

WHAT'S A MOM TO DO? Part 1

BUILD YOUR HOME

7 Habits of Godly Moms

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What is a Home?

It could be a cave, or a teepee, a hut, or a shack, or a car; it could be underground, or in a tree; it could be a bungalow, or a mansion, or even a palace.

A home is not limited to a house. Home is where your family lives.

What are the components of a home?

We know some families include married parents, and others, unmarried parents. Some families have only one parent. Some families have foster parents. Some families are large, while others are small. But any family can have a home.

Home is not defined by a certain number of people in the family.

Home is not defined by the physical structure in which you live, nor the design or style or décor of your house.

Home is defined by the *relationships* of your family.

The Role Mom Plays

A mother's role in the relationships of the family is crucial. The Bible places her at the center of the family dynamics. How she conducts herself — spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, and physically — largely determines the condition of the home and family.

*Proverbs 14:1 A wise woman builds her home,
but a foolish woman tears it down with her own hands.*

"Tears it down with her own hands" has always invoked for me an image of arms flailing in a hysterical fit of panic or frustration or anger, while objects are flying off the shelves and crashing to the floor.

But the biblical word "foolish" indicates something usually quite different. Biblical foolishness is characterized as laziness, carelessness, and lack of common sense.

This reminds me of the old saying, "Aim at nothing and you're sure to hit it."

A foolish mother is the *opposite* of the woman of Proverbs 31, who is creative, entrepreneurial, diligent, strong, hard working, dignified, good-humored, and kind.

A foolish woman is so self-absorbed, focused on all that she *doesn't* have (complaining, whining, nagging, pouting, blame-shifting, over-protecting), that she advances the break-up of the precious relationships of her family and carelessly lets her home fall apart at her feet.

A wise woman, on the other hand, *builds* her home with prayerful and diligent forethought and hard work.

We all recognize that relationships tend to fall apart unless someone does the hard work of nurturing them. No one does that better or more effectively than mom!

No mom is perfect, or perfectly spiritual, but every mom can practice habits that will strengthen and build her home. There are many such habits, I suppose, and no mom will master them all, but every mom can reach for healthy balance by considering and working in seven significant areas.

Here, then, are seven habits of godly moms:

1. Value people more than things.

Every family is familiar with spilled milk and broken dishes. Sometimes, even precious things get damaged in the course of everyday life — in spite of safeguards and repeated instructions. But nothing in your household is more precious than your family members.

If you have items too precious to run the risk, then lock them away, in order to protect the family relationships from injured feelings.

Repairing a damaged person is more difficult than fixing broken glass. And damage done to persons affects not only that person but also others around that person and those who may follow that person.

Prepare yourself for spills and breaks; they are inevitable. Then, even if the loss hurts you personally, you'll be able to avoid further damage due to wounded feelings and crushed dignity.

2. Trust your kids (but not too far).

Kids will be kids, but not forever. They will grow up. And, as they grow, they will want to try their wings. Growing kids like to experiment with self-government.

External discipline (like the kind parents employ to guide their children) should be aimed *not* at punishment (which offers little value at all in raising children) but at instructive training.

If you discipline in anger, your children will have difficulty learning their lesson due to the interfering emotional turmoil. Deal first with your own anger or hurt, then you can train, not punish, your child (even when the “rod of correction” is used).

The aim of external discipline is to develop *internal* discipline, or self-government. However, discipline alone is insufficient to produce it. Self-control is a fruit of the *Spirit*. In order for Him to develop it, kids must be given room to experiment (and fail).

Kids learn their best and longest-lasting lessons the same way you and I do: by trial and error.

Though it often feels like they are challenging our authority, most of the time they are really challenging themselves. Only when our “authority” interferes with this process as fearful, over-protective, smothering, and controlling behavior will kids fight back. Usually, they are just trying their wings.

So make room for it. Select the least dangerous circumstances to actively encourage their experimentation. Anything that can be repaired or replaced or thrown away would be an opportune object lesson, especially if it is *their* thing. Then their own feelings of regret become added tools to strengthen the lesson.

Give them guidance, appropriate warnings, and practice runs under your oversight, but then, let them try it on their own — like riding a bicycle for the first time. Will there be spills and scrapes? Sure. But the lessons learned and the trust received will be absolutely invaluable. This is how you help build self-confidence.

3. Keep your promises.

We trust God because of His words to us. Fulfilled prophecies and the evident unity and insightful wisdom of the Scriptures teach us to trust God’s character even in the areas about which He has said nothing.

As a parent, your word is your character. If you overpromise or habitually fail to keep promises you have made to your children, they will lose confidence in anything else you may say to them, including your instructions about life values or faith.

Avoid making a promise (“I’ll give you candy,” or “I’ll take you to the park.”) in order to quiet a child’s pleading, unless you thoughtfully intend to fulfill them. When you hear children who won’t take “No” for an answer, it is likely because they have grown accustomed to unfulfilled promises and no longer trust the word of their parent.

4. Provide security.

I’m not suggesting you hire a personal security guard or post an inflatable Hulk outside their bedroom window to ward off would-be intruders. I’m referring to the security that comes from knowing mom will be there, at the hub of family activities — to guide, to observe, to appreciate, to celebrate, to serve, to hold, to listen, to referee, to love without conditions — in the same ways that the Lord is always there for you.

If you cannot be with them physically, because of work or other obligations, at least let them know when you will be available or, better still, give them a way to contact you. Make up your mind right now that you will teach them to measure the appropriateness of their contacts with you when you are away, so you can avoid showing frustration when they call. If you tell them, “Call me anytime,” or “Knock on the door anytime,” be prepared to be interrupted and take it with a welcoming smile.

Don’t neglect the simple power of touch. To hold a child (of almost any age) in your lap or at your side while you watch TV or read, is preferable (if they also like the idea) to just being in the same room together. Although our kids are all grown, we still enjoy the occasional snuggle session (even a king size bed seems pretty small when you try to squeeze five or six adults into it at once!)

5. Promote socialization

Children (and adults, too) learn more from observation than from instruction. That's why Jesus spent so much time *with* His disciples. They followed Him from place to place and observed His behavior under various conditions. In this way, He "lived the Kingdom" before their eyes and became the primary illustration for the principles He taught them.

Children need a wide variety of relationships to observe how people behave with each other. In these ways they learn about good behaviors and bad behaviors and they develop their own identity, sometimes emulating others' behaviors, sometimes avoiding them.

Take them where other children play, so they can learn to play together. Bring other children to your home, so your children can learn to be hospitable, and other children can receive your hospitality and witness your faith.

Include children in adult gatherings, whenever it can be done appropriately. They will learn from observing adults relating to one another and they will become comfortable relating to adults themselves.

Take time to play with your children the games they want to play. Get down on their level and play like a kid, whenever you can. More life skills are learned in a playful atmosphere, then in an intensely instructive one, because play relaxes our defenses and opens our receptors. Take advantage of the power of play with your kids. You'll benefit from it, too!

6. Teach constructive skills

When children are young, any game or activity you can come up with that emphasizes balance or aim or coordination helps to develop skills that have universal applicability.

Don't always "do for" your kids. Show them how a project is done, then have them practice with you (at least the parts that are appropriate for their age and abilities). Finally, after practicing, let them do it while you observe and coach.

Baking cookies, painting walls, building bird houses, tying knots, vacuuming carpets, washing dishes, picking up trash at the park — these are all projects you can share with your children, and teach values and skills they will carry with them throughout their lives. Teach them "how (skills) and why (values)" to do the things you do.

7. Encourage practical faith

Don't send your children to church...*take* them! If it's not a primary value for you, it won't become one for them.

And don't *just* take them to church, unless you think that occupying a seat and going through the motions for 90 minutes on Sunday mornings is the sum of spiritual and religious exercise.

Teach your children your spiritual values where the "rubber meets the road": in your neighborhood and community. Have them help you bake a plate of cookies and deliver them to a new neighbor or a sick friend. Spend an hour at a rest home on a weekend just to visit with some of the loneliest people in the world. Take them with you to the homeless shelter to help prepare and serve a meal. Spend an hour or two on a Saturday sprucing up the church grounds before the doors are opened for visitors. Teach them, by example and instruction, to take all their cares and needs (and those of their family and friends) to the Lord in prayer.

In such ways, you will relate the deep truths of our faith to the nuts and bolts of our existence and raise them above the merely academic.

You're the Hub

Mom, God has placed you at the hub of your family, the very core of human society. Keep your eyes on the Master's blueprint, and your hands on the wheel of child-raising. Build your home solidly on the Word of God and build it diligently in the patient gentleness of the Spirit's power. The Lord Jesus Christ is with you, as you build your home!