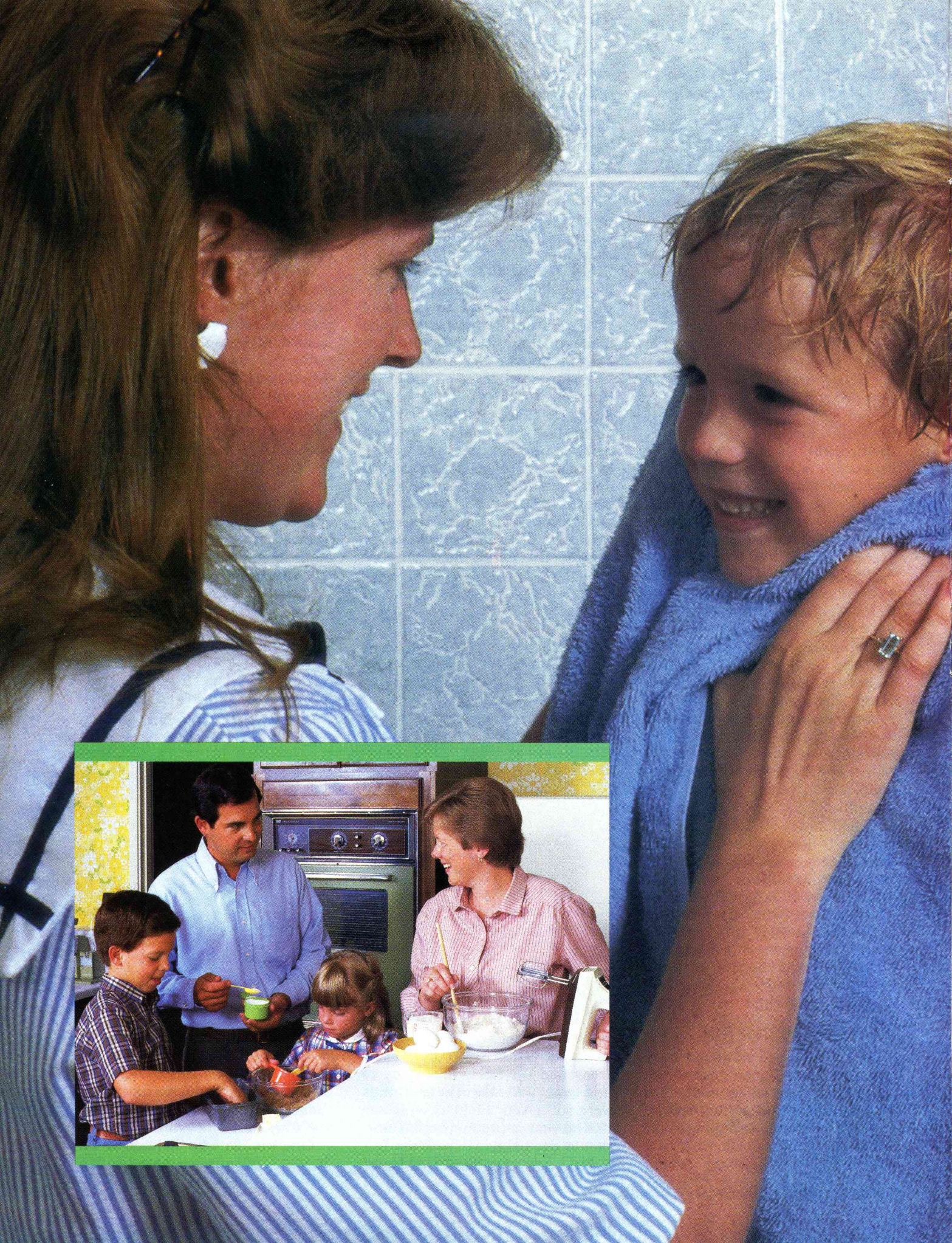






MOTHERS AND HOMEMAKERS Biblical Heroines!

The family is in trouble! Never has understanding God's point of view on the function of mothers and homemakers been more important.

By K. Neil Earle

Paradox of paradoxes! The family is that sacred institution God created as the warm haven and positive foundation for facing the storms and stresses of life successfully.

Yet today, far too often, the family is a ferment of psychological terror and even physical danger. The resultant emotional scars are sometimes nearly impossible to live with.

The family, the bedrock of all decent society, is in convulsion. The result? Staggering human tragedies and social problems piling atop one another like debris from an earthquake.

Bible prophecy stands fulfilled (Isa. 1:9)! Sodom and Gomorrah cannot be forestalled much longer (verse 10)!

Personality weaknesses, social fragmentation and hopelessness grip millions upon millions of people (II Tim. 3:1-4). Yet few seem to equate the skyrocketing rise of these problems with the

undermining of family life in the Western world.

A pillar of the family

Even into the 1960s, one pillar upholding the family was the mother and homemaker. Honor was attached to this responsibility. Yes, few other options existed. But the easy affluence of the 1960s, the growing presence of women in the work force and a generally self-seeking attitude on the part of everyone began to change that.

Increased mobility, the tediousness of modern life, the economic downturn (which fueled the need for two breadwinners) and the movement to "liberate" women all combined to erode the woman's position in the home.

So today, the hand that rocks the cradle is often that of the babysitter!

How tragic, for there is no satisfactory substitute for the sense of warmth and security generated by capable, concerned mothers. What else steers young

Photos by Hal Finch

minds and bodies through the minor but significant slips and starts of childhood, or the bewildering physical and emotional changes of adolescence?

What an enormous responsibility falls upon mothers! They bear the minute-by-minute supervision of their children, little personalities made in the miniature image of God. It is no joke that mothers need the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job, the watchfulness of an eagle (Deut. 32:11) and the stamina of a thoroughbred horse (S. of Sol. 1:9).

The stakes are literally life and

death. God's Word is emphatic: "The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it" (Prov. 30:17).

"Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands" (Prov. 14:1).

"A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother" (Prov. 10:1).

How unerringly accurate God's Word is! What a tragedy that for many people the later years of life

are not lightened and immeasurably gladdened with the sure knowledge of their children's successes. And all because of the lack of solid parental guidance in the early years (Prov. 17:25, 22:6).

Fight for the vision

What is happening to the institution of the family?

Our industrial societies value systematic efficiency and technical competence over the nurturing gifts prized by other generations (Matt. 24:12). Secretarial skills, keypunching, managerial

Home Economics: Becoming an Efficiency Expert

By Ann Hays

Food for the dinner table, clothing for the children and on occasion a night out — day-to-day money management weighs heavily on the minds of many.

You are not alone in your struggle to make ends meet. With high unemployment, inflated prices and devalued currency, homemakers the world over are faced with the battle of managing the funds available to them.

Providing the best possible services for your family is of primary importance. Every woman is in a position to greatly contribute to the financial stability of her family simply by using most effectively what money she has.

And in doing so, she can become an efficiency expert.

Buying less expensive items, buying less often, eliminating waste, making it yourself and simply doing without are a few of the many ways to save money.

These principles can be applied to many areas in your budget.

Family food budgeting

Certainly one of the biggest week-

ly expenditures in the home is food. An effective way to minimize grocery bills yet still provide nutritious, creative meals for the family is by efficient meal planning.

Before doing the weekly grocery shopping, plan the meals to be served during the coming week. Use the four food groups — milk and dairy products, grains and cereals, meats and proteins, fruits and vegetables — to meet nutritional needs. Be familiar enough with the alternatives within the groups to substitute certain items, based on store specials.

By putting this information down on paper, you will be able to ensure variety in your meal planning and have an organized shopping list at the same time.

Another important tip is to plan meals around foods that can be served in several different ways. This enables you not only to add variety to your meals but also to utilize leftovers more effectively.

The next step in your shopping strategy is to select a market that has the best buys and specials. Based on accessibility in your area, you may

want to consider a "no-frills" supermarket.

"No frills" generally means picking a product out of a cardboard box instead of neatly organized shelves and then bagging your own groceries at the checkout counter. You will save the cost of the service of these added conveniences on the price of the products you purchase.

When shopping, read labels for content, weight and grade. Purchasing the supermarket's own label or a generic name can provide additional savings without losing nutritional value. Buying cheaper cuts of meat can give you basically the same nutrients and taste if cooked properly.

Be aware of advertising and merchandising gimmicks. You don't want to be induced into buying a product that you don't really need.

Another way to save is by buying in bulk or large quantities. If the price is right and the product is something that your family regularly needs, you may want to consider stocking up. Don't be tempted to use these goods to excess, however, just because they are available.

In most areas, it is possible to include the use of coupons in your shopping strategy. Don't use them, however, on products you don't normally use or need. And check to see if another brand is less expensive.

Perhaps one of the biggest ways to stretch your food dollar is by eating at home. According to statistics released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, on the average, meals eaten out cost at least two and one-half times more than meals prepared at home. By preparing it yourself, you can also be certain of the quality

roles, computer operations, competing in business — that's where the action is, society tells us.

It's not that women should not acquire certain job skills, but solid, enduring human values like tact, patience, understanding and sympathy or the skillful and concerned direction of offspring based upon years of keen observation — these skills are often considered of lesser or no value.

"Surely you have things turned around!" exclaims the great God (Isa. 29:16).

This society is in desperate trouble (Matt. 24:22).

Even God's own people need to fight today for the vision of the mother's responsibility in the home. Indeed, there is no substitute for this responsibility.

God's viewpoint on the seemingly ordinary tasks of the everyday housewife is plain indeed (Prov. 11:29)! God in His Word lavishes praise on individual mothers as an enduring witness to their matchless contribution to His plan.

The example of godly women

God values the role of homemaker. He sees the mother's func-

tion as one of the best bulwarks against the encircling hopelessness of a dying civilization. Godly women have helped transform society more than once.

Sound farfetched? Then why did God place this record in His accounts of the kings of Judah?

"In the second year of Pekah . . . Jotham the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done" (II Kings 15:32-34).

Did you catch it? A righteous king, yes. But "his mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok." What more precious gift, what more outstanding contribution could a woman make to society than the steady character of a strong, wise leader, one who could turn God's blessings toward a whole nation?

Read on: "Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done" (II Kings 18:1-3).

Jedidah, wife of wicked King Amon, is praised in the same way (II Kings 22:1-2). Her son was Josiah, whose personal righteousness prolonged the life of his country (II Chron. 35:25).

What made these women so successful — what caused God to record their names for all eternity in His

Holy Bible (I Pet. 1:25)?

Jerusha, Abi and Jedidah had one thing in common: They found fulfillment in serving their families and pointing their children in

and preparation of the food your family eats.

Cutting clothing costs

Another area where costs can be cut is clothing. In most areas, clothing is seasonal. Just before the start of a new season is the time when prices are the highest. If you are able to wait until end-of-season sales, you will be able to save money.

Waiting can also help you avoid the pitfalls of the latest fad, which is not so fashionable in a few months. Plan your wardrobe around classic, timeless styles.

Buying quality clothing can save money in the long run, even though the initial cost may be greater. Purchase only what you are able. If you simply can't afford certain items, even a few accessories can give a new look to some old outfits.

Sewing your own clothes can result in significant savings. Developing your talent as a seamstress can also be a marketable skill.

One other way to save on clothing costs is by seeking out used-clothing stores. Also, check garage sales in more affluent neighborhoods. This can be particularly economical in the case of small children's clothing. Children often outgrow garments long before wearing them out.

Other ways to save

Have you ever considered bartering for the goods and services your family otherwise couldn't afford?

Bartering is simply a cashless exchange of merchandise, skills or services. It can be as simple as exchanging baby-sitting services for a neighbor chauffeuring your child to

school or other activities. A more complex exchange may be ironing, mending and sewing in return for music lessons for your child.

What about that occasional night out? Can you really afford it?

Recreation and leisure time spent with the whole family is extremely important. If dinner at a restaurant is simply unaffordable, consider having a picnic at a park. Commercial entertainment such as going to a movie can be quite expensive. An evening at home with popcorn and games can be just as much fun and more profitable. Even a weekend camping trip can be surprisingly inexpensive.

Home gardening, family haircuts at home — once you've become a trained efficiency expert, you'll think of many more ways to economize.



For more information on building financial stability in your family, write for our free booklet *Managing Your Personal Finances*. □

Make Yourself at Home!

By Colleen M. Gus

It's a welcome sight: your host and hostess standing at the door, holding it open wide as you get out of your car and head toward the house.

"Come on in and make yourself at home!" your host calls, with a smile of welcome. Whose spirits wouldn't rise at such a sight? You know you're in for some real hospitality.

A hospitable person, according to the dictionary, is "one who is disposed to entertain with generous kindness." Hospitality, then, is not just having a lot of parties, but showing genuine interest in people. It's an attitude of mind.

How can we practice this attitude when we share our homes with others? Here are a few pointers.

Inviting people

Real hospitality begins, not when the guests arrive, but even before the invitations are issued. Everyone likes to show hospitality to his or her friends, to those whose company is sure to be stimulating and enjoyable. But what about that widow with the three children? What about those new people in the area? These people appreciate hospitality even more than those who already have lots of friends and social opportunities.

Good hosts and hostesses think about the combinations of people they invite over together. For example, they might balance a guest list including several talkative, gregarious people with one or two quieter people who are better listeners.

Also, thoughtful hosts take care to invite people far enough in advance to make it convenient for them to plan, but not so far ahead as to make it awkward for them to refuse if they prefer not to come. (It's hard to say you're busy three months in advance!) A week or two in advance is just about right.

The host remembers to explain in detail the directions to his home, if the guests have not visited before. He might even provide them with a map.

He mentions what kind of clothing will be appropriate, and the parking arrangements.

Have you ever been the guest of someone who was so worried about the table, the dinner rolls and the mashed potatoes that he or she seemed to have no time for you? A truly hospitable host understands that, while the guests enjoy the decor and the food, they have really come to see him or her. This host plans ahead, taking care of as many details as possible before the guests arrive, so that he can enjoy visiting and fellowship with them.

Make guests comfortable

When the guests arrive, the host greets them warmly at the door and makes them feel welcome. "Hi, Mary! Hello, John! Glad you could make it. Did you find the place without any trouble?" He takes their wraps and shows them around the house.

A skilled host knows his guests may feel a little uncomfortable at first, being in a strange place and completely dependent on him. With his warm and friendly manner, he puts them at ease, and sees that their food, drink and other wants and needs are amply provided for. He tries to prevent any awkwardness or embarrassment for them.

The story is that a guest at one of Queen Victoria's dinners was overwhelmed by the finery and formality. When the servants brought out finger bowls, crystal bowls of water with flower petals floating inside, the awestruck guest looked around nervously, lifted his bowl to his lips and drank it — whereupon, Queen Victoria did the same! That gracious woman understood the importance of putting her guests at ease.

What about food?

In planning the food, his guests' preferences are a good host's prime considerations. He tries to find out

beforehand if they are allergic to some items, dislike some kinds of food, are watching their weight or are avoiding alcohol.

A good rule is to plan for one or two people more than are actually coming. That way, guests will feel welcome to take seconds if offered.

Of course, no one can be expected to entertain beyond his means. If he can't afford to have someone over for dinner, a person can practice hospitality by asking another in for cake and coffee or for popcorn, lemonade and a game of cards.

After-dinner conversation

After the meal is over, what should the host or hostess do? Rush to clear the table and wash the dishes? No, after-dinner conversation is often the best part of a visit. The guests are filled and happy, and the hosts are more relaxed because the bulk of the work is already past.

It is the host's responsibility to lead the conversation. To lead does not mean to dominate, but to focus on the guests, directing the topics toward them and their interests.

A gracious host or hostess is careful to see that no one is left out. He does not allow the conversation to dwell long on a topic to which only a few can contribute.

Many people enjoy a lively back-and-forth discussion. This can be fine, even desirable, if everyone takes it in fun and has a good time. But the moment a host senses that someone will have his or her feelings hurt, he smooths over the controversial point and changes the subject.

Ending the evening

Sometimes a host and hostess might be tempted to think they have done their jobs too well, for while they are exhausted, the guests linger on!

It is not wrong to give such seemingly oblivious guests a hint. Often, just standing to clear the table will be enough. If not, a subtle remark like "What a great time we've had today! How we've enjoyed your company!" might do the trick. Then try mentioning the time. A host knows he can entertain his guests more willingly next time if they don't overstay their welcome this time.

Showing hospitality is a superb — and pleasant — way to practice the *give way* of life. □