

Keepers at Home

2:4 (KJV) That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. **Titus 2:4-5 (KJV)***

For us wives, this concept of “keeping” our homes: no matter what lifestyle we have chosen; whether we work in or out of the home or are stay-at-home-moms, it consumes us, doesn’t it? We are completely taken with the responsibility of the harmony and functioning in our respective homes. Whether we tackle the task with eagerness or we find the whole thing rather daunting, it is still our charge and we all face up to it at one point or another.

I have mulled this topic over and over on many occasions since I married (since childhood, really) and have always been amazed by how many women I’ve met that try to reject this God-given position. They never do seem satisfied with anything they choose in its stead. They will attempt to pass it off to other family members or take half-hearted stabs at all the role entails, but if a wife does not embrace her position in her home with joy and appreciation she will ultimately be miserable.

What does it mean to “keep the home?” Where there is no one specific outline for every family there are some basic things we all do. It is typically our job to cook, clean, and care for our dwelling places. It is furthermore our responsibility to see to the fluid movement of our homes’ general functioning. Whereas the husband, the “head”, is ultimately responsible for the direction of the home, the wife is responsible for the harmony (or atmosphere) in the home. Face it ladies, the old saying: “If mama ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy” is about as true as it gets.

In addition, we are the primary caretakers of the children. This makes us teachers, nurses, chauffeurs, nursemaids, musicians, mechanics, (I could go on and on), on a daily basis. This keeping of the home business is no small undertaking.

And yet, I still find wives who “kick against the goads” (see Acts 9:5) and fight their role. For many reasons I’m sure; a very liberal upbringing, a contentious mother, or confusion from public schooling perhaps. Regardless of why, it has been my witness that women who

try to deny their God-ordained ministry as home-keeper can't seem to be happy or effective in their home.

When I had my first child, I was young (17 in fact). I lived in a bad neighborhood in a tiny apartment. I was shocked at how dirty a home could get in a short period of time and I balked at the idea that it was my job to clean it up. I couldn't even believe how much laundry one little boy could accumulate! Somewhere in those first few miserable months I came to the conclusion that I had a choice before me. I could become bitter and resent the tasks before me, continuing to abide in disarray and filth **or** I could decide to like my role and figure out how to master it to suit my family.

Mastering the "keeper" role will most likely always be a work-in-progress because a family is always changing as people grow and life happens. It sure is a lively challenge though. Even though I am still much younger than many of my peers, my attitude regarding my position in the home has led women twice my age to ask for advice and ideas on how to get a house running better. A lot of what I tell them is common sense (that has gotten less and less common), but it is a pleasure to share the joy of homemaking with others.

In my opinion, there is no recipe for a perfect home. I think it's all about heart-motive and balance. After all, we don't want "white-washed tombs" (Matt. 23:27) where our homes are militantly spic and span but our kids are grouchy and we are neurotically stressed about the appearance of our stuff. However, we want to have things in "decent and good order" (1 Cor. 14:40) so we can be good stewards of our homes.

Here is a list of some things I would include in a "keeper of the home" profile:

- Be frugal but not stingy. Take care to manage whatever finances your husband has you in charge of with wisdom and care but not to the detriment of your faith. Do not become poverty-minded and forget God's abundant provision, but do be organized and thoughtful in your approaches to saving and spending. Research what you can to become better at this. (This is a major area of contention for men and women so success here will be a HUGE blessing in your marriage!)
- Be thorough in the aspect of meal preparation. Success at meal time takes a bit more forethought than looking through the

cupboards 30 minutes before supper fretting over what to fix. Spend the time to plan ahead weekly or even monthly and you'll find your family eating cheaper and healthier than you could have imagined.

- **STRUCTURE:** Organize yourself. There is no way around it. Even a spontaneous, off-the-cuff type of gal can have a basic framework to work off of. Set up goals for your housework and make plans on how to achieve them. Weekly, I write out the things I want to do each day. I also have charts for the kids so that they learn to pitch in. I've met a lot of women who complain about their homes' condition and let the mess get overwhelming before they try to fix it. It is much easier to keep a clean house clean than it is to miraculously tidy up a disaster every once in a while. I have also seen a lot of strife between a man and a woman if the man feels his "castle" is in ruins. To help me manage my daily work load I do the following: I tackle at least one load of laundry each day so I don't ever fall too far behind. I make frequent pick-up trips throughout the house and make sure any one room doesn't get out of hand. I deep clean one area each day and by the end of the week each room has been done.
- **Recruit the troops:** I train my kids to pick up after themselves so I don't have 6 people's messes to contend with. (Our motto is if they are old enough to make the mess they are old enough to clean it up.)
- **Do not make it an idol:** My house is by no means spotless, you'd never see it in a magazine; I do have 4 boys and a husband in the construction trade, but there is a sense of peace and order most of the time. I receive comments often on how comfortable people feel at my home. I do have stains on the carpet and my furniture has seen better days but I am not stressed over how my home appears. I would be at perfect peace if company (even my pastor) just dropped in. There is a general place for everything and I take care to keep things in an attractive yet functional capacity.
- **Simplify:** One of the best things you can do is simplify what you have. If you don't use it you probably don't need it. Don't hoard up things for yourself or your children no matter what it is. We extend this principle to clothing, toys, books, craft supplies, everything. We keep only what we are really going to

use. That makes a world of difference in a home. Clutter will undoubtedly lead to chaos.

- Clean your closets: I try to keep only one “junk” drawer. The rest of the closets, drawers, cabinets, etc. are pretty well organized, even labeled if appropriate. Our storage items are arranged and labeled. That way we know what we have and can be good stewards of what we have. (Prov. 27:23) How can you be a good steward of your things if you don’t know what you’ve got? How can you know if you have only that which you’ll use if you don’t know where you are keeping things? I find that organized closets and cupboards save me a ton of time, money, and stress. It takes much more time to frantically search for some treasure in a heap of mess than to get things tidy and put things back when done.

- Be happy: None of the aforementioned ideas will work if you can’t embrace the ideas with a glad heart. You need to truly be grateful for where God has you in your life and be willing to seek him in your efforts to “keep your home” diligently. It really is a high calling and truly is a ministry. No amount of cooking, cleaning, or the like, will make up for lack of joy in a home. Husbands and children rely on us to regulate the atmosphere of peace in our homes. We won’t always get it right because we are human and we all make mistakes and have difficult and trying days, but the Lord wills for us to face each day with a “new song” of praise in our hearts (Ps. 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; et al) and a servant’s attitude. We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength! (Phil. 4:13)

~ Amanda Paul
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* All scripture references taken from The Holy Bible King James Version