

workers @ home

Making The Most of Your Time

Erin Thiele

Eighth Revised Edition



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by Erin Thiele

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She looks well to the ways of her household,

And does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up and bless her;

Her husband also,

and he praises her saying:

“Many daughters have done nobly,

But you excel them all.”

Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,

But a woman who fears the LORD,

she shall be praised.

Give her the product of her hands,

And let her works praise her in the gates.

—Prov. 31:27–31

Dedicated

This book is dedicated to the young women in my life, especially my married nieces. I now dedicate it to my daughter Tyler, who continues to proofread as she works through its pages every day, helping me with our large family. 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 more rewarding, more challenging, and more fulfilling than being a public speaker or author. I am not a housekeeper, nor are you. We are homemakers. We are what makes a house a home.

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

Worker at Home!

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

—Titus 2:5

*She looks well to the **ways of her household**,
And does not eat the bread of idleness.*

—Prov. 31:27

*Give her the product of her hands,
And let **her works** praise her in the gates.*

—Prov. 31:31

Chapter 1

Making the Most of Your Life

Let Her Works Praise Her!

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

Knowing my background, it is kind of funny to think that I am 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 my husband, 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**! She eloped with my father, who also came from a wealthy upbringing, when she was just 16 and still in Girl Scout camp!

Her mother (my grandmother), never allowed her to be in the kitchen or 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 the sixth), 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 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 could only cook about a dozen meals. Most of us tried to get invited to neighbors 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, fortunately, for their husbands, 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—just as most things that God has done to bring me from tragedy to triumph. I should have followed in the curse that my mother set in place, but God redeemed me and He redeemed you too! Thankfully for my husband and my children, 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!

I have trained my daughters, so that when they marry they will be well prepared. They all (even my sons) have learned to do laundry, to clean, and to cook.

I am sharing all of this with you to prove that no matter where you are or where you have come from, there is help and hope! This book will give you guidelines, but it will be GOD who will transform you and His Holy Spirit that will guide you!

Though my ministry is helping women restore their hopeless marriages, my mission is to share this one life-changing verse that will literally change your life, once you embrace it:

“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, when God enters into your life, it will change! Most of us never rely on God or ask for His help, but instead struggle to do things in our own strength by leaning on to our own understanding of what 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, the Lord *wants* to help **you**. He *longs* to be gracious to you and to me! The Bible says that He is actually looking for hearts that are totally sold out and seeking Him, so He can strongly support us in our efforts! 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.

God loves to show Himself strong on our behalf, especially the most hopeless cases like mine (and maybe yours), so He can get ALL the glory!

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

Seeking Him

When I was young (maybe twelve), I remembered the frustration of not being able to find my own clothes. 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 accepted the Lord as my Savior when I was seven, but 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 I had invented 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 I 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 my brother taught me about using 3x5 cards that helped me 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 from my husband being with another woman and being left with four little children in which to provide care. In our ministry, we call it 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 is 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 (I tried to use a peeler that you would use for peeling a potato instead of a small knife!).

By the time God restored my marriage, God had made me a good cook!! My husband returned home to a wife who could cook (and 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 household things! Isn't God faithful?!

The lack of humility was not the only thing standing in my way in 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 miscarriage. That is when my brother and sister began to insist 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 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 each child!) but got down to a slim size by the time they were just a few months old. After I repented of everything the Lord brought to mind, I then gave my weight and size to Him!

The hardest part was not trying to *help* God 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. But then things just started to *happen*!

I began to crave different foods, and I started to feel that my pants were getting loose. 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 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 five nine/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 wonderful weight that I was when I accompanied my husband to his high school reunion! Isn't God so good?!

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, resist trying to help Him (which usually last about four months of temptations and testings)—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 will give you guidelines, wisdom, and knowledge; but it will be God who will do the changing. Then, give HIM the glory!! That's all that He wants for blessing you!!

However, did you happen to notice in 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 heavy. Secondly, I needed to repent for not giving God the glory for what He had done by keeping me thin after each pregnancy.

In 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 running 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 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: “For where *jealousy* and *selfish ambition* exists, there is **disorder and every evil thing**.”

When “my agenda” is first and foremost in my life above God’s plan, my husband’s needs, my children’s needs, and my 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 running home, and usually it is filthy! But surprisingly, even stay-at-home moms can have a home that looks the same way: untidy, unclean, and unorganized.

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

We see someone who has what we think they 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 impress your family, rather than trying to please God? 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. It 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 God is happy and pleased with you no matter what you do today. Find that peace, and allow Him to love 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 children. Your contentedness will strengthen your husband when he is in his home and with his family.

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

Write Your Thoughts Down

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

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

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

Notes:

Chapter 2

Making the Most of Your Space

Removing the Clutter

*The way of the sluggard
is as a hedge of thorns,
But the path of the upright is a highway.
—Prov. 15:19*

This used to be Chapter 7, but I moved it to the front of the book. God began prompting me to move it to the second chapter when I saw so many women, who began reading the *workers@home* book, **began** by removing the clutter from their homes. Though it wasn't originally written that way, this obviously is God's way—this is where *He* wants to begin in your life. Take time to read the chapter all the way through, and maybe even a second or third time, before you take any action. De-cluttering is a principle that you are going to learn, not merely a task to undertake.

I have been a student of organization for many, many years; yet, when I read my first book on de-cluttering my home, it took a few days for it to really sink in. That's when it all began to make sense. I thought to myself, "For all these years, I have really been organizing and reorganizing **clutter!**"

Clutter is an Encumbrance

What exactly is clutter? Clutter is the *stuff* that you hang onto that you *honestly* don't use. It might be things you *think* you might use in the future. However, stuff that you are really not using is nothing more than hoarding, which leads to selfishness. Clutter then, is made up of the things you really need to "let go" of. They are the things that are slowing down your race; they are the encumbrances that make you feel tired and overwhelmed. "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses

surrounding us, let us also lay aside every **encumbrance** and the sin which so easily *entangles* us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us . . .” (Heb. 12:1).

If you have things that you are not using, things that are nice and have some worth, then by giving them away (even away to someone you will never know or will ever meet when you give it to a thrift store), you are blessing someone that may never have what they *need* because you were not able to “let go,” simply because **you** still *want* it.

Not only will you be blessing someone else, but also the real thrill will come when you have more drawer space and more closet space! The greatest reward is how incredibly easy it will be for you and your family to keep your de-cluttered home clean! Our family has literally (after de-cluttering) been left with about *half* of what we owned, and we didn’t miss a thing! Each time we de-clutter (the last two times because of moving), a freedom set in and settled over our entire family. And if that were not enough, your house stays neat and tidy until you need to de-clutter again.

You may be more than willing to let go, but typically your children are not. Children are selfish by nature. (We will discuss husbands who can’t let go later.) Even though they may have outgrown the clothes or toys, they still want them! Also, when passing down items to siblings, it is wise to make sure that it will be worn, played with, or read. All your children are different, not all the clothes look equally good, and not all toys are as enjoyable to each child.

Also, in regard to passing down clothes, saving something for a year is fine, but any more than that and the style probably will be outdated.

When my babies were coming “fast and furiously” (not in regard to the speed at which I labored, but how close they were apart in years), I was given boxes and boxes of baby clothes from a lady who lost her husband. I added what she gave me to what I was already storing. I carefully put the boxes and rubber buckets to store, but to my horror, when I was pregnant and opened the box, they were mildewed and spoiled beyond being able to salvage.

I was ashamed, because I had heard the message of “letting go” of what I didn’t need, but hadn’t heeded the principle. All I could think about was

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