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## Preface: Why I Wrote This Book

Many years ago, I was the mother of one small baby boy in a little rental house. My husband and I were committed to having me stay at home to raise our little boy. I remember being embarrassed because of the dust, laundry piled up, and dirty dishes, and I scrambled to make something for supper just minutes before my hard-working husband came home.

Why couldn't I handle the basics? My shortcomings as a homemaker frustrated me. I had read enough to know that I had it easy compared to women in the past. I didn't have to go outside and pump water like my grandmother did. I didn't have to kill a chicken and dress it to make supper. I had a gas stove, a refrigerator, a freezer, a crockpot, a washer and dryer. I was rich compared to women throughout the ages, and I knew it. What was wrong with me?

Thankfully, I didn't have far to go for help as my mom, mother-in-law, and grandmother lived close-by. Across the road, I had another grandmother-type homekeeper and mother of six who was willing to help me. I consulted with these Titus 2 women. I traded coping strategies with the moms in my weekly Bible study while our babies and toddlers played under our feet. I searched out books and learned the art and science of managing a family one step at a time, one day at a time, one season at a time, one baby at a time, and I'm still learning and growing in my skills as a wife and mother. It has been a process that I am still not finished with. I'm not done bringing up my children or learning all the techniques for keeping the home.

Back in that little rental home, struggling with one baby, I desired to master the basics—dusting,

laundry, dishes—so that I could move on to more creative expressions as a homemaker. In high school, I had taken a class called “Early American Homemaking.” We learned all the arts that our foremothers practiced amidst the tremendous amount of work that they did.

I knew that homekeeping was a dynamic life. My grandmother, mother, mother-in-law, and elderly neighbor were wonderful gardeners, and they put up lots of food for the rest of the year. They created healthy and wholesome food from the garden, in their kitchens. To this day, I cannot make fried chicken like my mom. My grandmother sewed beautiful quilts from scraps left over from the clothing she sewed for herself. My elderly neighbor was a master at flower gardening, drying, and making arrangements. She could tell me the names of every plant that popped up in my yard those springs that I lived near her. I could see that the opportunities for creativity in the home know no bounds!

I longed to master the simple, care for my baby, and explore the creative, and I worked towards that goal. It didn’t magically happen—I had to learn it bit by bit.

This book has grown out of this years-long experience. It began as a journal I wrote to my daughters recording all of the things I had learned and was in the process of learning as a mother. My goal in writing to them was to prepare them for the life of motherhood and home management. I did not want to see them struggle with what, how, and when to do the next thing in managing their homes, as I had done. I wanted to record for them how I worked to overcome those issues.

My problems in effective home management are directly related to the inexperience of my upbringing. I grew up in a Christian home with wonderful parents, but for thirteen years I left my home each day at 7:20 in the morning and came home at 4:00 in the afternoon. During my high school years, there were many seasons where I came home simply to sleep and then leave again. My parents did require me to do chores in our home and on the farm. We cleaned the house every single Saturday. I made supper when I was home and my mom was working.

What I did not experience was the daily, hour-by-hour work that a home and children require. I knew how to do housekeeping tasks, but I struggled with when to do what, and how to do my work with the distractions of a baby. I struggled with the self-discipline of doing tasks in a regular manner. In school I had become a master at procrastination and got away with it. That doesn’t transfer well to house chores. I learned as I struggled. Sometimes it felt like two steps forward and one step back. A lot of lessons were painful. Each baby that came along added more challenges to be overcome.

There are many things I have learned the hard way over the years that I wanted to pass on to my daughters—so I wrote.

As the years of writing this book have progressed, I learned two more things. One is that my daughters are now learning all the things that I learned as a young mom, because they are home, working alongside me. Thankfully, they probably are not going to need this book!

Second, I found that there are many young moms who are in the same position that I was—unprepared for keeping the home with lots of children. While women historically were equipped to be the caretakers of thriving, busy households when they reached maturity, most of today’s women are ill-equipped for such responsibility. This change has happened in the wake of feminism, which

teaches young women that they can have a career and be a mom. Guidance counselors in the schools encourage those who enjoy children to be teachers or day care providers. Childbearing is an experience to have after practicing with a dog or a cat for a few years. I read recently that in some circles children are an economic status symbol along with all the accoutrements to buy for them.

When the Internet came along, I met many fellow casualties of feminism. I realized that I was not the only woman who desired to be a faithful homemaker who was crying out to God, “How do I do this?” That realization caused me to begin sharing my ideas through blog writing, articles, and, eventually, completing this book for those moms who were a step behind me in the journey of motherhood and homekeeping. I am motivated to take the time to write now because the answer I often heard to my own question of “How?” was, “I don’t know, I just did it.” There’s truth in that answer—there are so many things that we need to just do—but I wanted specifics. The specifics pass into the deep recesses of our minds because often they are small tips, tricks, or ingrained habits that require little thought. My goal is to write those things down for those who are struggling with “How?”

My hope and prayer for the women who read this book is that you will be encouraged in your life as a homekeeper and mother, that you will learn methods and systems that will help you in your endeavors—and that you will be able to love God and enjoy Him more abundantly in your life as homekeeper.