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THE HERALD

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Woman's Nature Is Home Making

By Abigail Dodds

“Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled” (Titus 2:3–5).

I have occasionally observed women (and men!) bristle when reminded of God's words from Paul to Titus on how Christian women ought to behave. The two phrases from Titus 2:3–5 that are most likely to make people bristle are: “working at home” and “submissive to their own husbands.” In this essay, I want to address the former.

More than once I've been told that simply quoting the “working at home” part to women oppresses them, as it keeps them out of the workforce and limits the development of their gifts. While I think that assessment makes a mockery of the

largeness of what home is, what it requires, and the weightiness of what it provides, more importantly, this line of thinking misses a fundamental reality undergirding the command to be “working at home.”

The Reality Under the Command

Think back to your first home—the very first place you ever lived. Think back on a home that saw loads of growth and development in you, one where you grew around 20 inches in only nine months! Think back on a home from before you had memories. We all had such a home inside our mother's womb.

Our first home was not made of walls or a foundation; it did not have a kitchen sink or refrigerator. Rather, our first home was a person, but not a random person either—it was our mother. Our mother's body provided the protection needed for safety and the nourishment needed for all that growth. She was the walls and the kitchen, the living room and the laundry room. And even after each baby is born, it is the mother who continues to provide food and comfort and safety from her body.

In light of women's bodies and their God-given design, doesn't it make sense

that God would see fit to tell women to be “working at home”? In essence, he is reminding us to do what he created us to do. All women are born daughters who are designed to potentially be mothers—that is to say, to be home-makers in various ways.

The Largeness of Our Task

G.K. Chesterton wisely said,

How can it be a large career to tell other people’s children about the Rule of Three [a writing technique], and a small career to tell one’s own children about the universe? How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone? No. A woman’s function is laborious, but because it is gigantic, not because it is minute. I will pity Mrs. Jones for the hugeness of her task; I will never pity her for its smallness.

To make a home—to keep it and pour yourself out for it—is not giving yourself to a building or to housekeeping or to laundry or to cooking or gardening or industry. To work at home and to pour yourself out for it is to give yourself with no strings attached to the people who live there, whether a husband or children or roommates or grandparents or friends. And giving ourselves for the well-being of other people’s growth and comfort and stability and health will require us to serve them by cleaning, laundry, cooking, managing logistics, perhaps growing food or making clothes or selling goods.¹

Good homes don’t just happen. They are worked at and created through much labor.

Just like a mother labors to bring children into the world, so too women labor to make home what it should be: fruitful, industrious, joyful, secure, lovely, hospitable—both a refuge of rest and a launching pad for growth. In making this kind of a home “a good home,” we remember that the curse of sin included exile, yet in Christ, we are given fellowship at His table. He makes His home with us. Our making of home for others is a wonderful foretaste of heavenly fellowship.

In J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo found safety in the Last Homely House, which he describes this way, “That house . . . was a perfect house, whether you like food or sleep, or storytelling or singing or just sitting and thinking best or a pleasant mixture of them all. Merely to be there was a cure for weariness, fear, and sadness.” I think it’s really possible to have a home that is a sort of cure for the cold, unforgiving world. But not without a homemaker. Not without a woman who has freely given herself to the work of the home.

Consider what such a home looks like. It is a place where the dad and mom smile at each other and the children laugh and tell loud jokes and elaborate stories and the whole place is wafting with a mixture of onions sautéing in butter alongside the baking bread and desserts in the oven. It is a daily concert that glows from a distance, thrumming with music and singing while the table is being cleared and the dishes done. It is a refuge where there’s often someone off in a corner reading, covered with a thick blanket or occasionally napping on the couch. If you have never seen such a

place, do not be so quick to reject its home-maker. In truth, it's hard to argue against such fullness, such beauty. Don't you want to make such a place possible for the people in your life? Don't you want to give your life to that important work?

Remember though, it's not the house itself that's the cure. It's not the precise food or the cozy blankets or the songs or stories themselves, even though those things are the necessary and blessed forms. The cure is Christ in that home—which is to say, Christ in the people, Christ causing a woman to walk in the good works and design He has prepared for her. Because of Christ, women can joyfully imitate the noble woman of Proverbs 31:27 who “looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.” Every person longs for a truly good home—what an immense and potent privilege to be tasked with pouring our lives out to make it so by God's grace. When a Christian woman works hard at home, sacrificially prioritizing the people God has given her, she beautifully adorns the grace of God that has been poured out for her by her Christ. She is a living testimony that the grace that saved her is the same grace that powerfully works in her to help her live a godly life in this present age (Titus 2:11). The world is in desperate need of such a testimony.

1 - Even secular research shows that families flourish when they live within the roles that God's word has given—producing happier wives who report greater sexual fulfillment. See Matthew D. Hammond and Chris G. Sibley, “Why Are Benevolent Sexists Happier?” *Sex Roles* 65, no. 5–6 (September 2011): 332–43; Sabino Kornrich, Julie Brines, and Katrina Leupp, “Egalitarianism, Housework, and Sexual Frequency in Marriage,” *American Sociological Review* 78, no. 1 (February 2013): 42.

The First Two Minutes Matter Most

By Tim Challies

It's obvious, I know. It's been said a million times by a million different people. But, in my defense, it's been forgotten by a million more. I've said it and neglected it too many times to count: The first two minutes matter most.

Today Christians are gathering all across the world for our worship services. We will read the Bible, sing the Bible, pray the Bible, preach the Bible, and learn better how to live out the Bible. Then the service will end and the first two minutes will matter most.

In the first two minutes, visitors will feel either awkward or welcome. In the first two minutes, unbelievers will feel either rejected or accepted. In the first two minutes, the lonely will feel either neglected or comforted. In the first two minutes, so many people will make the decision to stay or to go.

Here's the challenge: Determine right now that when the service ends, you will do your utmost to give the first two minutes to someone you don't know or to someone you don't know well. The temptation will be to turn straight to your friends, to immediately catch up with the people you know the best and love the most. There will be time for that. But first you can make a difference in someone's day and maybe even in someone's life if only you'll make the most of the moments following that final “amen.” It's the first two minutes that matter most.

FUNNIES

A crafty antique dealer is traveling through Wayne County when he spots a priceless Chippendale cabinet in a junk shop. He knows he will make thousands of dollars if he can persuade the shop owner that it is worthless. He offers the man five dollars, explaining that the only reason he is interested is that he needs some firewood and the wood should burn easily.

So the price is agreed upon and the dealer explains that he will return the next day with his van to pick up the cabinet.

The following morning, the dealer drives up and sees a pile of old wood sitting outside the shop. What's that?" he asked.

"It's the cabinet," says the shop owner. "I felt so guilty charging you five dollars for firewood that I've done you a favor and chopped it up for you."

One day a farmer came to pay his rent to a man whose love of money was very great. After settling the account, the farmer said, "I will give you a shilling if you let me go down to the vault and have a look at your money."

The farmer was permitted to see the piles of gold and silver in the miser's big chest. After gazing for a while the farmer said, "Now I am as well off as you are."

"How can that be?" asked the other man.

"Why, sir," said the farmer, "you never use any of this money. All you do with it is

just look at it. I have looked at it too, so I am just as rich as you are."

A district attorney was having trouble with one of the witnesses, a rather pugnacious old man.

"Are you acquainted with any of the jurors?" asked the D.A.

"More than half," grunted the witness.

"Are you willing to state on record that you know more than half of them?"

"The old man glanced at the jury box. "If it comes to that," he drawled. "I am willing to state on record that I know more than all of them put together."

Woman modeling a new hat before her husband: "It didn't cost a thing. It was marked down from \$20 to \$10, so I bought it with the \$10 I saved!"

I figured out why postage rates keep going up. They need extra money for storage.

At Sunday School they were teaching how God created everything, including human beings. Little Johnny seemed especially intent when they told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill, and said, "Johnny, what is the matter?"

Little Johnny responded, "I have pain in my side. I think I'm going to have a wife."