



*The*  
CHRISTIAN  
*homemaker's*

HANDBOOK



EDITED BY

*Pat Ennis & Dorothy Kelley Patterson*

“The number one question Christian women are asking today is, ‘where are the older women?’ Singles, wives, and moms want to know God’s plan for them and are looking for help with how to live it out. Here, in one priceless volume, is instruction from the Bible and practical guidance from women who know how to make God’s teachings a daily reality. From time and life management skills, to building better relationships and much more, every chapter points women toward honoring and pleasing God while blessing others.”

**Elizabeth George**, Jim & Elizabeth George Ministries

“Characterized by distinctive, if not countercultural, ideas for our twenty-first-century world, readers will discover in this new resource a most interesting collection of thoughtful essays on the important subjects of home and hospitality, as well as spiritual and personal health. The contributions found in this volume will be helpful for individuals, groups, and churches. This handbook will be one that many will want to keep on hand.”

**David and Lanese Dockery**, President and First Lady, Union University

“Dr. Dorothy Patterson and Dr. Pat Ennis have performed an invaluable service to the body of Christ by rescuing the word ‘homemaker’ from liberals who equate the title with ‘doormat.’ As Dr. Patterson so aptly illustrates, the role of a homemaker is as challenging—and certainly more consequential—than that of any CEO in a Fortune 500 company. The timeless truths found in these pages will motivate every woman to pursue with passion her God-given calling and will encourage every husband to honor his wife as a ‘fellow heir of the grace of life.’”

**Robert Jeffress**, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas

“Being a wife and mother are some of the greatest and highest forms of Christian servanthood. In this book, a variety of authors help show, in a very positive way, God’s grand design. Without casting aspersions upon anyone who chooses to work outside the home, these authors also point to the fact that many women are rediscovering powerful fulfillment by discovering anew God’s design for the home. Many women choose to be a part of that group called Christian homemakers. There is no more challenging task. There is no more draining vocation. There is no more important task in all the world. Listen carefully to these wonderful authors and their well thought out words of advice, counsel, and instruction.”

**Frank S. Page**, President & CEO, Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention

“One of the great scandals of the last several decades has been the popular scorn heaped on the home economy, and particularly the homemaker. All the same, even in 2013 and after fifty years of feminist complaints, half of all economic activity in America still occurs in homes—and the most important half by far. In *The Christian Homemaker’s Handbook*, Pat Ennis and Dorothy Patterson provide a lively, cogent, and practical guide for women seeking to understand and fulfill their ‘God-assigned priorities.’ The authors correctly affirm that God’s design for the home, as laid out in Genesis, has not changed and that young women will find the fullest meaning and the greatest happiness in their bonds to husbands and children and in their commitments to home-building. The book also properly emphasizes the importance of hospitality, a welcoming spirit, and a gracious heart to the vital Christian home.”

**Allan C. Carlson**, President, The Howard Center for Family, Religion, & Society; Founder and International Secretary, the World Congress of Families; Distinguished Visiting Professor of History, Hillsdale College

*The Christian Homemaker's Handbook*

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# Contents

Acknowledgments	13
Foreword by W. Mark Lanier	15
Introduction: Why Do We Need to Recover Biblical Patterns for Homemaking?—Dorothy Kelley Patterson	19

## *Part One*

### **God's Design for the Home**

1 A Portrait of the Twenty-First-Century Home—Pat Ennis	27
2 Impact of Feminism on the Home and Family—Candi Finch	37
3 Home: A Prepared Place—Dorothy Kelley Patterson	55
4 God's Plan for Marriage—Dorothy Kelley Patterson	65
5 The Role of the Wife—Glenda Hotton	75
6 God's Paradigm for the Homemaker—Dorothy Kelley Patterson	85
7 God's View of the Extended Family—Rhonda Harrington Kelley	97

## *Part Two*

### **God's View of the Sanctity of Life**

8 The Value of a Child—Dorothy Kelley Patterson	109
9 Biblical Insights on Birth Control and “Family Planning” —Dorothy Kelley Patterson	119
10 A Life Full of Days: Caring for the Aged—Terri Stovall	137
11 The Impact of a Handicapped Individual on a Family —Rhonda Harrington Kelley	151
12 Placing the Solitary in Families—Pat Ennis	161

## *Part Three*

### **Foundations for Parenting**

13 Biblical Foundations for Parenting—Dorothy Kelley Patterson	177
14 God's Design for Nurturing Motherhood—Glenda A. Eitel	197

15	Effective Preschool Education: Early Learning—Ann Iorg	209
16	Teaching and Training Children—Elizabeth Owens	223
17	Raising Teenagers on God’s Terms—Joy Souther Cullen	235
18	Relating to Young Adults—Susie Hawkins	247
19	Spiritual Formation through Family Worship —Malcolm and Karen Yarnell	257

*Part Four*

**The Practical Aspects of Establishing a Home**

20	Life Management Skills—Rhonda Harrington Kelley	269
21	Nest Building 101: Setting Up a Household—Pat Ennis	281
22	Nest Building 102: Relocating a Household—Pat Ennis	303
23	Smart Routines for Cleaning a Home—Pat Ennis	319
24	Technology in the Home—Corinne Thomas	333
25	Is Working at Home for You?—Glynnis Whitwer	343
26	Too Much Month at the End of the Money?—Pat Ennis	357
27	Decorating Your Home with <i>Silent Witness</i> —Georg Andersen	369
28	Decorating Your Home with Love—Lisa O’Harra	379
29	Biblical Hospitality—Mary K. Mohler	387

*Part Five*

**Planning and Preparing Healthy Meals**

30	Nutrition and Healthy Eating: Making Wise Choices —Kimberly Toqe	399
31	Food Safety in the Home—Janet Taylor	413
32	Kitchen Equipment for the Home—Janet Taylor	423
33	Family Mealtime—Liz Traylor	433
34	Ideas for Holiday Celebrations—Mary K. Mohler	445
35	Making Your Kitchen a Springboard for Ministry —Mary K. Mohler	459

*Part Six*

**Making Wise Clothing Decisions**

36	Crafting and Complementing Your Life Message—Pat Ennis	471
37	Is Modesty an Obsolete Virtue?—Pat Ennis	487
38	Beautifully Balanced—Beth Mackey	495
39	Merging Quality and Fit to Equal Value—Beth Mackey	505
40	Will It Come Out in the Wash?—Beth Mackey	511
	Appendix: Perceptions of Homemaking Study	523
	General Index	529
	Scripture Index	537



# Foreword



*W. Mark Lanier*

For almost three thousand years, wise people have asked the question:

An excellent wife who can find? (Prov. 31:10)

The Proverbs answer that question in the very next phrase:

She is far more precious [and rare] than jewels. (v. 10)

If possible, this is even truer today than it was when written. We live in an age where the media informs women what it means to be successful, and rarely is that message congruent with what it means to be an “excellent wife.” From the earliest age, girls are taught by what they watch on television, by what they hear on the radio, and by what they read or see on the computer—that success is found in independence, in economics, and in beauty. Yet real independence, real purpose in economics, and true beauty are not often portrayed. The skewed vision is more typically one that makes the girl-turned-woman the center of focus and attention. Independence is valued for the woman who reports to no one and needs nothing. Economics is seen as the drive for consumption and personal satisfaction. Beauty is first and foremost, skin-deep. It is built to a standard made possible only by Photoshop, personal trainers, and the best plastic surgeons.

Unfortunately, the media message is wrong. The real jewels among women are those who rise to the godly level of praise found in Proverbs 31:10–31. The Proverbs passage forms the backbone of this book, even as it forms the character and life of godly women. As a man blessed to live in the midst of Proverbs 31 women, I can testify firsthand to the truth of this message as well as the importance of this book. My marvelous wife Becky exemplifies Proverbs 31, as do my mother, my two sisters, and day by day, our four maturing daughters.

When I first met my wife, she was in middle school, two grades behind me. While she caught my eye early on, it was not simply because she was pretty! Her personality was shown in everything she said and did. Her kindness was apparent to all as she cared about others more than herself, even at the age of

fourteen. She was smart, but not showy about it. She was talented, but never flashy. She was popular, but went out of her way to befriend those alone. She knew how to encourage, how to make people laugh, and how to make others feel important. It was no surprise she was always voted “Class Favorite” by the students. The faculty gave her the “I dare you” and “Hall of Fame” awards. By the time she graduated high school, she was voted “Most Likely to Succeed.”

She continued on the path to “success” taking her national debate talent from high school, her dexterity in multiple languages, and her high grade point average to college where she ultimately amassed more degrees than a thermometer. She took a bachelor’s degree in international trade, a master’s degree in Spanish, two law degrees, lived as a rotary fellowship representative in Argentina, and prepared for a “successful” life with great energy and passion. The law firms fought over a chance to have her, and the men lined up outside her door hoping to win her affections! (By my count, she turned down five engagement rings before I cajoled her into accepting mine!)

With this background, and with this talent set, Becky could have done anything in her life she wanted. And she did exactly what she wanted. She settled into a marriage with me where she applied her strong gifts and talents into her truest passion, being the best wife and mother she could possibly be.

My oh my, what a blessing she is to our family. Her days start early, getting in her quiet time before she wakes our two daughters still at home (our son and two of our daughters are already in graduate school). She makes them breakfast, packs their lunches, and typically drives some set of children in some carpool tandem. She stays active as “team mom” in multiple sports and school activities, serves in the Parent Teacher Organization, volunteers her teaching for the school’s debate and speech program, and is found serving concessions at volleyball games. In the process, she stays plugged into both my legal work and my ministry efforts. She runs multiple events for the law firm, travels with me as much as possible, and is constantly planning one church event or another. She stays active with our extended family, runs our home, regularly makes costumes for any and all parties or events, strives to ensure that we are all well fed (combining sound nutrition with great flavor), keeps us up to date with doctors and dentists, keeps the pets up to date with all shots and medicines—and somehow keeps her car clean in the process.

In the midst of all this, she constantly amazes me not only for all she does, but for how she does it. She recognizes the importance of sleep. She knows the importance of prioritizing. She knows when too much is too much and when she needs downtime. She gets alone time, not by sacrificing what she does for

others, but by careful planning. She thus ensures her batteries are charged so she can do for others. Her greatest joys are achieved when she sees her family happy and successful. She knows that is fruit from labor! Most importantly, she knows that she can achieve nothing, nor is anything she achieves of merit, absent the strength and love of the Lord.

Proverbs 31 is right—such a woman is more precious than jewels and is hard to find. I pray that all young men search for their helpmates and companions by seeking those who are not bent on becoming what they see on television, but rather on what they learn from the Lord. For Proverbs 31 ends instructively:

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,  
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.  
Give her of the fruit of her hands,  
and let her works praise her in the gates. (Prov. 31:30–31)



# Introduction

## Why Do We Need to Recover Biblical Patterns for Homemaking?



*Dorothy Kelley Patterson*

A woman makes choices on what quantity and quality of her time to invest in her home. Her task is overwhelming. She cares for husband and children; she maintains and directs the household with planning and creativity; she coordinates scheduling for the family; she is the catalyst for getting all household tasks done efficiently and effectively; she is on call for emergencies within the extended family, as well as volunteering in the church and community for unpaid tasks that serve society—from the local neighborhood to the international scene. Yet in a sense the homemaker has been sidelined for more than half a century. She is considered a nonperson by many who do not see value in her work. She does not have what others consider a respectable title for her position, and she lacks a clear job description of what is considered worthwhile work. She does not receive a salary for her work. She just does what needs to be done to get the job done!

The modern culture seems to be marked by frantic busyness and “to do” lists in every avenue of life except the home. Even those who choose homemaking sometimes tend to immerse themselves in volunteerism and projects that might lead to recognition and accolades from outsiders, such as the church and community. Other women are looking for a professional pursuit that produces pocketbook rewards. Most believe that the biblical model for a homemaker, who devotes her freshest energies and most of her time to keeping her home, is obsolete. To help your husband and nurture your children has often been rejected in this great age of enlightenment and in the throes of the modern faltering national economy. As maternal nurturing wanes in importance, mothers are eager to cut the apron strings from their babies and get them up and moving self-sufficiently into the world as quickly as possible.

Day care is so interwoven into maternal life that sometimes a child is placed on a waiting list for institutional care from the moment of conception in an attempt to find the best option in light of the tragedies associated with this surrogate care. Institutional care has become the norm from

birth onward. Nutrition has evolved into reading labels on prepared food or exchanging drive-through fast food for gourmet-café takeout. In reality, the so-called liberation from feministic ideology has introduced a heavy dose of personal rights and self-fulfillment in modern women, who are drawn more to the right of personal achievement than to the responsibility of family care.

But one must not count God out in this battle for the future of marriage and the family and for the survival of the most precious product—the next generation or those who follow after. From creation God placed in the heart of every woman a maternal drive consisting of a natural nesting instinct, a passion for protecting her child and preparing her offspring for living in the world. However hard the world seeks to invert a woman's God-given priorities, a remnant of those committed to God's plan for the home are pulling for that woman to dig in and seize the opportunity to rear her own children in an earthly shelter she fashions and directs for that very purpose.

Every work has its mundane tasks. To enter the world's marketplace, whatever the prestigious position or lucrative compensation, does not ensure the absence of boredom or the lack of fatigue resulting from hard work. The question is not whether a woman wants the best for her husband and children or even for herself. Rather the matter to consider is this: Is being someone's wife and another's mother really worth the investment of energies, creativity, and a life of sacrifice and hard work? What is necessary to keep a home? Do you need skills? Is it necessary to plan and prepare all along the journey?

Every evangelical woman agrees that Scripture contains timeless and unchanging principles. Such principles form the foundation of living the Christian life and managing a household God's way. However, the problem comes in determining exactly what principles are timeless. Here every woman must continually "test the spirits" against the Word of God (1 John 4:1). What is the ultimate consideration—your own experience, the culture in which you live, or the words written in an ancient book—God's Holy Word?

Every professional pursuit requires training and preparation as well as commitment to the task and dedication to do it well, and this book is our affirmation that homemaking is worthy of this effort as well. The activities are ongoing, and successful advancement is seldom without a cost to be paid in energy, time, and even creativity if you do well. In the modern era, finding anyone who is professionally prepared and motivated to do a job regardless of payment or recognition seems rare. The diversity of opportunities for women in the modern era should not prompt the neglect of God-assigned priorities for their respective responsibilities. If any professional person gives the most

productive part of her day to peripheral chores or other commitments, neglecting the use of primary energies and freshest creativity for the most important responsibility, her main job falls victim to mediocrity. Generalities in services rendered and opportunities embraced must be governed and guided by specific purpose and needed preparation.

Homemaking is indeed a career in the sense that it demands a woman's careful diligence in preparation, dedicated commitment to priorities associated with the assignment, freshest energy, and keenest creativity. Most dictionaries define the homemaker as "one who manages a household especially as a wife and mother."<sup>1</sup> Though the homemaker does her job with no expectation of a salary (much less financial bonuses and perks), she cannot duplicate her services for any amount of money (Prov. 31:10). Dorothy Morrison wrote,

Homemaking is not employment for slothful, unimaginative, incapable women. It has as much challenge and opportunity, success and failure, growth and expansion, perks and incentives, as any corporate career.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics suggest that top priority is assigned to the importance of family life—ranking it even above financial security.<sup>3</sup> Pouring your time and energies into the lives of the people you love most is a rewarding task. Many people are surprised to learn how much time and energy it takes to run a household and care for a family. From my experience, having a marketplace career was far easier than being a homemaker. In the marketplace, I was never called to be on duty twenty-four hours a day, nor have I ever needed the variety of skills and myriad of abilities I have used in managing my household. Laborsaving devices do make my life easier, but the time saved becomes capital to be invested in the lives of my husband and children and in service to others. No professional pursuit so uniquely combines the most menial tasks with the most meaningful opportunities.

When a woman chooses to pursue homemaking with energy, imagination, and skills, she accepts a challenging task. As well as meeting the mundane needs of her family efficiently and completely, she also often finds the time to enrich lives with her tender loving care—encouraging and guiding, counseling or comforting. She is available to divide sorrow or share rejoicing, making the ones most dear to her the first priority in time and the most important work of her life.

<sup>1</sup> *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (2010), s.v. "homemaker," March 4, 2010, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homemaker>.

<sup>2</sup> Dorothy Morrison, "My Turn," *Newsweek*, October 17, 1988, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Dorothy Kelley Patterson, *Where's Mom? The High Calling of Wives and Mothers* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 18.

Why would a woman want to read a book on being a homemaker? After almost half a century of marriage with opportunities to minister to women along the way, here are some goals in my heart for this project:

- A woman can learn the biblical model for the home and family through answers to theological questions like: Why did God design the family at the dawn of creation? Who makes up the family? How do they interface with one another?
- Who should be concerned about establishing a home? Does age, marital status, giftedness, and training have a part?
- What skills are needed to manage a household? How do you acquire those skills?
- Is homemaking to be distinctive when working from a biblical perspective? Are there resources, rituals, and steps to the practical implementation of this kind of homemaking?

Unfortunately, society has suffered some serious blows from the advance of feminism into the heart of the family. The survey done by Pat Ennis, which is described and evaluated in chapter 1, started our thinking and motivated us to move forward in this task. Clearly women want something more.

Preparation for this journey begins with God's design for the home as discussed in Genesis—that is, the creation order. God's principle for marriage as given at creation (Gen. 2:24) and then repeated three times in the New Testament (Matt. 19:4–6; Mark 10:5–9; Eph. 5:31) gives the foundation for a monogamous and permanent union. The paradigm for a homemaker as described in Proverbs 31 will be a pattern to study and embrace. The importance of the extended family is clearly established. These principles established in biblical foundations lift up a banner and call for a standard that is old in its origins but new in its rallying call.

The sanctity of life cannot be separated from the family. The value of a child as well as the discussion of troubling issues faced by women who are making choices concerning birth control and family planning come to the forefront in part 2. The responsibilities of mothers and fathers and even the family's value and care for aging saints and the special needs of the physically and mentally challenged are tough topics that demand wise instruction and careful planning within the family circle. Adoption is also very much a part of any discussion of parenting. Biblical principles on parenting address baby care, preschool education, childhood oversight, adolescent supervision, and young adult influence. Part 3 culminates with a helpful chapter on the building of faith through family worship.

Once the foundations are laid in the first three parts, attention moves to the practical aspects of establishing a household whether here in the United States or overseas. Life-management skills and routines for managing a household as well as addressing technology within the home offer new opportunities for more efficiency and broader horizons. Chapters about establishing a home-based business as well as consumer and financial considerations address money, budgets, and the importance of family resources. Interior design, as well as the selection of furnishings and accessories, is important for the comfort of your family and for the silent witness your home offers to the outside world. The importance of hospitality, woven throughout this volume, includes how to implement a welcoming spirit and gracious manner into your home.

The last two parts are even more specifically addressed to household functions largely ignored in the modern era. Part 5 begins with nutrition and food sanitation, which are essential to family health and meal planning and preparation. The organization of the kitchen and acquisition of equipment is included. Family mealtime and ideas for holiday celebrations provide a springboard for using your kitchen as a ministry.

Part 6 encompasses the making of wise clothing decisions, beginning with the ways your clothes frame your life message as well as your body, and underscores the importance of modesty. A basic understanding of textiles and principles of design lead into clothing selection and care.

The final parts, in addition to specialized and technical information, provide simple and clear instructions on what every homemaker needs to know in order to feed and clothe her family. The emphasis is not on becoming a chef or seamstress but rather on the importance of knowing enough about these subjects to manage your household. The user-friendly indexing and straightforward presentation of facts enables a novice to work her way through the maze of technical information.

Finally, anyone who loves homemaking, as do Pat Ennis and I, knows it is a demanding job, but the fringe benefits are terrific. You keep your attitude right by focusing on the results rather than on the process. Homemaking challenges you to walk the fine line of being able to accommodate others without losing your own identity. A happy homemaker performs even her monotonous duties and routine chores faithfully and patiently. In so doing she serves others and achieves greatness in the process. The Lord expects from every woman the joy of obedient service whatever her assignment, and the service she offers to her family and others is ultimately unto him.

A welcoming home need not be pretentious or ostentatious. Rather than

looking down at the world while flaunting her assets and giftedness, a woman can preside graciously and confidently over her humble abode. She can blend into its surroundings and effectively and efficiently meet the needs of its occupants as well as serving those who enter its doors. Behind the scenes a homemaker guides the daily activities and sets the pace for loving care and committed service. She is the angel of the hearth and the heart of the home. May the Lord use this book to revitalize homemaking in the hearts of Christian women. Use the “Attitude Check” that follows to examine your own life (James 1:22).

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 **AN ATTITUDE CHECK**   
for the Homemaker

- Appreciate God’s calling on your life to be a homemaker.
  - Visualize the overall purpose of your work.
  - Keep yourself at your best in appearance and health.
  - Strive without ceasing to keep your interfamily relationships as the most important in your life.
  - Learn good homemaking skills and fine-tune them by practice.
  - Choose women as friends who affirm your calling and happily encourage you.
  - Work diligently as unto the Lord and count your blessings.
-

For additional resources and updates,  
visit [www.BiblicalWoman.org](http://www.BiblicalWoman.org).

# THE *Ultimate* GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN HOMEMAKING

This one-stop reference tool gives you tips and training on everything from meal planning to interior decorating, biblical womanhood to budgeting, so that you can become a holistic homemaker! It features practical teaching from Scripture, instructions for do-it-yourself projects, application questions, helpful resources, a comprehensive index, and more.

With nearly 50 years of marriage experience, 30 years of college-level home economics instruction, and a commitment to biblical womanhood, the editors of *The Christian Homemaker's Handbook* have compiled this comprehensive manual for today's woman and her home.

"From time and life management skills, to building better relationships and much more, every chapter points women toward honoring and pleasing God while blessing others."

**ELIZABETH GEORGE,**  
Jim & Elizabeth George Ministries

"Listen carefully to these wonderful authors and their well-thought-out words of advice, counsel, and instruction."

**FRANK S. PAGE,**  
President & CEO, Executive Committee of the  
Southern Baptist Convention

"The timeless truths found in these pages will motivate every woman to pursue with passion her God-given calling and will encourage every husband to honor his wife."

**ROBERT JEFFRESS,**  
Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Dallas, TX

"Thoughtful essays on the important subjects of home and hospitality, as well as spiritual and personal health—helpful for individuals, groups, and churches."

**DAVID and LANESE DOCKERY,**  
President and First Lady, Union University



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CHRISTIAN LIVING