

MANAGING YOUR WEEK

*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,
making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.
Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
Ephesians 5:15-17*

Have you ever started out your week with intentions of getting a list done and by the end of the week realizing that you haven't even scratched off half your items? The weekend is here, you go into overload and stay up late trying to accomplish all of your "tasks" at hand. The week starts again and you find yourself in the same predicament the following week. How can you go about fixing that? You make a plan.

Many housewives of bygone eras had a set day to focus on different tasks. If you read books about homemaking and home life in colonial times, women had certain days they would do things. Wash on Mondays, Iron On Tuesdays, bake/make butter on Wednesdays, etc. When I experienced an Amish group, I realized that they have the same ideals. They would do all the wash on a set day, bake another day, deep clean another, and garden/outside work another. They had a main focus for each day of the week. That got me thinking.....here were women that have done this for many generations. How could I incorporate that into my own life?

In our home, I can't do all of my laundry on one day....our septic would overflow☺ I don't iron or mend....not me. We don't have to make butter.....but what are the main focuses for our family?

- laundry
- cleaning house
- baking
- errands
- office/paperwork

Monday is laundry day

After the weekend, we always have big piles of laundry, this would be the day that I would get up early and get the clothing separated and start washing. I teach my children to immediately put their clothing that they take off into the laundry hamper. I have a few that I still have to remind to pick up their clothing, but most of the time the dirty laundry is in the hamper. If I am diligently and call the children whose clothing I see at that moment, it helps them to stop what they are doing and immediately pick it up and put away. Train your children to do this, it will save you many countless steps in picking up each day. I have a teenage son who did not put all his clothing in the hamper and I refused to pick it up. There was a day when he put it in the basket all at one time. I did not do laundry and he missed out on some clean clothes the next day. I told him if he wants clean laundry, to pick it up every day. He rarely leaves it out now.

When I am ready to wash, I sort the laundry into piles.

- towels
- darks
- lights
- work clothing

I would also look and see whose bedding I am to wash this week and gather that up as well.

If it were a nice day out, I may get towels going first and then I can have them waiting in a basket to go out on the clothesline when the sun came up. If I had bedding to hang out, I would do that next. Anything that I wanted to hang outside---work jeans, work shirts those would get done so that they would have time to dry.

I then would throw in the whites and then the dark clothing. As the clothing came out of the dryer, I would separate it into four baskets:

- Dad and Moms
- the girls
- the boys
- towels

We wash everything in cold water. The only thing I wash in hot water would be my cloth diapers. Everything else gets clean in cold. This saves huge on your water heater bill. I purchase a big bag of laundry soap crystals for \$8 and that will normally last us about a month and a half. We used to make our own soap, but I

have found that the soap making items are more expensive in the area that we currently live in. While shopping one day, I saw bags of the laundry crystals and I purchased a smaller one to try out and we liked it. I've been using it ever since.

We don't use fabric softener or any other type of additions. I do keep a bottle of bleach in my laundry room to bleach my white rags or shower curtains. I can purchase a bottle and have it last me a few months. I find that if I hang out any items of clothing on the clothesline that the sunshine works as a natural bleacher.

When I had little ones, to protect their clothing, they wore bibs to prevent stains on their shirts.

If I have a pile of clothing that needs to be hand washed, I do that in my kitchen sink. I fill it with cold water and put a little laundry detergent in it and swish around the clothing. I do any lighter, non bleeding colors first and within a couple of seconds the clothing is done. If I have more I will do it in the same water and continue until finished. Drain the water out and place clean cool water in the sink and repeat in the order you washed them. I will do my light brown shirt first and then wring it out carefully, place my orange dress next and wring it out and follow up with the turquoise dress that always bleeds color. I take my balls of clothing and put them on hangers. I will place on the clothesline or over tub on the shower bar to dry.

I always do full loads as to not waste the water. I told you I have to be frugal with my septic system☺ I fill the washer with clothing just up to the agitator bar, if I have some extra room, I might throw in some washcloths or dark socks to the load to make it full. I can gauge from the size of my laundry hamper whether I will have a full load or not, if I don't I won't wash it that day.

I am constantly listening for the loads to be finished. I have a buzzer on the dryer to be able to hear when it is done. As soon as I hear it, in goes the load from the washer and out comes the load separated into baskets. If you can do it all day, keep this going and by the end of the day you should have all of your laundry washed.

Later in the afternoon when everything was finished, we would take our baskets to the rooms and put them away. The little ones, I would separate and let each girl put her own away. Even the younger girls know how to put leggings and socks into their drawers. I help with hang ups and they place on the bar. We collect any extra hangers and place them on the bar in the laundry room.

Monday is now laundry AND clean floors day?!?!?

Now, fast forward to a few years later and we have a home where I cannot run my washer all day long. Our septic would not be able to handle it. My dreams of getting it all done are gone, what is a Mom to do? She just figures it out. In our home now, I only run two loads of laundry at the most each day Monday through Friday. On Mondays I normally throw in bedding and towels because those are the ones in need the most. I hang out what I can and dry the rest in the dryer. The towel basket gets folded at the end of the day and all bedding goes back on.

After each day of doing dishes, I place the washcloth and drying towel in the washing machine. Whatever load I wash the next day, I know that these are going to get clean. If I were to put them in the laundry hamper and wait until I wash towels, they would smell musty.

For the rest of the week, every morning that I get up, I see which category of clothing needs to be washed the most. If I have a lot of light clothing I throw that in. When it is dry I separate it into the baskets like I used to do for laundry day. The baskets sit on a shelf above my washer and dryer. On Fridays when everyone cleans their rooms, we put laundry away. This is the method that works for our current situation. You have to choose what you are able to do. If I could do it all in one day, I would. That is not the situation so I have to figure something else out.

Since I now don't have an entire day to dedicate to laundry I choose another "bigger" chore. That is the floors. On Mondays in our home now, I sweep all hardwood floors. I steam mop them all and we vacuum every inch of carpet. This includes moving couches and getting inside the cushions for a good vacuum. We sweep the stairs with a hand broom and hand wash them with a rag. Every square inch of our home will have been thoroughly swept or vacuumed today.

I make sure to shake and vacuum any rugs and get into all of those tiny corners as well. It will all be done, even if it is the only day that it looks perfect.

I have found that if I do a quick vacuum on the insides of cushions this helps with keeping mess off the floor too. I don't take them off, I just lift and do where the cushions separate. I push the couches back and vacuum or sweep underneath them.

Tuesdays are cleaning day

We used to dedicate this day to doing all of our home chores. This would include a thoroughly cleaning of the floors, dusting, mirror/window cleaning, and a deep cleaning of the bathrooms. This was great, back in the day. I knew that on Tuesdays my home would be spotless, but again life happens and we have to figure out something different.

My Mondays are usually a bigger cleaning day, the floors take some time. Tuesdays now start off with two loads of laundry in the early morning. I wash and dry and separate according to baskets and then on this day I tackle all three bathrooms

I will spot wipe each bathroom as needed on other days with a homemade cleaning wipe just to keep up but today we get in and scrub it good. It is convenient to keep a container of cleaning wipes or paper towels and all purpose cleaner spray in your bathroom for quick clean ups. As I am giving children a bath, I might do a quick wipe on other days that I don't do a deep clean. If after I use the bathroom in one of them and I notice they are dirty, I wipe them down with a couple of wipes quickly. Usually every morning I check them and grab one wipe or paper towel and wipe the sinks down, I use the same wipe and another one to do a quick wipe of the floors and then I throw those in the trash. I use a separate one and wipe the toilet rim and lid good. Some bathrooms aren't used as frequently like ours, so they don't need wiping every day. The boys bathroom definitely gets wiped everyday and the girls bathroom is normally done every other day.

Lets deep clean....

I start off by sprinkling my powdered cleaner in the shower and let it sit. Usually it is still wet from showers so it works good. If it was not wet, I would turn the shower on for a moment to get it wet. Then I would flush the toilet and sprinkle some in the bowl. I start out with spraying some all purpose cleaner in the sinks. I wipe out the sinks with my sponge, turn on the water to wring it out and continue wiping my faucet. Make sure to get behind it and around all the corners. Wipe off the counter. Put away any items that may not belong on it. I open the drawer and clean out any hair that I see. I wipe out the plastic containers, see if the q-tip container needs to be filled, and make sure we have enough towels and washcloths. I wipe down the front quickly as I move to the toilet.

I then take my same sponge and wipe the inside of the toilet. I go around the rim and get up on the inside. I flush and put some all purpose in the water now. I then wipe the rim and the back where the lid latches on. As I need to rinse off my sponge, I do it in the toilet water---its clean. I continue wiping the lid and the toilet

tank. I move down and do all around the front and sides of the bowl. Don't forget the back. You will be able to smell if there is any areas that you did not wipe. Everything should smell clean. I keep squeezing and rinsing out the sponge as I clean. I then wipe around on the floor by the toilet. I make sure to get way in the back. If I have boys, I wipe the walls, I know gross, but it will cut down on bathroom smell. As I am cleaning the floors, I move the trash can out in the hallway for the child who needs to pick that up and empty it today. I continue wiping all the floors, getting into the corners well. If I notice part of the lower walls are dirty I will wipe them as I am cleaning the floors.

I finish off by wiping up the sides of the tub and the edge. I then take my bath pouf scrubbie---which is designated for shower scrubbing only and start scrubbing the bottom of my tub. I scrub the floor and wipe around where the "ring" is. I rub my hand to see if I get all of the scum off. I scrub up each of the walls. I remove soap bottles and shampoo to make sure and wipe every little spot. Wipe around the bars and wipe off the top of the shower. It will have dust. I take my ice cream bucket that I brought all my cleaning supplies with me in and fill with water and carefully pour down the sides of the shower. I make sure and rinse it all off. I check the shower curtain to see if it needs cleaning. If I notice any spots, I will scrub it with my pouf or make a note to bleach it later on. I put back all of the containers of toiletries, replacing any that are almost empty. If my husband's shampoo bottle is almost empty, I grab up another one and squeeze the remainder of the old one in it. Myself I would fill it with water and use one last time on my hair, but men are different and don't always do that. I squeeze out as much as I can and throw it away. If the bar soap looks low, I replace that too. My husband does not like running out of toiletries because he may not know where the replacements are. Keep them stocked. Even if you set it on the vanity for when it does run out this will help. Close the shower curtain so that it can dry properly.

I refill any toilet paper containers. I keep three to four rolls stocked in each bathroom to avoid any running out situations. I replace any hand towels and check over my room before I leave. I may not wipe the mirror this day because on my chore system I have on Thursdays to Windex everything. If I can I do, but if I am super busy, I know that on Thursday it will get done.

I gather up my bucket with cleaning supplies and move on to the next one. I repeat the same pattern with each of the bathrooms and when I am finished, I rinse out my sponge and place it in the microwave for a few moments to kill any bacteria. All the items go under the sink. If I notice that my powdered cleaner is running low and I may not have enough the following week, I put it on my shopping list for next week's errand day.

If I do this early enough, my day will go smoothly. Sometimes it does not and I have to space it out. But if my MAIN focus was just bathrooms today, I could get it done at sometime during the day. It might be in between nursing babies, doing school, or after meals. I just know what this day is designated for and I do it.

If this day was all cleaning, I would work hard at getting it all finished today. Do what is best for your sized home and what you can accomplish in one day. For myself, it is realistic to say that I can do my daily chores and deep clean all three bathrooms on Tuesday. This allows me time to still do school and prepare meals for our home. Don't over schedule yourself. Make work what will work for you. When we had a smaller home, I could do all my cleaning in one day. That is not the case in our current home. Again, do what is BEST for YOU!

Wednesday is kitchen day

This day starts out and I grab my apron right away. I realized not many women do. What started me on the path of apron wearing was because I had to replace all my t-shirts because of the grease splatters or the stains on the belly area from the sink water. When I received an apron for Christmas and started wearing it years ago, I never went back. Every time I am in the kitchen, I put this on. This saves my clothing and it gives me something to wipe my hands on as needed. I even wear it as I am cleaning other areas of the home. I like the ones with a pocket and made with 100% polyester material. They don't wrinkle and they last for a long time. If I am up early and working on chores, I can put my sermon or music on and listen with my ear buds while my phone is in my pocket. The pocket is good for when I find small objects that go in other places of the home. I might find money, marbles, or tiny little toys. This is a life changing thing---really. For \$10 it will keep you clean. Ask for some for Christmas next time😊

After my apron is on I look at my menu plan and I see what sort of treats I want to make for the week. In our home, I make different things for us to enjoy for desserts or snacks. Here are some we make:

- puppy chow and rice crisp
- apple dapple cake and granola bars
- pumpkin muffins and banana bread
- energy bites and chocolate chips bars

We also will make a larger food prepare to stock my freezer for a later meal. This might be because I noticed that we don't have certain staples in the freezers. This can include:

- dried beans that I cook in my roaster or Crockpot until soft and scoop them into plastic deli containers to freeze for meals
- refried beans made from overcooked pinto beans and then pureed
- eggs, if I have tortillas, I might make a big batch of breakfast burritos and freeze them
- French toast sticks and freeze for quick breakfasts.
- roast or chicken cooked in a Crockpot until it easily falls apart, divided into individual containers for later meals in the month
- soup—make a big pot and freeze into containers for a quick lunch

If I don't have a plan for the day, I check my freezers and pantry and see what I have an abundance of. If we have lots of mashed bananas, diced apples, or shredded zucchini, I'll do muffins or breads. I make what we have in the home. Sometimes we don't have many snack type foods and I will pop a big container of popcorn from the 25lb of seeds we have stored (we always have popcorn seeds) and dress it up with caramel corn topping or melted chocolate discs. Just to make something to enjoy. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it is still a treat.

Depending upon how much baking I have, my dinner for this day is easy. We typically do a pot of homemade spaghetti that I can keep the sauce cooking in the Crockpot all day long without taking up oven space. It is nice to be able to serve homemade bread that we made today as well.

With all the kitchen work, it tends to get extra dirty. As I work, I clean. I usually have a sink full of hot, soapy water that I can wash utensils as I work. I try and keep my countertops wiped as I go. When I am finished baking with items, I wipe them off if needed. I give my mixer a good wipe off too. As things are baking, I start with some of my weekly cleaning in this room. I might start wiping off the faces of my cabinets in between muffin batches. I open up cupboards as we are putting dishes away and straighten them up. I look in drawers and make sure the proper items are in each one. If I see something I haven't used for over a year, I take it out and place it in my box to give away. If I notice that my butter knife stash has grown and all it does is keep overflowing into my fork container, I take out a few to get rid of. We can only possibly use a few in our home. Take out what you don't need. If I find that I have too many hot pads and I have to keep jamming them into my drawers to shut, I look through them and keep the nicer ones. I throw the other ones away. Same goes for washcloth and towels. If I have plenty of them, I put the rest in the rag pile for my husband.

I do a quick look over my cleaning items. If I can condense some of my all-purpose cleaner into one container, because I opened a second one without realizing the old one had fallen over in the back, I do that. I fill my soap containers and if it is almost empty, I fill the filler body with some water and pour it into the sink for dishes. I set it in the sink until I use it up that day and throw away the refill bottle afterwards. I wipe out all my major appliances.

I do a clean out of the refrigerator and wipe down all shelves and drawers. If I can condense some foods together I do. If I find a little leftover salsa in a container, I pour it into my spaghetti sauce mixture. If there is only a little parmesan cheese, I pour that into my sauce as well. Any leftover containers I put up front so that they

get used up. If we have too many carrots, celery, apples or oranges, I take some out and cut them up for the children to snack on this day.

I rinse out my coffee pot and get it refilled for the next day. I wipe my kitchen floor with a rag to clean up any dropped foods while baking. I make sure to get the kick plate as that is often overlooked. I clean out my sink drains and dump the food pieces in the trash and give my sink a good scrub with some powdered cleaner. A good wipe with the towel we dried dishes with and wipe up any wet spots.

Everything looks clean, I throw all of my used cloths into the washer along with my apron. I make sure all of the counters are cleaned up. We have already put some of the baked goods into the freezer for later in the week. The rest get covered and placed up high---to avoid snacking. My kitchen day is completed. Yes it has been a long day, my back does ache, but I feel accomplished after this day. Tomorrow will be easier.

Thursday is office day

This is my day to get all of my paperwork done. Throughout the week, if I needed to do something for bills, online, paperwork, etc I write it down so that I do it today. If I keep video recommendations from people, in my weekly planner, I will write down the movies on Thursdays for subsequent weeks. Then when I order all of my library books for the week for children, I will also order a couple of entertainment movies to watch. If I space them out over a few months, we have a new movie to look forward to. I order all my homeschooling books this week. I get my list ready for running errands tomorrow. I write down exactly what I need from each store. If I have to return something, I get it out and place it by the front door so that it doesn't get forgotten. I keep a bag by the door for all our library return books so that those can get put in the van to return.

This day, I also pay bills that are due each week. I have in the back of my planner a monthly view of which bills are paid each week. Since we are paid weekly, every week is designated to specific bills. As soon as I get a reminder that a bill is going to be paid on a certain day, I write it down in the current month on the week it will be deducted.

- Week one---groceries
- Week two--gas, electric, internet, trash bill
- Week three—insurance, cell phone bill
- Week four—house payment

This helps for me to know what each week is designated to. I might not be able to go shopping specifically on week one but I know to keep that paycheck aside for groceries.

If you have all your bill paying dates due on the same week, contact your creditors. Most will allow you to switch the date that your bills are due. I know for our family; I had a set schedule and then we bought a home and all my dates were changed. We had everything due at the end of the month along with our house payment. A few phone calls to utility companies and I was able to switch them to be more efficient each week.

If I need to mail away any bills, I have all of my necessary items in one place. I keep envelopes in my filing cabinet. In my purse I keep checks and stamps. Yes, I have learned that over the years, little ones think stamps are stickers?!?! I have kept them in my wallet out of habit. If I do have to mail something away, after it has been sealed and addressed, I stick a clothespin on it and place it with my errand list for

tomorrow. This reminds me to take it with me to mail. I keep it on my console in my van, so that I don't drive past the post office and forget to mail it.

Even though purchasing your checks through your bank is more convenient, the cost is three times that of a mail order check system. Look into different companies. There are many that do it for a fraction of the cost and you have a wider variety to choose from.

If there was something I wanted to look up on the internet I would do that today. Maybe I wanted to research a better way to teach fractions with my child, I might do that today. I might want some new recipes and will spend some time looking them up. I plan any homeschooling get togethers and parties this day. If I have to send out text reminders, I do that. All my receipts, check stubs, statements, tax papers, etc that have been sitting on my desk from the week, I file into the appropriate files. If there is any mail, I open it and discard what I don't need. If it is a magazine, I flip through it and decide if it is really worth my time to read, if not I pass it along to a friend. I have a pile for her to give tomorrow.

This day is also set aside to write any letters to people. Yes, it is important to write out letters. How great it is for a mom who is home all day long, to walk to her mailbox, open it and find something just for her! I have a list of people in the back of my planner just for this. I have pretty stationary and nice envelopes. I keep my letter positive. I NEVER share negative things. This letter is meant to give the recipient a positive note for their day. I may share a bible verse, an encourage quote, or something positive that has happened in my life. I usually give an update on what everyone in the family is doing. If I have any photos to send, I do so. I might tuck in a special tea bag, a recipe written out on a recipe card, or some other small item. It doesn't have to be much. It might even be a pressed flower from something in our yard. Just to let the person know that I am thinking of them. This is a good habit to help form in your young ladies. Especially in our new age of digital everything. It is rare to receive hand written notes, but it is a treasured item.

I also keep this day to write out any thank you letters. Growing up, my mother always had me write a thank you letter for everything. As I have grown, I realize the importance of that habit. I try and instill that in children too. Whenever they receive something, I show them how to write a thank you note. It can be simple but thoughtful:

Greeting

State the gift, a thank you and that you are considerate of it.

Share what you are doing with the gift.

Write something about the past and future.

Thank them again.

Close and sign.

February 10, 2017

Dear Grandma Linda,

I wanted to send a note to thank you for the crocheting kit. It was very kind of you to send me this item.

I am currently learning how to do make granny squares with this item. It is hard, but I am learning. I work at it a bit every day.

When we get to see you again, I hope to have a small blanket made. I really enjoyed our visit and look forward to the spring time when we can see you again.

Thanks again.

Love,
Jadyn

Maybe I have nothing to do this day...rare but it happens. I might clean out my filing cabinet. I pull out my individual folders and look through what I stuffed in them. I keep 6 months worth of check stubs and throw the rest away. I look through the warranty papers and see if any are expired. I look at receipts I kept from gifts that I wasn't sure if we were going to need to return but we didn't so the receipt goes. I don't need bank statements because I can go online and print them off if needed. I don't keep utility receipts or phone bills, all are accessible online. Anything that I can get online, I throw away. I keep birth certificates, social security cards, titles for cars, receipts for business expenses, medical bill receipts, warranties, insurance policies, and now my filing cabinet is nice and neat.

I might pull out the journals I started for each child and realize that I hadn't written in them in a while. I place them on my desktop and write in a couple of children's. I write different events that have happened in our life, things that they did, or how they have grown. I can't do all of them at once, but after I write a page and date it, I place it back in the filing cabinet. Throughout the next couple of days, when I have a spare moment I see the piles and write in some more books.

I have already ordered all our school books, but I may get inspired for books to read to my little ones, I search an internet book list that someone has made that are appropriate for kindergarteners. I order those to read for my little ones.

I might look up DIY homemade gifts and make notes of ones that I want to make for people at Christmas time. It may be March, but I have more time in March than

I do in December to look up gift ideas. I make a list of people I want to give special gifts to and slowly start planning on them. For my girlfriends, I want to do a bag of my favorite things. I came across a stainless steel water bottle that I love. They are \$10 and to buy 10 of them in December is a lot. If I grab one every few weeks and work that into my grocery budget it doesn't put much damper on bills. I place them aside and keep adding to it. I might want to make something and see the items I need at a thrift store one day, I grab them for later use. I might find cute lotions on sale, I gather them up and save for later. I scan clearance isles after holidays and look for things to pick up. When the holidays come around, I have already been collecting items throughout the year so the pressure is off to try and find "extra money." I top off my presents with some homemade dark chocolate, coconut, almond, cranberry crunch candy and call it good. This is a much better approach then to have Christmas come and gone and I "wish" I would have given gifts to someone or I bought something that was overpriced because I felt I should, but now am out of money. It always helps to plan ahead.

If I hear my husband say he wants something I write it down in my gift idea section of my planner. When Christmas time rolls around, I already have an idea of what to get him. Same goes for my children, if there is something they have been wanting, we add it to the list. This helps prevent purchasing gifts that after the New Year they end up in the "give away" pile.

How do we cut down on paper clutter?

As soon as mail comes into the home it is sorted immediately. I place the junk mail directly into the trash. I set unopened bills in my bill holder on my desk for Thursdays office day. Any magazines get a quick look through. Do I keep it? Do I think it is just a time waster? I either throw it away, set it next to my bed, or place it in a bag to give to friends. Any other items that I might need to look through get placed on my desk for the appropriate time.

When I do get a chance to skim through a magazine, I will rip out any recipes that I might try. I tear out any articles that I will want to read later on and place them in a folder. I may take these with me while waiting in the car and read them. I place the recipes in my household binder in the "recipes to be tried" section. As I make my menu out for the month, I will glance at this section and see if I want to make something new.

Most every one of our bills is paid electronically. If I can have it paid automatically then it saves on paper, stamps, checks, and most important late fees! Don't pay get stuck with unnecessary fees, have them deducted to avoid this. An extra \$5 each month equals a couple of days worth of groceries each week lost in late fees.

When my husband brings home receipts and paystubs, I take them and walk them to my room and place them in the filing cabinet in the correct folders. If we get an invitation to something, I write it down in my planner—along with phone numbers or address and throw away the card. Any type of appointment reminders, as soon as I arrive home, I write down in my planner the dates and times and throw away the cards.

Did you know that you can have your name removed from marketing lists? This helps hugely in having junk mail sent to your home. This saves on the environment, on your trash pile, and time wasted by you looking through things you don't need.

To opt out for five years: Call toll-free 1-888-5-OPT-OUT (1-888-567-8688) or visit www.optoutprescreen.com. The phone number and website are operated by the major consumer reporting companies.

To register your phone number or to get information about the registry, visit www.donotcall.gov, or call 1-888-382-1222 from the phone number you want to register. You will get fewer telemarketing calls within 31 days of registering your number.

What about digital clutter?

Just as our physical inboxes can have clutter, so can our digital inboxes. On my phone, I can get all of my emails and texts together. As soon as I get one and can read it, I decide what I am going to do with it. I delete it, if I don't need it. I save it, if I need to respond and can't at the moment, or I file it, if it has important information.

I made a "save these" folder on my Gmail account. This is where all my emails are at that might need to be referenced. I might get a reminder that my ebill is ready to view and pay. I will look at it and write down which bill it is and the amount, on the appropriate paycheck week. This allows me to delete the email. If there are pictures to save, I scan through and save them so the email can be deleted. If my girlfriend sent me a recipe, I will decide if it is "really" something I would do, I then save the snapshot in my photos file on my phone and look to it later.

If it is something that I can't take care of at the moment, I save it as new and I see it every time I look at my phone. My goal is to let my inbox and text inbox be emptied every night. Before I go to bed, I respond to any texts and then delete the messages. Any other emails, I take care of and delete as well.

I will periodically go through my phone when I have a few extra moments and clean it out. I look through my photos and decide if they are to be kept or not. I have Dropbox on my phone and will grab all the images and videos and transfer them to my Dropbox account which takes them to my laptop. I then can save our family photos or get blog post photos ready for posting. I scan through my "saved" images and see if there is something I need to make a note of and write down in my planner. I might have taken a photo of a book, I wanted to check out, that will go on my Thursday planner day to order. The recipe I wanted to try, I will make a note on my errand day to get the ingredients. Things are cleaned out to keep my phone running smoothly.

If I need to make a quick note throughout the day, I create a draft text and it automatically saves it in my inbox on my phone. This works great for something that I may have read in my Bible or heard on my sermon for the day. It is wonderful to look down and be encouraged throughout the day.

Maybe my friend and I were talking and she was giving me a recommendation for a movie or a topic to look up. I would transfer that information over to my planner so that it could be deleted from my phone.

Since I now don't designate a specific day to cleaning the entire house, on this day I keep my chores lighter. I want MOST of my focus to be on office type things so I rationed out the chores for this day to be dusting and window/mirror cleaning. I used to not and did it all in one day, but since we had to stretch things out a bit, this works for us. Dusting and window/mirror cleaning takes about 15 minutes out of my day. Not much of an inconvenience. Usually the children finish chores early and I split the jobs up between the two girls.

Friday is errand day

When we could do laundry all in one day and when we cleaned all in one day this day was just left for errands. This worked well when I had little ones because I was left to do the majority of it. When Mom has to do it all, it's good to keep it to one day. Now my children are older and can help more with keeping things neat. We now stretch out our cleaning to smaller chunks for the week as you have noticed. This day I have each group of children focus on their own rooms. This means that in order for them to come out with me and do errands, which they enjoy, they must get up and get their rooms cleaned. This includes putting toys away properly, dusting and window cleaning in their rooms. They have to clean under their beds, straighten their beds and areas up and do a thoroughly vacuuming of the room. I make them do under the beds and in all of the corners. I also give them their laundry baskets and they put them away as well. Before we leave the house, the rooms are spotless. I do this in my own room, before I even leave it in the morning. If I have a child that is finished with their rooms, I might have them vacuum my room and the little boys room. The boys aren't old enough to run the vacuum yet so the girls help do that.

This is what works well for me now. When there were many little ones, I could not even fathom of doing extra chores on this day AND getting out the door on time. That is why not one homemaking schedule will work for everyone. You have to put into account what is best for your family and situation. That is why I am sharing what we did when we had little ones as to what we do now with older ones. I had to be much more structured with little ones to keep up on all of the daily tasks, but now that my little ones are grown and can be responsible for their items, the work load is not so much on just me.

I have also learned over the years that when you have little ones it is best to be at home. Routine, schedules, and the same is good to keeping happiness flowing in little children. When I had a nursing baby, toddler, preschooler, and several older elementary age children, it was easier to stay home. It took a lot of work and energy to get out the door. Then if someone was having a bad day or it was too cold or too hot, it made for unhappy trips. I remember going and just being exhausted coming home. I didn't have a stocked pantry, I couldn't even think about planning out my menu for the month---it was hard enough just for the week! Trips were every week to the grocery store and I had lots to get. Some days were great, others were always resulting in a meltdown by some child. Gone are those days. I am thankful to be able to do what I do now, but I did get through it. What would I do different?

1. I would have read my own book😊
2. I would have lessened my expectations for how I did things. For example, how I kept my house clean, having a better schedule, and keeping meals simple.
3. I would have stayed home more.

After I finally figured out that it was better to do that, then I started doing a routine and schedule and we stuck to it. It made the days fly by. I knew what we were supposed to do, my children knew what to expect, and our home was peaceful. Don't get discouraged if life is crazy. I understand it is. Take a couple of hours and make a schedule and have a plan. Don't be rigid, but be flexible. It will make all the difference in the world, I promise.

Okay on to focusing on getting out the door.....

This day we get up, get our chores finished, pack some sandwiches and grab some snacks to take. Someone fills water bottles and places them in the cooler by the door. I have already put my chili ingredients into the Crockpot for dinner. If I get up early enough I might make a pot of soup and just keep it warm in the Crockpot. This days meals is always something that doesn't take much prep work. I want something easy for when I walk in the door tired.

The children are dressed in comfortable clothing. The night before we pick out what they will wear. If they like sweatpants and I know we will be out all day, we wear sweat pants. If they are comfortable in sparkly shoes that don't match outfits completely, they wear them. I don't worry about "looking proper" it is about portraying a clean, neat appearance.

We place coolers with ice packs by the door so cold items stay cold. I grab extra cloth bags for groceries. We take a basket for breads and chips---I don't like smooshed bread.

While the children are eating breakfast, I go over the rules for shopping:

- No screaming or being loud in the car
- When getting out, be careful not to hit the car next to you.
- Don't brush up against the side of the van. Wait along the side while everyone is getting out.
- No running in the parking lot
- Only touch things you are going to buy

- Don't touch the candy in the checkout isles because it makes them melty and could break them
- No running or twirling in the store
- Don't climb on objects while shopping
- Don't ask for toys or items in the store.
- I tell them where we are going and what we are doing—they are not to ask me anymore
- Pay attention to others around you
- Smile----no one loves a grumpy face
- No talking to strangers unless mom is nearby.
- Always stay near mom
- If an elderly person or someone in a wheel chair cart needs assistance help them. Place items on the checkout counter for them
- If you don't obey the rules you go into the shopping cart or have to hold onto it—no second chances

While looking for a parking spot, if we are fortunate enough to get a front row parking spot, then great! But my second choice would be near a cart corral. It makes it easier to grab one and place children inside of it. Before we go in the store I make sure everyone gets a drink of water. I say, "Remember the rules for shopping." I remind them to smile and look pleasant. If I have a baby that is nursing, I make sure to feed the baby before we go into the store to avoid any unhappy little ones. If it is going to take longer in the store, I make sure not to dawdle and keep moving as quickly as I can. I have been in situations where I have a baby crying and have an unhappy toddler. Those are not fun situations to be in. If you plan, it helps.

If our shopping day went smoothly and the children are good, I may buy a small snack to enjoy as a reward for the day. On hot days, we might get a box of ice cream treats. Other times I might grab a \$5 pizza and each child gets one slice. This is not always typical but I do treat for good behavior.

As soon as we get out to the van, everyone goes inside, gets buckled, and gets hand cleaner on. We do this immediately after we have been out. Mom and an older one will help load up the groceries in the back. We place all cold items in coolers, chips in baskets and stack the bags as best we can.

When we arrive home, I remind them to grab up any items that they had brought with them and remove them from the van. We collect water bottles and put them back in the bag up front. I then delegate an older child to clean out the row that

they were sitting in. This includes removing any forgotten toys, clothing, and removing any type of wrappers. If it is nicer outside, we will just take the hand broom that I keep under the front seat and quickly brush away any crumbs from the floor. It might be done perfectly, but at least it gets the majority of the mess out.

Depending upon what time we have gotten home, how warm it is outside (for grocery melting temperatures), or if it is raining, we vary who helps bring in groceries. Sometimes my son unloads it all and the girls and I put them all away inside to avoid anything from spoiling. If it is cold outside, we will all help unload everything to get it done quicker. Everything gets put away. All the freezer stuff goes in piles and the children carry those downstairs, and I will organize them. If the children know where the items go in the pantry and the can cupboard, they put them away. If they don't know where items go, they leave them on the countertop and I put them away.

We gather up all the bags and stuff them into one bag and place under the sink. Any boxes get put outside the door for my son to put for the burn pile. Bags get return to the closets, water bottles rinsed out with hot water and refilled, and a double check of the dinner to make sure it is cooked and we are done. We have free time and everyone gets to do their own thing until dinner.

I will empty out my purse, throw away any receipts I don't need, place ones I need in my bill holder until next Thursday's office time, collect any loose change and put it back in my change holder, and organize my bank cards and any other items that may have moved. I put my purse away and finish preparing anything for dinner.

All of our library materials that we just picked up get put in the appropriate place. School books and videos get placed on the shelf designated for that, any entertainment videos and reading books for the little ones get placed on a shelf in the bedroom. Everything that we did today, gets placed in its appropriate place, no matter how tired that I am. It is much better to get it done and then not worry about it the next day.

Saturdays are for extras

This day Dad might be home so I don't specifically focus on doing too much. If my week was busy or we had unexpected people over and I didn't get to doing certain chores, I would finish them up today. I also try and do outside type chores.

This might include:

- cleaning the chicken coop out
- picking up dog mess
- sweeping the porches
- cleaning out the van
- checking the yard for trash or toys
- cleaning outside windows or doors
- cleaning the garage up

If I find that I don't have anything "big" to do and Dad has no plans I make take on other tasks like:

- change out seasonal clothing
- declutter a room of the home---maybe my home is getting to be messy too often and I realize it is time to get rid of things
- organizing school for the month or upcoming week
- spend time in extra projects like sewing or crafting

I also plan on being ready to go if Dad would like to get out today. He works away from the home and enjoys being out hiking or swimming with the family. I have food already planned that we can take on the road. When I shop once a month we have some sort of item to grill. Whether that be chicken, hotdogs or burgers I know we have something to take with us. I usually have a watermelon each week and some sort of side to go with it. All the food that we can take is easy to grab up. We take the same thing each weekend so planning is easy.

- beach towels
- bathing suits
- grill or charcoal and lighter for grilling
- cooler filled with drinks
- cooler filled with food
- snacks in bags
- bag with an extra outfit for everyone

- fold up chairs
- water and sand toys
- umbrella for shade
- fishing poles and tackle
- wagon for transporting things
- flip-flops or sandals for everyone
- extra water in jugs for drinking

It is the same thing so we keep it simple. I just know where all of these items are so that we aren't spending time looking for them.

Sundays are for resting and worship

This day is church. The night before, I make sure everyone has clothing and shoes set out. We get up in the morning and have an easy breakfast. Children get dressed, brush teeth, do hair, and wash faces. I don't allow TV or tablets as this slows them down. Whoever is done first, gathers up the water bottles and places them in the bag to take. I take tortillas, a jar of peanut butter, and a butter knife to make quick sandwiches for the ride home. This helps ward off the "hungrier" little ones before I can get to dinner.

We all sit together for service. We like having everyone together worshipping God. Little ones are allowed one quiet toy to play with. Nothing that makes noise. Older ones have bibles and paper to write things down on.

We believe in our entire family participating together so we do that. We don't worry about following after what other people believe. Our pastor understands what our convictions are as a family and he respects that. I respect that church may be the ONLY time that other mothers get a break and can listen to the message to get equipped for the week, I understand the need for nursery and children's church. I am not against any of it. This is just something that the Lord has shown us to do as a family. We all are responsible for our own households. Not what everyone else does.

When we come home, I have the girls hang up their dresses---if not dirty. We put away our shoes and any other thing we brought in with us. I might start on dinner for the day. I typically just make one larger meal and we eat mid afternoon. The younger ones might do a bigger snack later in the evening but for the most of us, we just eat once. This day is for relaxing, taking naps, going to the park, or just reading a book. Whatever we find relaxing to do we do. I don't do laundry, I don't pick up messes. I do wash dishes and wipe down counters for sanitary conditions. I remind the children if they have left things out, but the majority of work is done tomorrow.

I find that God's word is true about resting on the 7th day.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

God's Word is not about being legalistic. We aren't to argue that it isn't proper to wash dishes and that we shouldn't do any work. Our world is not like that. If no one worked on Sunday, our hospitals would not run, our land would not be protected, our energy would stop. This isn't about what's right and wrong. His Word says to rest. If we run around and do things, and stay as busy as we do during the week our bodies have no time to recharge. God gives us a day to relax and get ready for the week, just as He did.

And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Mark 2:27

Sunday rest is set aside for us. God knows what our bodies are capable of doing. He knows exactly what they need, that is why He has set it up for us to rest. Consider doing just the bare minimum this day.