

Large Family Mothering

Building your home one piece at a time

Amy Maryon

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my family. The older ones especially as they had to “endure” as Mom tried to “figure it out” through the years. I thank you for your patience and your love.

To all the moms out there who feel like they can't even breathe. Hold on Momma's there is hope!

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"You have how many children? Oh Wow, you must have the patience of a Saint! You homeschool them all, stay at home, AND run a home business?!?!? I don't know how you do it with all of yours, I only have one and I find it difficult!"

This is a typical conversation scenario when I am out and about in town meeting new people. I have come to realize that I am NOT a Saint. and I never followed some "magic formula" for figuring out how to do everything, I just did! Are there days I fail? Oh for sure! Are there days where I just stay in bed late, don't answer texts, throw chicken nuggets in the oven with fries for dinner and call it good? Yes, Yes, and YES!

But one thing that I believe in, is trying to strive to become the woman, wife, and the mother that God has for me to be. How do I go about that?

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

Colossians 3:23

One thing I have learned over this journey of my life is that life is hard. It is trial and error. I was never handed an instruction book on how to do things effectively with our family. The internet was not that huge years ago when I first became a mother, and when it did start becoming more and more popular I was in the mode of having babies and just surviving. I would get the occasional tidbit from a friend, but the majority of my life has been live and learn by my many mistakes.

It doesn't matter whether you are a career woman or a stay at home mom--the principles remain the same--you want to be the BEST that you can be. For myself, if I was in a career outside of the home doing accountant work, my first choice in life, then I would study, learn, and work hard, very hard at becoming a successful accountant. Being a stay at home mom is no different.

*The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing;
But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.*

Proverbs 13:4

In life, we should WANT to strive and be the BEST that God has for us. He promises us that if we are diligent in working towards HIS plan for us,

we shall prosper. Those promises are for the stay at home mom as well as the working mom. God is no respecter of persons.

Why write this book? I believe what the Bible says about “iron sharpens iron” and the importance of sharing with one another to encourage each other. Momma’s we are on the same path of life. My life of ten children is no different than your life with one or two children. We are all striving to be the BEST at our jobs. If we can work together and share what has helped each other, than we will be much further ahead in life. Why? Do I know it all? No, I learn each and every day something that I can do better. But what I want to do is share all that I have learned because I have ten children, we have one income, and I homeschool them. How do I survive? How can I find time for writing and blogging? How do I have time to help in our business? How do I find time for me? All these things I will share as you read through the book. I hope you enjoy reading through the many tidbits and information that I have learned over the years. I pray some of them encourage you in areas that you want to improve in your own life. Even though I do it daily with a large number of people, all of the principles are the same for any size family. It takes time, planning, management, diligence, and patience to be successful in any area of life. All of these principles we will put to use in striving to make our homes a haven for peace and not chaos.

Be blessed and enjoy!

Amy Maryon

Household Management

1

CLEANING ROUTINE

The number one complaint that I hear from moms is that they can't keep their homes clean. Their children's rooms are always a mess. Their closets are jammed pack. There is always clutter sitting on the tables. They can never find what they need. Clothing sits in piles with nowhere to go. Food gets wasted because they didn't realize what they had already in the refrigerator or pantry. The list of complaints goes on and on.

With a little organization and planning you can create a successful plan on how to keep your home running smoothly and remove the clutter and things that fill your life with too much stuff.

The general rule to remember is

$$\textit{Less Stuff} = \textit{More Life}$$

If we can simplify our lives and get rid of the "clutter" and the inefficient plans for doing things we can start experience more of life. This includes more time for yourself and more time with your family. More peace in your soul because your life is not so crazy.

STEP I

What's the first task you do? You start with a cleaning systematization. What's that you might say? A cleaning system, routine, something that becomes a "way of life" for you. It needs to be flexible enough to be resistant to change and interruptions in your life, but efficient enough that you don't overlook things that need to be done in your home.

How did I do it in our life? I started out by making a list of all the chores that I had to do in my home. Yes, it seems that my list was very long and took me a few days to complete. I had many little ones and it was hard to concentrate at times. I suggest you take time for each of your areas in your home that need cleaning. Write down everything from wiping the walls, cleaning carpets, to organizing the food pantry. Work on it for a few days. Look back at it and see if there is something that you think you missed. Walk into that room and get a visual of all the things that you need to do and write them down. I'm including plenty of space for you to write down everything that needs to be cleaned.

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Areas of suggestion: living room, family room, kitchen, dining room, hallways, bathrooms, master bedroom, girls room, boys room, laundry room, basement, play room, garage, outside areas, etc.

Next to the job that you have written down, write whether you think you should do that task (D) daily,(W) weekly,(M) monthly, or (A) annually.

Quick tip...if you don't want to write in this book and would rather download and print off these pages go to www.plainandnotsoplain.com under large family way of life printables and download your free copies.

Area to clean:	
Cleaning tasks needing to be done	Frequency

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Cleaning tasks needing to be done	Frequency

STEP II

You now have your list made of all of the cleaning tasks that need to be completed in your home. Looks like A LOT doesn't it? This is the part that you may get overwhelmed and think that it is just too much and you might not want to continue. But, I encourage you to just keep working with this technique. You will get there. It is hard in the beginning because you are in your planning stages. This is where you have to lay it all out and figure out exactly what it is you have to do. The next part will be the "when" you do it. I promise you that after you start this, it will work for you. Your life WILL BE full of LESS STUFF and you will have MORE LIFE! Stick with it!

As you continue on with this planning system, you may think about a few extras that you had forgotten, just keep adding them to your lists. I know myself I kept adding things that I had forgotten like washing the table legs and chair rungs, etc. You will get it!

Now for part two of our cleaning systematization. I want you to gather up all your DAILY chores and place them on a new list. These are all things that you feel is important to do each and every day. In our home these things include:

- picking up master bedroom and making bed
- picking up boys room and making beds
- picking up girls room and making beds
- quick wipe of the bathrooms
- sweep of the kitchen and dining room floors
- washing one load of laundry
- feeding cat and dog
- feeding the chickens
- empty the big trash can
- wash dishes/put away after breakfast
- wash dishes/ put away after lunch
- wash dishes/put away after dinner
- wiping the counters and table after each meal

Yours may be different depending upon the needs of your family. You just want to give yourself something in writing of things that NEED to be accomplished each and every day.

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In the column on the right hand side put the initial of the person who is responsible for the chore. Give chores to children that are age appropriate. You may need to do some training with a child to help them learn how to do things properly. I know in our family, I had to endure a few “not perfectly” swept floors as my children were learning to sweep. At first it was not like that, they had to learn by doing. For children learning to wash dishes, start them out with the meal that has lesser dishes. We start ours out with lunch (because we don’t normally have very many). As they do better, they can move up and help with breakfast dishes. This allows another child to step in and learn how to do them at lunchtime. Given time they did learn and I am thankful for their assistance now as they are older.

Some tips.....

As you write down your daily chores on the following page, scratch it off from your original list to prevent missing anything during transferring.

You may want to delegate a different child for each meal. For example Jadyn washes the dishes at breakfast while Brooklyn puts them away. Autumn washes lunch dishes while Madelyn puts them away. Dinner Mom washes, while Evan puts them away. You can get however specific you would like to get. For our family, we choose a day for each child to do dishes. I like washing dishes and do them at every meal. Monday and Thursday Jadyn puts them away after every meal. Tuesday and Friday Brooklyn puts them away. Wednesday and Saturday Evan puts them away. For the children that do not have to put dishes away, they then help with clean up after each meal. Every family is different, this is just how we choose to do it. I at one time had everyone doing a different tasks and rotated them around, but for me it was a lot of remembering and confusion. This method works well. It is much easier for me to look at my chart and know who is supposed to do dishes for the day instead of for every individual meal.

Remember to include your children with your work. They are an important part of the family. They make messes and contribute to the extra work that needs to be done in a home. Giving them tasks to do keeps them busy, builds character, teaches them responsibility, and helps you out in the home. It is important to build up our children’s work ethic. If you don’t give them work to do, when will they be expected to work? If you train them up while they are young, as they grow older they will come to know that work is an integral part of life.

In the business world any successful manager will know the fine art of delegating to help their job be successful. That is true in home management as well. If you have little children, know that the workload will only be on you. But a positive, is that with little ones, your home doesn't get as dirty as it would with many "mobile" children. As your children grow and the work demands increase, you should be able to give them some tasks and they can contribute to your family structure.

If you don't want to write in the book you can go to my website www.plainandnotsoplain.com under large family book printables and download free copies of these charts to make writing easier.

Daily Chore List	

Looking over your list, do you feel confident that these are things you need done each and every day? If not take some off and put them back on your other list. Maybe you feel that you only need to vacuum once per week instead of everyday. Then again maybe you will decide that you need to do

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that two times per week to keep your home clean. If that is the case then leave that in the weekly category.

Congratulations!!! You have successfully created a cleaning systemization for daily tasks. You can now put into practice your daily cleaning from this day forward. Take note, you may notice things that you forgot to add to your list that need to be done each and every day. Maybe you realized that you forgot to add “get the mail” to your list. Go ahead, add them and delegate it to someone. Get as detailed as you would like. I recommend for someone who struggles with getting it ALL done, that you be as specific as possible. When I first did this, my daily list was long. Now after doing it for 20 years I have my daily list memorized and I just routinely know what to do in the morning. You will get to that place as well. Just as you remember to brush your teeth and get dressed each day, you will start to form habits to complete your daily chores as well.

For the next few days you will have to reference this list quite frequently and help remind your children until you can get them something just for them to look at. This is just a temporary list. Place it in an area that you can see it like on the refrigerator or by your work station.

Don't get overwhelmed with all the other tasks at hand in your home. You are beginning with a small step. Start implementing this step. Don't worry about doing all of the other chores each day. Over the next few weeks, you will get to everything that needs to be done in your home. It is okay if you are just able to get your daily chore list done. Dust will still sit on the tables. Mirrors can have streaks on them. The children's bedding will be okay if it sits for more than a week without being washed. Relax and just get used to your daily chore list.

STEP III

Now let's transfer all of your chores that you find that need to be done weekly and place them in categories by room. Write down in the box the number of times you need to do this. Let's say for example you want your bathroom trashes emptied two times per week, then write the number "2" in the column. If the task only needs to be done one time like dusting the furniture, then place a "1" in the column.

Remember if you don't want to write in this book visit www.plainandnotsoplain.com for free printables of this task.

Weekly chores for: kitchen	

Weekly chores for:	

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Weekly chores for:	

Weekly chores for:	

Weekly chores for:	

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Weekly chores for:	

Weekly chores for:	

Weekly chores for:	

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Weekly chores for:	

Weekly chores for:	

Weekly chores for:	

Some examples of weekly chores for us include

Kitchen

- wash floors
- wipe out microwave
- clean out refrigerator
- wipe all cabinet faces
- organize pantry
- clean and polish stove

Bathroom

- scrub the tub
- wipe sink and vanity
- clean and wipe drawers out
- clean toilet
- empty trash
- wash floor
- spot wipe walls for fingerprints
- check for toiletries

Living room

- dust all wood items
- vacuum –two times per week
- wipe the windows
- straighten bookshelf
- water the plants

Boys bedroom

- organize toys back to proper place
- put away laundry
- dust furniture
- wipe off tablets
- vacuum the floor ---two times per week

Outside work

- straighten the decks
- sweep the porches
- pick up the trash cans from the road
- clean out the van
- wash the van
- clean out the chicken coop

Remember to keep working at your daily chore list each and every day. You are beginning to form habits of doing something on a regular basis. You will start implementing this weekly list as you finish with it. Don't hurry through it, just work diligently. You want a better system for your life. You want a clean house that doesn't overwhelm you will "stuff." Putting this into effect will help you.

STEP IV

You have your weekly chore list complete. It has everything that you want to get done each week but not necessarily each day. Now you are going to have to make some decisions and choose which days you work on which tasks. For our family we choose a couple areas each day.

Monday we focus on floors and playroom. This means that we sweep and steam all the hard floors in our home. We also vacuum every inch of carpet. After the weekend, things tend to get dirty. We start the week out fresh by doing this. We also do a thoroughly cleaning of the play room. Things get organized properly and put away. The floors should be picked up as that is part of our daily routine. If I see an item that belongs to someone, I remind them to please pick it up.

Tuesday we focus on bathrooms. This day I deep clean and do all of the bathroom tasks that need to be done. Each day, I do a quick wipe but today, I get the tub scrubbed, mirrors polished, toilet disinfected, and trash emptied.

Wednesday is our kitchen day. We normally do extra baking this day, so I choose to deep clean it as well. As we are going about our baking, I do a scan of my cupboards and make sure that things are organized properly. I look through the drawers and see if the proper items are in each one. I straighten my pantry so that I know what foods I have to eat. I fill my sink up with some cleaner and wipe off the front of all of my cabinets when we are done baking. This removes food and finger grime. Make sure to wipe the cabinets on the bottom. Sometimes those are overlooked and they can get very dirty. I wipe the back splash to remove any splatters or grease. After all of our food is cooked and baked, I wipe down the stove and microwave and give it a good shine. I clean out the inside of the refrigerator, throwing away any old food and wiping each shelf. The outside gets a wipe as well. We also rinse and scrub out our water bottles for the week this day. We constantly keep them filled but once a week I sanitize and scrub them out. The floor gets a sweep and a spot hand wash to remove any food that we may have dropped during our baking. Our trash gets picked up tomorrow, so we make sure to empty all of the household cans and put the trash out to the road this day.

Thursday we focus on doing all of our dusting and window cleaning. We also straighten our school items. This means we straighten the books, clean out our homeschooling area---return pencils to their proper place, throw

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away any paper, put library books in bags, etc. I have a child that goes around and wood cleans everything in the home. Another child takes the window/mirror cleaner and goes around and cleans all the windows from the inside and wipes all the TVs, mirrors, tablets, computers, and phones.

Fridays we focus on the bedrooms and putting away all of our laundry. I don't designate one day to wash all of our laundry because we have so much. Plus our septic couldn't handle all that water. Each day I wash and dry one load of laundry. I place the dried clothing in baskets: one for girls, one for boys, and one for my husband and myself. Towels get placed in a basket on top of the washer when they are dried. If a child needs an extra chore for the day due to disobedience or I find that I am running low during the week and can't wait till Friday, I will have them fold this basket and put them away. Everyone works at separating and putting away their own clothing. The older children can fold and hang their own. The younger ones can put away in their proper areas once I fold them. Each bedroom gets a good cleaning. I will clean under the beds, straighten desks, shelves, and drawers. I will wipe down anything that maybe got forgotten during the dusting day. The girls wipe down their shelves. The boys organize their toys in their proper bins. Closets are checked to be in order. We thoroughly vacuum the bedrooms again this day. I also run the vacuum through the living areas again to get them cleaned for the weekend.

Saturday we focus on outside chores. We will empty and clean the van. We sweep and straighten the porches. We clean out the chicken coop. We wash the pet bowls out and clean up any dog mess. We catch up on any chores that could not be completed during the week. Maybe we had unexpected visitors on our dusting day and were not able to do that. Today is when we would "catch up" on those chores.

You will have to decide which days you want to do each of your tasks. Plan your focus area depending upon your circumstances. If you have to leave the house early for church on a certain day to help with classes, don't make that your kitchen day. It will only stress you out as you try and get everything done. Our kitchen day is a day that I know I am going to be home and not have to leave the house. On Fridays, we do our shopping and errands. The children like to go to the library, they know that once their rooms are done, we can leave. This helps them focus. Mondays are always busy after a long week, I keep my "extra weekly chores" shorter and just focus on the floors. You arrange it according to the demands of your family. If your husband gets home early on a certain day, don't take on a lot of extra work that day. Choose things that can be done quickly.

Create your list according to your family plans. You may need to switch it up a bit. Fill out the charts and work at your daily list and then designate a time in the afternoon to work on your weekly list. If you find that you can't get it all done in one day, that is okay. As your week goes on, you will find that you don't have as many extra chores on another day and you can rearrange and add those chores onto another day.

This is a work in progress situation. You are going to have to implement it and then evaluate if it is working for you or not. This is what a successful manager does.

As you fill in the weekly chores, designate if someone is to help you do that tasks. Place their initial next to the chore. As you do the chores throughout the week, notice if one child gets done with their work more quickly than others. You may need to add additional chores to that child if another tasks takes longer.

In our family, we try and not do extra chores on Sunday and make it a time for family and worship. It is okay if the laundry piles up this day or that there may be dirt on the floors. You will get to them. Make it a time of rest and relaxing.

Remember to post these lists along with your daily list in an area you can see. You will be making a final copy when you are finished. Right now, you will have erasures and changes made as you try and figure out what works best for your family.

Remember to cross it off your weekly chore list from step 3 when transferring so that nothing gets overlooked. Pay attention to the chores that you place a number next to. For example, if you need the trash emptied 2 times per week, make sure to write which two days you want it emptied.

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Monday	

Tuesday	

Wednesday	

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Thursday	

Friday	

Saturday	

If you don't want to fill in this book, visit www.plainandnotsoplain.com for free pintables' of these activities.

Step IV

Now that your daily and weekly chart is all done, it is time to work on our monthly chores. These are the chores that you need to do only once per month. In our family these chores consist of:

- washing the girls bedding
- washing the boys bedding
- washing our bedding
- washing the throw blankets
- organizing the freezers--to know what I have for meals
- wiping the dining room table legs and bench legs
- wiping the washer and dryer off
- spot wipe all high traffic areas on walls
- wipe switch plates
- wipe fan blades
- wipe down bathroom cabinets
- wipe and dust wall decorations
- vacuum behind/under/inside couches and chairs
- dust light fixtures
- clean oven

Typically you get 4 weeks out of the month to do these chores. In our home, I divided up the chores by the number of weeks that I had. I then made a list.

<u>Week 1</u>	<u>Week 2</u>	<u>Week 3</u>	<u>Week 4</u>
wash our bedding	wash girls bedding	wash boys bedding	wash throws
wipe the dining table	spot wipe all walls	deodorize trash cans	wipe down bathroom
wipe van blades	wipe switch plates	vacuum out couch/chair	clean oven
dust light fixtures	wipe/dust wall décor		

Notice that I grouped similar chores together. Instead of getting out the vacuum each week, I put all the “vacuuming” jobs on week 3. When I was going to wipe all the walls, I decided to do all the extra chores that were similar to that chore for week 2. We have a large family and I cannot do too much laundry, so I space out when I have to wash everyone’s bedding.

Now when do I get all these chores done? Do I have a “set day?” Not always. Typically I will have my list all printed out and then on Monday, I will look at my list of what I have to do for the week. If I get a few free

minutes here or there, I will tackle a job. Sometimes I wait and designate it all to be done on Saturday when I have extra time. These jobs are good for children who don't obey☺ They are not much fun and work well if I have someone who has an attitude problem. That isn't always the case, so we just tackle them and get them done somewhere in between life.

You can also delegate who does that by placing their initial after the chore. Do what is best for your family.

Week One	

Week Two	

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Week Three	

Week Four	

Step V

If you notice that typically four times during the year we have an extra week in our month. The 5th week. Hmmmm, what can we tackle on that day For myself, that is when I would do my extra annual cleaning. I don't like to have to take a week out of the year for my "spring" cleaning. When springtime rolls around, I want to be outside enjoying the sunshine. These are the chores that we have under our annual list:

- vacuum under and behind refrigerator
- wipe all walls from ceiling to floor
- clean out heater and cooling vents
- defrost freezer and wipe out
- clean behind washer and dryer
- carpet clean floors
- clean out basement
- clean out garage
- sort through and donate clothing
- sort through toys and donate
- sort through household things and donate
- clean off videos and bookshelves and donate
- clean out dryer vent
- clean out fireplace
- clean inside and outside of windows and sills
- flip mattresses
- test fire alarms/smoke detectors

I would divide up the number of chores that you have by four times per year. Every time that extra week comes around, aim to get that set number of chores done. If this list is on the wall along with your others, mark off the chores that are completed so that you don't do them again in the coming months. If you keep it in your household binder, you can just check it off. (See chapter 29—creating a household binder)

Maybe you just want to have that extra week to NOT have to do extra chores, that is fine. You have to find whatever works for you. The key is to have a list so that you know what you have to do each year.

Fill in the chart or go online to www.plainandnotsoplain.com for free printables for your binder.

Now that you have your rough draft copies, I would recommend going to my site www.plainandnotsoplain.com and print off the forms for daily, weekly, monthly, and annual jobs to make your final copy. You can also make them yourself in a simple wordpad document for each of your children. Put them in plastic protector sleeves to keep them nice and place them in your binder. (see chapter 29 on how to make one.)

Wow! Can you believe that you have organized all of your cleaning tasks into something tangible that you can actually use? I know it may seem like a lot, but all you have to do is implement it into your life. It will be okay if you forget to dust one day during the week. Know that the following week you will get to it again.

This method or systemization takes time. It takes time to sit and write everything out. It takes time to learn to implement and see what works and doesn't work. As with everything in life, time spent doing things that are important are well worth it in the end.

You want a smooth running home where your husband comes home and can sit at the table and have dinner with his family without all the clutter. A home where you won't be afraid if your friend just drops in for lunch. A home you won't be embarrassed to entertain others in. A place where your children know what is expected of them and they help contribute to it. A place that they value and love because they work together to keep it nice. All this starts with us and our willingness to make our homes a place of peace for our families.

*She watches over the ways of her household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness*

Proverbs 31:27

FINDING MORE TIME IN YOUR DAYS

I get it, you don't have a lot of time. I have been there, I am STILL there. You as the mom, may be the one that does everything. It seems like you get up early and you go all day long with no help or reprieve. There was a time in my life that my husband worked long hours and had a long drive to and from work and he was not able to help me at all due to his exhaustion when he arrived home. I didn't have any family or friends that would come and hold a baby or help with a toddler, it was just me. I HAD to do it all. I could have very easily, stayed in my bed and closed my eyes for the day, but I couldn't. I had to get up and function and make my home work. My little ones were depending upon me. Someone had to push through and make it work. It was either succeed or fail time.

How did I do it all? The reason I write this book is to share everything that I do in my life. Why? Because it has allowed me the ability to do it all. The ability to have time for myself and the things that I want to do. None of this all happened at one time. I didn't have my perfect cleaning schedule or my monthly menu all at once. I worked at them. I realized that when I did have a plan, even if that plan was to fall apart, I still knew what I had to do each day. I still knew that if I didn't get to making my monthly menu, I had one from last month that I could use and it would work. It saved me tons of hours of frustration and time. I don't have much time. Investing in something once and seeing the benefits over and over again is the key to success.

I started out way back in the day and made a list. I was already sitting holding a baby, watching Baby Faith with my toddler on the TV, why not do something productive? I started writing down the things that were frustrating in my life.

On my list were things like:

- Having a schedule so that we could get it all done in one day if we tried.
- Time for my devotions
- Weight loss and exercise time

- Time to read to little ones
- Time for crafts with my girls
- Organizing my home better

It all boiled down to TIME. I needed MORE of it to make my day. Unfortunately we all have the same 24 hours in a day. I just needed to figure out how to make it all happen. The only way to do that was to make a schedule.

I wrote down the hours of the day in half hour time slots. From the moment I got up, until I went to bed. I then started filling in my schedule with the things that I had to accomplish. Getting up, getting ready. Getting the children ready. Making and cleaning up breakfast. Doing school. Doing dinner prep. Doing my daily chores for the day, etc. When I did this, I realized how much time that I actually had leftover in my days. Then I started filling in the time slots with the things that I had “wanted” to see change in my life. After lunch and before nap, was a good time to get ½ hour of reading books with my younger ones. I was wanting to exercise, if I did it at 8:00 while everyone was watching a video before bed, I could do that. Otherwise, I was just laying their watching TV every evening. I needed some time in my afternoon to focus on my devotions, while the children took a nap that was a good time to get that in. I made time for crafts with the girls each day, time playing with the toddlers, etc. All the things that I wanted to get accomplished I filled it in. Then I put it on my wall where I could see it in the kitchen and attempted it the next day.

I woke up and took note of what I had scheduled to do for the next hour. I then worked at my task. If I was off on some things, I penciled it on my rough draft schedule. When it was time to read to the little ones, I did. I kept note of the clock and was sure to end our story time on time. Even if I was tempted to keep going. The children knew when the stories were finished, it was nap time.

Everyone took a rest when they were little. Even the ones too old for a nap, still took the hour that we dedicated to “rest time” and did a quiet activity. This was a good time to allow them to do melty beads without toddlers getting into them. If I was needing a nap during that time, I took one. I shut off my phone and the entire house went on quiet mode during this time.

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The older ones had a clock in their room and knew that during nap time, you don't come ask Mom if it is time to get up. You stay in your room, until the time is done. I didn't place children together. This just frustrated me if they didn't sleep. Everyone had a separate area to be quiet in. I also set my alarm as to not over sleep. When I didn't need a nap and had a specific task to accomplish during nap time, I made sure to end during nap time. Even if I was tempted to just work for a few more minutes. I knew it was best to stop and pick up with the next task of the day. I have also learned that if you let children sleep longer, that just means they will be up later at night. Even if it is sooooo tempting to let a toddler or preschooler sleep longer than usual, I would normally wake them up. If they had not slept well at night or maybe were not feeling well, then I would let them sleep longer. If I didn't want to stay up later past my bedtime, I had better get them when naptime ended.

When it came time to doing crafting time with the girls, we worked for that ½ hour only. As much as they wanted to work longer, I said that we would put this away and continue working tomorrow at 2:30. This was then an anticipated time to look forward to. They enjoyed being creative. Every day at 2:30 we would do this together. Children like to have routines. They like to know what they are supposed to do and when they are supposed to do it.

After I tweaked and got my schedule set, I started working on the children's schedules. I scheduled the things in their days that they needed to get done. They had slots for free time, play dough time, time to play with a certain sibling (we alternated this each day), time for school, chores, time to help Mom in the kitchen (we alternated this too), and anything else that needed to get accomplished in their days. I typed it up like I did mine and placed it on the wall. This is when it got a little tougher. Not only did I have to stick to my schedule, but now I was helping them to keep to theirs. We worked at it. Some days we were a little off, but that is okay. We learn to be firm yet still flexible for these interruptions that will happen in a day's time.

I planned for most of our days to have something to do. I didn't allow them to just lay around and watch TV. That was easy. I wanted them to be productive at things, even if it was writing a letter to a friend, reading a book, working on some crafts, or playing with a sibling. I was teaching

them to maximize the moments in their days. I wanted them to learn how to get things done in life. You have to have a plan and work towards it.

I left most of our evenings free as when Dad is home, he doesn't like us working or tending to things that we can get done in the day time. After dinner, we had free time. I scheduled some bedtime stories and a bedtime routine but nothing set like we did during the day. This allowed us to go outside when he got home, enjoy a game together, or allowed the children free time if Dad was working late. Since most of their days were scheduled and they had a plan, this freed up arguing among them during the day. I have noticed that when they are bored and having nothing to do, they start fighting and bickering among each other. Being productive and having a plan, kept them happy and diligently doing things throughout the day.

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MAXIMIZING THE MOMENTS IN OUR DAY

Having a set schedule and sticking to it will help you get all of the things done that you are wanting to get done in a day's time, but how do you find MORE time in your day? You maximize moments.

- Do multiple tasks. For example, while talking on the phone, clean out your purse.
- Never walk through your home empty handed pick up as you go. If you are going upstairs take something with you that belongs there.
- Request that kids fold clothes, sort socks, brush dog, while watching TV.
- Clean bathroom mirror and shine fixtures while the children take a bath.
- Hold onto the kitchen counter and do leg lifts while waiting for water to boil.
- Have kids swish hands and feet around the tub during bubble bath to loosen bath tub ring.
- Cook 2-3-4 meals at once.
- Do a 10 minute clean up challenge when things are looking messy.

Being effective

Write it down

Having a lot of children and being pregnant often is enough to make you not remember things. My mind is going a lot of the time during the day and sometimes night. How can I remember things so that I won't forget them? I write them down.

If it is something that I need to remember in the morning, I stick a note on the bathroom mirror so that I won't forget. If I am running an errand and don't want to forget to go to the post office, I place a sticky note on the dashboard of the car. If I need to remind my children or husband of something, place a sticky note on their bathroom mirrors.

I already have my menu so I know what I am making for the day, I have a schedule so I know what I have to do for the day, and I also have my daily chore focus so I know which chores to get done for the day, but I still need lists. Sometimes there are things that I need to just remember to do. I had a homemade dry erase board that I made out of a glass picture frame, some cute scrapbook paper and some stickers. I spelled out in words different areas of my life: blog, food, office, household and then when I would remember something, I would write it down under my headings. Maybe I had an idea for the day for a blog post, I wrote it down. If I wanted to bake something, I wrote it down. I might get a library book suggestion from someone, that would get written down as well. This worked well. I would recommend making sure it is up high enough for no children to touch or accidentally erase. Paper lists are also great, but if gotten into little hands, it could easily disappear. Make sure you keep your lists up so that no one touches them☺ I used to do them on my phone, but since technology can fail easily, I have found that a good ol' piece of paper does the trick. If you have a choice of purchasing some paper, get something brighter. This helps when you "lose" your lists. I used a yellow notepad instead of plain white paper, this allows me to see it better when looking for it.

Have the right tools

There isn't anything better than planning on doing some big tasks, coming to that day, and realizing that you don't have all the tools needed to accomplish them. If you are going to plan on having a big baking day make sure that you have all the supplies that you need. Take into account freezer storage bags to place all your baked items in. If you are going to do some clothing organization and put away the season's clothing, make sure you have storage bins to do that in. Whatever your task, look through what you need and make sure you have all that is required.

Having buffers

In life, especially when having children you realize that not everyone will move at the pace you are. Traffic is going to be slower when you are running late. The checkout clerk is going to go extra slow the day that you need her to go fast. Your child is going to have a potty accident and you are going to have to stop what you are doing and clean up the mess. Life just happens. Nothing is smooth. We can't control everything around us,

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even though we would like to 😊 You have to plan for buffers. If you are going for an appointment, leave in plenty of time to get to it. It is better to have to sit and wait, then to be running late. Take some of those magazine articles you have placed aside to read one day. This is a good time to catch up on those. Always plan for longer than expected shopping trips. If you are done early, than awesome more free time! Even having a set schedule each day will not always run smooth. You have to come to expect that you will need buffers in your life. Be firm but not rigid.

Set deadlines

When planning that you want to accomplish something, don't just think that you want to do it "one day." Set a time and work towards it. For myself that might mean that I want to write another book over the next few months. I have to set a realistic time frame and say that I will write a chapter a day. If I don't write a chapter a day, then I need to take from my other "free time" to write. If my home was in need of decluttering, then I would set a goal each week to work on a room a week. If I didn't finish, then I would have to work harder to complete the task. Set realistic goals. If decluttering your home is going to be a major task, don't plan on doing it in one week. If you need to say, "This month I focus on decluttering my kitchen." Then you have the entire month to get it done. That might be a more realistic goal for you in your life. It all depends on what you have going on around you.

Work in advance

Procrastination leads to stress and strife in your life. Even if you work well under pressure, consider the extra burden of leaving things until the last minute. If you know you have a big project that needs to get done, space it out so that you can work on it a little each day or week. If you take the time to schedule it into your everyday schedule, that helps in accomplishing it. If you are needing to declutter your home, schedule to work on it for a ½ hour each day. If you work at it only during that half hour each day, by the end of the week or month you will have accomplished a lot. Sometimes it is harder to get large time slots for big projects and it works to spread it out for a little bit of time over the course of a week or month. If you have a bible study that you do at church and need to get the book part done before the next meeting, then schedule to work and get reading time in each day.

If you are planning a party, schedule out the tasks for you to do something each day. This week we are having a Valentine party for our homeschool group. Yes, I could plan on doing everything the morning of and making it stressful and crazy for myself, or I could space out and get the tasks done that I need to each day. A few weeks ago, I did an internet search for craft and food ideas. Last week, I purchased all of the items I needed for this party. Monday, we worked on writing out Valentines for everyone. Tuesday, we made a sample of the crafts that we need to make and packed all of the items needed. Wednesday, we will bake the treats we are making. Thursday is the party. I don't have to try and get everything done in the morning. We worked a little each day and can look forward to an afternoon of fun.

Take charge and create boundaries

As Moms, we are prone to do things out of guilt. We may feel guilty that our children are not allowed to do something so we make up for it by doing something that just completely throws off our day. Don't operate out of guilt. Don't let comments made by others fuel what you do for the day. You have to decide, with the help of the Lord and your husband what is important for you to do each day. Taking the time to ask the Lord what He wants you to accomplish is so much better than doing a bunch of things and still feeling empty inside.

Does your child play sports? Should they join the homeschool classes? Should they attend a study group? We can sign up our children for every activity under the sun, to make them not feel "left out" but is it worth it? Is it worth the chaos and busyness just to say that they did it all? I have found it is much better, to be home. Yes, I would love for my children to join tons of activities and stay busy all of the time, but I have learned that they are better adjusted by staying home most of the time. Yes, we do activities, and go out and belong to groups, but it doesn't over power our lives. We are called to be HOME makers, this means we stay home the majority of the time. We teach our children to enjoy being home. We teach them to enjoy simple things and that they don't have to always be doing something to be happy and content.

This goes down to the simplest of tasks like answering the phone. Just because your phone rings, doesn't mean you have to answer it. Unless of

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course it is a family member and could be an emergency. Let your voicemail pick up and call back when it is convenient for you. Call back on your designated time during the day to return phone calls. Stick to your half hour time slot. I set the timer when I do my phone calling and when it beeps, even if we are midway in our conversation, I kindly let the other person know that I have to go and will talk later. Work your life around you and your family, not how others want you to be.

Calendar

Have a family calendar so that everyone knows what is going on in your family. Make it visible for them to see. Write down birthdays and any activities that you have that month. Use different colored pens for different people in the family. You can also transfer information from birthday invites and then throw away the card. This cuts down on paper clutter. Write down the address and number in your planner on the day of the party for quick reference.

In my personal planner I write down things like getting haircuts, animal flea application, changing the filters on the home, etc for each month. In my December month I write notes about cookies I may have discovered along the way and would like to make, gift idea for people, DIY presents that I'd like to make. Things that I probably will forget throughout the year. All this helps in remembering what I have to do to run our home.

13 LAUNDRY

Having a plan when doing laundry is important for getting it all done during the week. Setting up your routine and “when” you do laundry is KEY to getting it all done. If you are tackling it all on one day, then get it done. Make it a goal to keep it rotated and get everything finished. If you can’t do it all in one day, because like our family, your septic would be overflowing, then make it a priority everyday to throw in one to two loads.

Area

If you can dedicate one area to laundry that is great. You need some shelves for clean baskets, a place to store detergents and other supplies, and place for dirty laundry separation. If you can have an additional table to fold things on, excellent, but not everyone has such a large space. In our new home, our laundry is in a closet area off of the hallway. I can’t have a set place for three laundry hampers. I must keep one in each bathroom. When I do laundry, I have to dig through the baskets to find each type I am washing that day. I liked it much better when I could put towels in one, lights in another, darks in a third. But you do what you can with what you have and you make it work!

Separation

Separation of laundry is important to maintaining your clothing. If you wash your nicer shirts or dresses with bath towels, it can get fuzzies on it. Jeans and other dark clothing will bleed somewhat and make your lighter clothing dingy. When separating sort according to these:

- towels/washcloths
- jeans/dark work shirts/dark socks and underwear
- dark clothing---nicer shirts and dresses
- lighter clothing/underwear/white socks
- reds or any other clothing that will bleed--keep separate.
- all whites or partial whites that you want bright do separately in a bleach or oxygen cleaner

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- sheets/comforters---larger loads keep separate as to not overload your washer
- hand washables---check tags and do these in a bucket in your sink

It is okay to throw a few washcloths in with any clothing load. We do this every day. As soon as we are done with dishes, we put our wet washcloths and towels into the washer so that they don't get smelly. They get washed with the next day's laundry. I will throw in a load of towels, dark, or light clothing. I don't throw in bath towels because one shirt will attract lint like crazy.

Washing

We wash everything in cold water. We have done that since I learned it was a waste of money to wash in anything but cold. This saves tremendously on your hot water bill. The only thing that we washed with hot water was cloth diapers. You need to do this to sanitize them. Bleached items, we do warm water too as to let the bleach get activated.

I start the wash and add a cup full of laundry detergent. As it is filling up, I put in the laundry that we are washing. Be mindful of not stuffing it all on one side. Layer it around the drum carefully to avoid it going off balance. Fill the clothing below the top of your middle agitator. Notice when the clothing is agitating around that the clothing is "actually" moving. If you have it stuffed full, the clothing can't get properly moved around and washed. This will result in smelly clothing.

We do a normal or heavy wash for each of our loads. If we do a smaller bleached load, I will put it on a low setting. Note, if you do wash clothing with bleach, to ensure that there is none leftover for your next load, you can do an extra rinse cycle to make sure none is left. If you are brave, throw in a load of towels, something you don't mind getting ruined. I would not recommend putting in a load of regular clothing, as there may be a small amount left. Use caution when using bleach, as a tiny amount will ruin clothing.

Drying

As soon as it is done washing, place it in your dryer. Make sure to remove any shirts or dresses that you don't want to "shrink-up." We now have a gas dryer and I was unaware of the "power" of how quickly it dries. We have shrunk up many shirts, that I now check through to hang anything I don't want dried.

If you have access to a clothesline outside, hang out your laundry. It helps when you are taking it out of your washer to layer it according to how you are going to hang it outside. Towels together. Jeans together. Shirts together, etc. When you clip clothing, overlap it just a bit to the next article of clothing to use every inch of space on your line. Shirts hang upside down as they will clip easier. Jeans and skirts, hang from the waistline. It is normally harder to overlap and share with another pair so don't even try. If you can get a clothing drying rack this is good for smaller items that you don't want to take up much space on your line. We use ours for underwear, socks, washcloths, and leggings. When we had cloth diapers, I would use my drying rack to hang all of my inserts on. I placed it directly in the sunshine so that it would naturally bleach them.

If you live in a high allergy area like we do, the pollen can be thick during certain season and it coats everything. We only hang items out when we know it is low. I usually just hang blankets, bathing suits, towels, and jeans outside. The rest we put in the dryer and I will even hang up all of the shirts to let them air dry on a shower bar. If I was looking to save some extra energy.

There was a time when our dryer died, so we hung everything up. We did it by using a clothesline, a drying rack, and keeping up on it. As long as you don't get behind, it is easy to stay up on dirty clothing. The moment you decide not to do laundry, is when it gets backed up and sometimes it seems it takes forever to dry. When we had no dryer and I had to be careful of the weather, I would do extra loads on the days it was nice because I knew I might not get the opportunity to hang things out. I was careful to hang up any bath towels that weren't very dirty and reuse them. Any clothing that didn't directly touch the body like skirts, jumpers, and jeans by a person who stayed indoors all day, didn't get laundered each time. Pajamas that

were on a cleaned body, got re-worn for a few days. This is possible to do, even in a large family.

Folding

As soon as laundry is dried, I separate it into the appropriate baskets:

- one for towels
- one for Mom and Dad
- one for the girls
- one for the boys
- one for the older boys

Any dresses or nicer shirts, I hang them up. Most of our clothing is everyday and able to stay thrown together in a basket. I don't fold them before placing them in the baskets, we fold them when we put them away. When we put clothing away each week, I take down the articles that I have hung on the bars above the washer and place them on top of each person's baskets to be delivered to the bedrooms. By sorting into the various bedrooms is easier for us because we don't have a set day that we do laundry. I wash and dry all week long so by having a basket for each person, I am able to keep them there out of sight until we put them all away.

If I did not have an area to store laundered clothing in, wash all in one day, and sort from a big pile and then put away that same day. We did this back when we had four smaller children.

I put away my husbands and my laundry. If I have a smaller child tagging along with me, I will ask them to put Dad's socks in his drawers, etc. The older boys do their own. I periodically go through and check their clothes. We often times find a missing sock or a missing t-shirt in their closets. The little boys, I put away myself. It is easier than having them help. I then help the girls separate clothing into the four girls piles. Everyone can put away their own underclothes. I then hand the smaller girls their clothing that is on hangers and they put them away. The two older girls, put away their own. My oldest daughter at home, is responsible for doing her own laundry, which she washes and dries herself.

Towels are folded as the basket gets full. I save this for a child who needs an extra chore for the day or for someone who doesn't have a morning chore.

What is the best washer and dryer?

For years, we got by with just one set of regular-drum washer and dryers. They worked and did their thing. Then we got a high efficiency-top loader washer and dryer and life changed. The amount of time I spent doing laundry went down a lot, due to the ability to do bigger loads. This was great when I had my hands full of six little ones under seven years of age! Cloth diapers got cleaner, and my husband's dirty and greasy work clothing got cleaner as well. I loved my HE washer and dryer. We went with the top loading format instead of front loading ones because of complaints from friends who said because of hard water build up, their seal was leaking. We never had any issues even with hard water.

Then life changed and we moved to another state. I was never able to use my high efficiency that we brought due to the size of the opening in our washer/dryer area. I used what they had. It was just a regular washer and dryer with a drum. I just did laundry more frequently. My children were also older and life wasn't so time consuming so I was able to keep up. I installed a clothesline to help with getting laundry done quicker and that was great.

Then we bought a home so we could be permanent in our new location. I was using the washer that came with the home and it works well. The only reason we are going to purchase another high efficiency front loader is to help cut down on the water usage in our home so that our septic is not overloaded. A septic specialist told us that a regular washer can use 50 gallons of water each load. If we had a high efficiency washer, most use only 15-25 gallons. We added up how many loads we do a day, how many showers we took, how many flushes we did on a average day and it was getting pretty close to the size of our septic. We decided instead of "worrying" about staying within a two load per day limit, that we would invest in another high efficiency washer machine.

Tips that have helped me over the years:

Train each of your children to pull out their socks when taking them off, pull their pant legs straight, and to check their pockets. My children “know” that mom is not going to check their pockets so if something is left inside, it can very well get washed. I have washed an electric razor before, an Mp3 player, lots of money, and many times a wallet. This teaches them that it is not my job to do that. It takes them only seconds verses me minutes to check everyone’s clothing.

Consider buying all white linens. Even if your color schemes change you will always have uniform matching towels. You can always bleach these and a new white towel will match an old white towel. The same goes for bed linens----whites never fade, they look cleaner.

Close zippers and other fasteners to keep them from snagging things.

Fold or hang up clothes as soon as they are finished drying to cut down on wrinkles.

Keep an ice cream bucket that you can do hand washables in.

Use bleach only when needed. Nothing beats bleach for whiteners but it will break down the fibers in your clothing quickly. Sunshine is a natural way to brighten and remove stains on clothing. Hydrogen peroxide will help remove blood from clothing that has been stained.

Taking good care of clothing ultimately means buying fewer clothes. Follow care instructions---drip dry, etc.

If you have an area like a shelf to keep your sorting baskets separated all the time, get heavy duty square ones. They will last longer and not break as easily as round ones. If you can’t have your baskets out all the time, get round ones to stack easily and out of the way.

Thicker plastic laundry hampers last longer than flimsy ones that have lids. We do away with lids and keep them sitting in the shower of the bathroom out of sight.

Keep a small mending kit near your laundry room---even if you have a separate sewing area. You are much more likely to fix a hole or sew on a button if all your items are together. Keep a pair of scissors, some dark and light thread, and sewing needle handy. Don't let your mending pile stack up, if you can fix it, take a few moments and do it. If you are not, then get rid of it.

Train everyone to put away their own laundry. Let go of ideals of folded socks, underwear, and pajamas. As they get older they will want their drawers neater. You put away the clothing that needs to stay neat, but they can do the others.

If you have only worn something for a few hours or have worn it but have not gotten it dirty like a jumper, pair of jeans, jean skirt, sweaters, etc, hang up, let air out, and then put away. Wash only clothing that sits next to your body---underwear, leggings, socks, t-shirts etc. Wear an apron to keep food and stains off your clothing. If it is not very dirty by the end of the day, hang it up for the next day. If you had a busy day in the kitchen, throw it in the next load.

ESTABLISHING A MORNING ROUTINE

It seems we do a lot of routines. Routines for chores, routines for our days of the week, routine for how we run our life. Guess why?? Routines are habits that work. If I know WHAT I have to do WHEN I have to do it, it gets done. Otherwise it sits and I can see it. The mess starts to creep up and bother me. Things stay messy and overwhelm me. I wonder why my home is always a mess. I go to my friends home and “wish” my home could stay as nice as theirs did. I get depressed. I sit and eat and think about all of the negative things. No Mam, no Mam!!! You start your routines and you stick with them. The ONLY way you are going to see positive changes in your life is to DO THEM!

Starting your day off right, makes all the difference in the world. I have been that mother that just rolls out of bed, drags her feet to the table to pour some cereal and milk for my children and quietly drink down my cup of coffee to try and wake up. After a little while, it seems I am ready to go, meanwhile my children are all off doing their own things.

I noticed that when I woke up before everyone else, got a shower, got my cup of coffee and had a few moments of quiet, how much better I felt and more positive I was for my day. When I had little ones, it was about survival, it was almost impossible to get up early, being honest. I needed all the sleep that I could get. With a nursing baby, a toddler that woke up a few times a night, and a couple of preschoolers who still might wake up one time during the night, it was hard. But that was only temporary. Those days seem to last forever, but I promise they move on. I can now look back and not even know how I did what I did. For the most part now, my children almost sleep all night long. I am able to wake up fairly early each day, I don't need naps, and I can stay up later and spend time with my husband. Those things didn't happen back in the day.

My morning routine now consists of me getting up between 5 and 6 am. This time works well for me. I like quiet. It is the time I can read my Bible, listen to my sermons and work on my writing without any distractions. If I

don't get up early, these things don't get done. I can't just slip away during the day, my days are full. My home is busy and loud most of the day. I really enjoy my quiet time in the morning and it is something I anticipate so it isn't a chore to wake up. I get my shower and get dressed for the day. If you only did this a few moments before your children woke up, you will feel 100 times better I promise. It is like you are saying, "I am ready for my day!" verses staying in your pajamas and wanting to climb back into bed.

Get dressed, it makes all the difference in your mood and tone for the day. If I am going to be home for the day, I might just throw my hair in a pony tail. But If I am anticipating people or am going to be leaving, I let my hair air dry and then after I do my writing, I plug in my hot rollers and put my hair up. It takes less than 3 minutes to roll my hair up and let it sit. I can do this while I am starting my morning chore routine. If I need makeup, I will do this now too.

My coffee pot has been programmed the night before so that is ready to drink. I like to take ½ hour and read my Bible, do my devotions, and pray.

The mornings are not my only time of prayer. The Bible says in **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

My days are constantly filled with prayers. They aren't "formal" prayers. They are the prayers when I look in my pantry and am so blessed by the abundance of food that we have and I thank Him. It is the text I receive from a friend, who is going through something, I can pray for peace in their lives. It might be my spouse having a wrong start to his day, me lifting up a prayer and rebuking the devil. I might start to feel sluggish, a slight headache, then it is time to start rebuking and not receiving that sickness. It might be throughout the day as we are doing school and I am finding myself frustrated with a child, I pray for wisdom to know what to do and how to teach. When I get in the van and begin our venture, it is a prayer of protection for our family. It is a prayer of wanting to be a blessing to someone else today. These are constantly on my lips. My relationship with the Lord is as it would be with my spouse or best friend. I constantly talk, share, and listen.

Then I start working on my writing. I check my emails, comments, and any other blog related items. I continue working on my posts or books and periodically look at the clock to make sure it isn't too late for my husband. If he hasn't gotten out of bed yet, I go and remind him what time it is. I keep working, even as my eyes are scanning the kitchen for his "out the door items." As he comes out of the shower, I pour his mug of coffee and set it with his items that he needs to leave with. I stand up when he comes in the room, I don't want to show that my work is more important, I give him a kiss goodbye and shut off the outside lights. I then continue working.

I stop working at my designated time, it depends upon the day and what I have going on. Right now, I am working on this book so I will write till around 8 am. Normally I stop around 7:00am. The children may still be in bed, I don't have a strict rule about waking everyone up early. They all typically are up between 8 and 9am. My older ones get up on their own earlier, but I don't mind if my little ones sleep for a bit. I've followed this rule with all ten of my children. I used to think that if they never got up at a set time each day and learned to rise early, then they would never be prepared for a job or "real" life. I had visions of them being the mother or father that stayed in bed all day while their spouse got up and took care of the children. Gone are those fears.

When my oldest ventured out on her own, I can tell you that she never missed a day of college. She is an elementary educator and can get up every day on time. My son, who I thought would NEVER learn to get up is usually the first one out the door in the morning and to work on time, if not early. My other daughter, liked to sleep in as well. I had talks all the time when she was going through her "teen sleep in phase." I explained over and over the importance of setting a schedule and getting up on time and how that will affect her work schedule and life. Sometimes it was a losing battle. I let her grow on her own and guess what? She gets up early and has her own set routine each day. She works at a Christian summer camp for girls and has to wake up early every day.

What have I learned from this? Don't fret over having to be up just because your children are homeschooled. If your husband doesn't mind, let them sleep for a bit. They will see from your example of getting up early as

they grow. They will come to appreciate early morning preparing. Live life by example.

I then get out my apron and put it on. If everyone is still asleep, I will put my headphones in and listen to my bible sermon or some praise and worship music. My favorite music group right now is "I am They." My home is busy and loud most of the day so I appreciate this bit of quiet. I can finish up my coffee, if I haven't already. I gather up the laundry for the day and throw in my load. This is done now instead of when I first wake up, because I know that no one is going to get in the shower and I won't be disrupting anyone. I then do a quick pick up of my room. I take out any dishes from the night before, pick up my husband's clothing--no he does not pick it up, make the bed, and return remotes to their proper place. Any miscellaneous toys or other articles that don't belong in here, I grab with me and put in the proper rooms.

If it isn't Tuesday, when I deep clean the bathrooms, I check each of the bathrooms and pick up any loose clothing or replace any towels. I use the wipes that are stored in here and do a quick wipe of everything. Even if I think it is very dirty and needs a thorough scrubbing, I know I will get to it on Tuesday.

I take a quick glance at my planner and see if there is anything important to do today. I then look at what day it is and a glance at my daily work so I know what I have to do. I fill the sink with hot soapy water and place the dishes from the night before. I keep my sink full for breakfast dishes later on. I empty out my coffee grinds and refill the pot right now. I set it to come on in the morning. I wipe down my counters and table top and place the benches on the table.

I look at my monthly menu plan and see what we are going to have for dinner. I scan the refrigerator for any leftovers for lunch. If I am unsuccessful, we may do peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Other times we may make some black beans and rice. Lentil rice casserole is another favorite. If we have a lot of tortillas on hand, we may make Mexican grill cheese or homemade pizzas. Sometimes if groceries are running low, we will do chicken salad or peanut butter on saltine crackers. I always try and put out some vegetables or fruit with lunch as well. Cut up celery, carrot sticks, cut up apples, and orange segments are all good choices. I have

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learned that lunch does not have to be a standard set thing. It is just a time during the day that we need to refuel and get some vitamins and nutrients into our bodies. Provide a simple protein and some vegetables.

Mondays, I start by making sure the floors are all picked up. If there is a big mess, I will wait for the children to get up and help pick it up. If it isn't too bad, I may start sweeping. Right now this is a good job for me to do. We have a lot of tile floors, I want to make sure it is done correctly. As my girls grow up, they will learn and do it too. I have other jobs set aside for them to help with. I shake my rugs outside and leave them on the porch until I am finished.

If I am really ahead of myself, I may start sweeping the stairs and work my way downstairs to sweep. As the children wake up, they have breakfast and get ready. I already have the chores that they are responsible for each day from our daily chore list. They know what to do and do it. I have one girl help me with steam mopping while the other girl vacuums the carpet. Laundry is done, I flip a load and keep going.

Then it is time for school.

Tuesdays, I start my routine out the same with with all my own personal time and after I throw my apron on, I grab my cleaning bucket with bathroom supplies. I tackle each bathroom usually before everyone gets up. They know what they have to do in the morning and don't need much guidance. Then school begins.

Wednesday, I do my same personal morning routine. After I get that apron on, I gather up any items I might need from the freezer to start thawing. I throw in dinner and will begin my baking and food prep early on. I have to stop much throughout the day for school lessons, so it is good to start early.

Thursdays, I do my same personal morning routine, but there is usually not a big need for an apron. This day I am taking care of business paperwork,

and/or doing my list of office needs. This is our last day of school as we only do book work Monday through Thursday. After today I feel like a good accomplished person.

Fridays, I do my same personal morning routine, and we normally clean up the house the night before. This morning, I might do a quick pick up if anything is needed. This is the day we are leaving to run errands, so I prepare myself and help get things moving to get out the door.

Weekends are different. I don't normally get up and work. I may sleep in a bit. I even let my children sleep in later this day. It is the only day to really "rest" in the morning.

Find what works best for you. If you find it difficult to wake up early in the morning do everything that you can do the night before to make your mornings go smoother. Set out breakfast items, get the children's' clothing out, or have your coffee programmed and brewing as you wake up. Anything that you can take care of the night before, do it. That might mean cleaning up your home and having it spotless before you wake up.

Do whatever works best for you. Back when I had little ones, that system worked for me. I could not find time in the morning to get chores done, but night time was an easier time for me. Do what you can. Just begin with taking care of yourself FIRST and work with what you got.

GIVING INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION IN A LARGE FAMILY

As a Mom, we want to be that supermom that can do it all. We want to be the best wife and we want each and every one of our children to feel loved. We try and spend time with everybody equally, but sometimes it is hard. This is especially true when we have a lot of children to have to spread out our love to. How do you find time to focus on everyone in your family? This can be tough especially if you are the main caregiver and Dad is busy working at providing for the family. It isn't impossible, it just takes some creativity.

One way we accomplished this was to have times during the day that the older ones were to spend time with the little ones. This gave me a break from having to "do it all." As well as help teach the older ones how to be responsible, how to interact with little ones, and how to do something for someone else.

I started scheduling different times throughout the day that each child would get to spend time with a sibling. In our home, I made sure to get a rotation of everyone getting one on one time with the others each week. For example Lauren's schedule at one time would have been:

- Monday during naptime, her and Jadyn would work on a sewing project. This allowed Jadyn to learn a new skill that I was not able to take the time and do, plus it gave Lauren the chance to work on her projects as well.
- Tuesday she would do Autumn's kindergarten work with her. It freed up my time so that I could do something else.
- Wednesday she and Brooklyn would bake something. This helped me and it helped her to bond with her sister.
- Thursdays she would take the two little boys outside to play. Boys need to be outside and play to run off energy.
- Friday her and Evan would play a board game together.

This was only schedule for a ½ hour every day. If she wanted to do longer, she could. This gave her a chance to bond with her siblings individually.

Sometime we scheduled it so that every day from 10:00 until noon, we rotated different children playing with each other in ½ hour time frames. This worked well for the winter months when we were stuck inside for long periods of time. This made the day go much quicker. The playtime wasn't careless, it was intentional. Certain age groups could play games together. I even scheduled the baby to be with some of the older children. I have many pictures of older ones reading books to the littliest ones. This was something I wanted to do each day, but did not have time. I am thankful that it was able to get done in such a meaningful way. Autumn still remembers Ashlyn reading books to her each day.

Sometimes it was hard to figure out what to do with younger children. Especially if you are a preteen boy and don't know how to play with a toddler. I would keep a list of activities that were only allowed for this time. Some of these activities were ones that would have been way too messy to do with everyone, but having it be supervised with an older child allowed them to do it.

- Play dough
- puzzles
- paper cutting and gluing
- blocks
- Go fish
- Candy land
- paint with water books

I also scheduled in time for myself to be with the children. This might be so that mom could play dollhouse with one of the girls. Or that I sat and did play dough with a toddler. Things that I did not get to do often because I was busy. But if it was scheduled and I knew it was on my list, it would get accomplished.

I would often schedule a kitchen helper for me on different days. This allowed the specific child to help me with all the work involved in making a meal. That child got to crack the eggs, mix the batter, and help serve the dinner. This allowed more one on one time with Mom. Plus I was already doing that job but by adding in one helper, I spent individualized and quality time with them.

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I had them play in various parts of the home so that they would not be interrupted. The preschooler was not allowed to interrupt the toddler and older boy playing blocks. They were scheduled to do something else. If I had to keep my eye on some of them, especially those stronger willed children, I kept them near where I was working. This helped me to keep a watchful eye in case troubles arised.

As my younger ones are older now, I can divide up the time that the older children spend with them as well. Now they enjoy playing things like board games as a group, going outside to play catch, or playing red light green light. My boys love when older brother Evan, builds them creations out of Legos. It may seem simple, but it is a time that they get to build some bonding time with the younger ones and at the same time, I can know everyone is doing something constructive while I am busy working.

My little ones look forward to the day and often ask, “Who gets me today?” If you haven’t implemented this before in your large family, expect your older ones to grumble and complain a bit. I had the eye rolls, the staring at the clock—in hopes of their time to fly by, and a couple of verbal complaints in the beginning. I just kept it positive and said, “Wow, you really did a good job playing with Stephen today. He really looks forward to the time you spend with him.” Build them up. Let them know that what they are doing is making a lasting impression upon their younger siblings. Be consistent. Continue doing it every day.

Don’t let them feel that because they grew up in a large family that life is burdensome or that they always had to take care of a sibling. Teach them to build relationships, grow bonds of friendship among each other, and to instill good character traits among one another. We are training up our children to have compassion for one another, to help when there is a need, and to learn how to interact with little ones. We are NOT having more children so that they can take the brunt of the work that God has given to us. We don’t have large families so that we can still be “comfortable” and have “me time.” We are building bonds within the family structure