quote Mom shared yesterday. This quote comes at the conclusion of Mrs. Piper's profile of the missionary doctor to Africa, Helen Roseveare:

"Perhaps the deepest underlying personal factor in Helen's tension was the need she felt to do her very best and, if possible, to be the

very best. God called her to Africa where that was not possible. There were continuing lessons for her: learning to treat malaria by symptoms rather than with prescribed lab tests, having to operate without having been trained as a surgeon, needing to make bricks rather than spending the day with patients.

Perhaps that is an issue for some of us--struggling with the reality that God has called us to do less than we want to do or less than what we believe is best. That can happen in any setting. For me, it's been especially true in my years with small children - 'I got a college degree for this?' Maybe the problem is the way we see ourselves. Maybe we think more highly of ourselves than we ought.

If anyone was too good to die, it was Jesus. If anyone should have done greater things than walking dusty roads and talking with people too dense to understand him, it was Jesus. In Philippians 3... is the verse, "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (verse 10). When God called Helen to less than she expected, he was helping her become like Christ, rather than like the best doctor or missionary she knew of. Who is it we want to be like?" (p. 172)

More Chesterton on Homemaking

by Nicole Whitacre

Here are two more excerpts on motherhood and domesticity from G.K. Chesterton. Simply superb.

"[Woman is surrounded] with very young children, who require to be taught not so much anything as everything. Babies need not to be taught a trade, but to be introduced to a world. To put the matter shortly, woman is generally shut up in a house with a human being at the time when he asks all the questions that there are, and some that there aren't...."

"[W]hen people begin to talk about this domestic duty as not merely difficult but trivial and dreary, I simply give up the question. For I cannot with the utmost energy of imagination conceive what they mean. When domesticity, for instance, is called drudgery, all the difficulty arises from a double meaning in the word. If drudgery only means dreadfully hard work, I admit the woman drudges in the home, as a man might drudge [at his work]. But if it means that the hard work is more heavy because it is trifling, colorless and of small

import to the soul, then as I say, I give it up; I do not know what the words mean.... I can understand how this might exhaust the mind, but I cannot imagine how it could narrow it. How can it be a large career to tell other people's children [arithmetic], and a small career to tell one's own children about the universe? How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone? No; a woman's function is laborious, but because it is gigantic, not because it is minute. I will pity Mrs. Jones for the hugeness of her task; I will never pity her for its smallness."

Homemaking School

by Carolyn Mahaney

The girtalk conversation has been all about homemaking lately. So many of you have written to tell us of your delight in and commitment to homemaking. Your example is inspiring!

But in addition to our example, we must also provide specific and intentional training to the next generation of homemakers. For in Titus 2, Paul urges the older women not only to “do what is good” but also to “train the younger women” to be (among other things) “busy at home.”

Sadly, while there are many women who are godly examples of homemaking—both single and married alike, I fear that many young women are not being trained to be busy at home.

Although written many years ago, this woman’s concern is more relevant than ever:

“The fact is, our girls have no home education. When quite young they are sent to school where no feminine employment, no domestic habits, can be learned....After this, few find any time to arrange, and make use of, the mass of elementary knowledge they have acquired; and fewer still have either leisure or taste for the inelegant, everyday duties of life. Thus prepared, they enter upon matrimony, Those early habits, which would have made domestic care a light and easy task, have never been taught, for fear it would interrupt their happiness; and the result is, that when cares come, as come they must, they find them misery. I am convinced that indifference and dislike between husband and wife are more frequently occasioned by this great error in education, than by any other cause.”

Moms of daughters—this challenge is first and foremost to us. Are we more concerned with our daughter's present happiness or her future usefulness as a homemaker? Are we taking seriously our responsibility for their "home education"?

My prayer is that God would help us to be faithful to pass on the legacy of biblical womanhood to our daughters so that they would eagerly embrace our Savior's call to what G.K. Chesterton calls, this "generous, dangerous, and romantic trade" of homemaking.

Note From a Homemaker

by Nicole Whitacre

This email from a girltalk reader spans three generations and highlights the enduring influence of a godly mother's example in the home, the importance of intentional homemaker training, and the redeeming grace of God in using our efforts—however incomplete we think they may be—for His glory.

May we all be provoked by this woman's humble example and may she be encouraged by the fruit of her faithfulness in the lives of her daughters.

Thank you so much for your recent posts on homemaking. Although I was raised in a "traditional" Christian home with a mother who was very skilled in her homemaking abilities, very little of that was passed down to her daughters in an intentional manner or with a background of the Biblical foundation of homemaking. When I married, I could bake and cook with ease but found the daily tasks of homemaking to be tedious. Over the years God graciously worked in my life and I began to discover that there were Biblical reasons for caring for my home in a precise manner. Sadly, although my own attitudes were changing and caring for my home became more of a joy, I did not do a good job in passing that on to my own two daughters.

Both of them are now married and are establishing their own homes. I see them struggle in certain areas of homemaking and know that I could have saved them much heartache and frustration if I had done my job as a mother properly. Thankfully, I have a great relationship with both of them and have confessed my sins of neglect and asked for their forgiveness. In addition, I try to help them learn to manage their homes now by cheerfully answering any questions they call me with, offering suggestions as they approach new seasons or

responsibilities, and recommending books, web sites, and blogs that can help train and encourage them~ especially in the spiritual aspect of homemaking, not just the physical skills.

So, thank you again for all of the encouragement that you have brought to our family. If it were not for the hope of the Gospel, I could become very discouraged over my failures to train my daughters properly. Instead, I rejoice in God's gracious work in all of our lives and try to offer encouragement to any young homemaker that God brings across my path. I know that my daughters will do a much better job of training their daughters and thus another generation will be prepared to honor and serve God in the home.

Homemaking Books

by Nicole Whitacre

Rhonda wrote in with a question:

I have always loved the art of homemaking. I am a single woman in my 30's and work a full-time job. I am able to live out my passion by slowly learning creative and inexpensive ways to show hospitality to others. I have searched for books on homemaking, but have only found home-decorating books. Would you be able to suggest any books on homemaking?

We so respect your commitment to homemaking, Rhonda! And yes, we can recommend some great resources on the topic. We aren't aware of one book that contains all you need to know to be a homemaker (wouldn't that be nice?!), but there are numerous books on specific aspects of homemaking—cooking, cleaning, organizing, etc. Honestly, though, we've found the best practical help from other homemakers. There is a wealth of wisdom in those who are doing it well and so along with the books listed below, we recommend a lifestyle of learning from other homemakers.

Having said that, the following list is comprised of books focused on a biblical understanding of a woman's role in the home, but many of them get very practical as well. We hope they inspire you and everyone else in your role as homemaker....

"The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective" by Dorothy Patterson is a chapter in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* and a great place to begin for single and married women.

Edith Schaeffer's classic *The Hidden Art of Homemaking* is both beautiful and inspiring.

Anything by Elisabeth Elliot is going to encourage a woman in the home, but her memoir, *The Shaping of a Christian Family*, will give you a vision for the fruit a godly home can produce by the grace of God.

In Becoming a Woman Who Pleases God Pat Ennis and Lisa Tatlock (a single woman and a married woman, by the way) cover both a biblical perspective and practical help for homemakers (it even includes a budget form and meal plans!).

Susan Hunt devotes a chapter of her book, *The True Woman*, to "Domesticity."

Married women will learn right along with the single women in Carolyn McCulley's *Did I Kiss Marriage Goodbye?* Part three of her book, "Finding a Guide For Daily Life in the Proverbs 31 Woman" shows how to make the home a place of mission and hospitality.

In Girl Talk: Mother-Daughter Conversations on Biblical Womanhood we devoted two chapters to a young woman's training as a homemaker.

And finally, last, but certainly not least, my personal favorite is still chapter six of *Feminine Appeal*: "The Honor of Working at Home"*

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