

# TIME FOR THE HOME

FOR MOTHERS



Anne Elliott



Realize  
**the stewardship  
YHVH has given you**

I will behave wisely in a perfect way.

Oh, when will You come to me?

I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

Psalms 101:2

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A young woman with dark, curly hair is looking down at a purple Holy Bible she is holding. The Bible has "HOLY BIBLE" printed on the cover. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with greenery. A yellow diagonal graphic element is in the top-left corner.

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# 01

## THE WAYS OF HER HOUSEHOLD

“She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness” (Proverbs 31:27).

If I look at all the characteristics of the Proverbs 31 woman, this verse seems to state the obvious:

- She works willingly with her hands (v. 13).
- She is like the merchants’ ships, bringing her food from afar (v. 14).
- She provides food for her household (v. 15).
- She plants a vineyard (v. 16).
- She has a high standard of excellence (v. 18).

- She works with all her might (v. 19).
- She helps the poor (v. 20).
- She has planned ahead for the winter (v. 21).

In Matthew 25:14-30, we read about a master who entrusted sums of money to three of his servants, according to the abilities that he knew they had.

Then he left on a journey.

Two of the servants were wise with the money, reinvesting it and making it grow. The third servant was afraid of the responsibility he’d been given, so he ignored it.

Wouldn’t you have loved to have been

<sup>1</sup> The Organized Homeschool, by Anne Elliott (Perry, MI: Foundations Press, 2020), p. 46.

one of the wise servants, to have heard your master applaud you?

“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21).

*“Well done, good and faithful servant.”*

What better words could a wife and mother hear?

*“Good job, Mom! You were faithful with the little jobs around your house, your hands were gentle and caring toward others, and you worked with all your heart.”*

It is very encouraging to know that when we are faithful in the small ways of a household—in the little things that no one sees—YHWH will reward us with responsibility over greater things.

“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48.)

1 Timothy 5:14 says that the younger women are to “marry, bear children, manage the house,” so that the enemy will have no opportunity to slander believers.

The words “manage the house” are one word in Greek: *oikodespoteō*. This word means to rule a house, and in this verse, it means to rule means to have dominion over and absolute authority.

We know that as women, we don't really have absolute authority. We have delegated absolute authority. First, our husbands often delegate much of the everyday running of the house to us. But more so, our Heavenly Father has delegated this arena to mankind.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (Genesis 1:26).

God created man in His own image, but God also has a dominion, a kingdom. He rules, but He has delegated the authority for His earthly creation to men and women.

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (Genesis 1:27).

Do you ever feel that changing diapers and doing dishes is just drudgery and has no eternal meaning at all? Do you wish you could do something that really mattered, something important for God's kingdom? It's normal to feel that way, for before you were born, God “set eternity in the hearts of men” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, NIV). You were made to long for eternity, to do something big for God.

What you need to realize is that the small task God has given to you today IS something big for God. He has given

you “dominion” over a tiny kingdom, and He’s watching to see if you’ll be a “good and faithful servant.”

Interestingly, our verse from Proverbs 31 says that we do this by not eating the bread of idleness.

Just as the third servant displeased his master by simply trying to avoid the task set before him, we often procrastinate on the unpleasant things. We reason that there is something more important to do.

But God wants us to rule well over our households, to be wise and faithful in everything He has delegated to our authority.

Some day we’ll stand before our King, in His holy city, and we want to hear Him

say, “Good job, Mama. You weren’t lazy. Instead you were industrious and caring and fruitful. I have big plans for my new world, so I set aside a nation of kings (and queens) and priests (1 Peter 2:9). Would you please be Queen of \_\_\_ for me? I know you’ll do a great job!”

But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

You go, Queen! Throw laziness out of your heart! You’ve got a kingdom to rule! “Give of your best to the Master!”

*~Anne*





# 02

## SURVIVING CLUTTER WHILE HOMESCHOOLING

*Written by Anne... when her children were all younger and still living at home*

In an ideal world, we would all have rooms in our homes that we could devote solely to homeschooling. We'd have plenty of space, plenty of bookshelves, and plenty of roomy cabinets. We'd have space on the walls for maps and charts, and we'd have a comfy corner for reading, cuddling, and projects.

In a realistic world, most of us use the dining room table for homeschooling. Around 15 years ago, when we lived in Minnesota, my husband made us a school room in our basement, but the basement was quite chilly and dark for much of the year. Inevitably, we contin-

ued to use the dining room table a lot.

In most of our other homes (and we've lived in nine homes plus a bus in our homeschooling years), we never had a dedicated school room. The dining room table has always been the best place for us to have school each day.

It's been like having a one-room school — in a house. As another mom recently commented,

"Our school room is our dining room (the only eating area since we have a galley-like kitchen). Our play rooms are the living room and the kids' rooms. So I feel very cluttered and "lived in" all the time. No pretty show house here. Open shelves of books in

the dining room, we have two china cabinets (one in the living room and one in the dining room), but one holds crafts and school supplies, while the other holds games and toys. We don't have the money to buy anything additional for storing and organizing, so we must put what we have to the best possible use."

I can relate! Our house is small, with a lot of children and activities.

So how does a mother survive the clutter and craziness that can reign on a Monday morning?

## *Eliminate Visual Clutter*

We can have nine bodies moving in our dining room at once (plus a yellow lab and two cats). It sometimes feels like nine rubber balls are bouncing randomly around the room. When the table is piled high with computers, pencils, books, hair brushes, salt shakers, mail, and baby bibs, and when little ones are playing with toys on the rug next to the table, and when pillows fall from the couch onto the floor — well, it can get a little overwhelming to my eyes.

Less really is more. The less clutter that is in the room to begin with, the more we can add in the form of school work, without it looking so crowded.

- Eliminate knick-knacks that serve no purpose.
- Have a consistent color scheme.

- If possible, go for a tailored, sleek look in curtains and furnishings. Avoid busy patterns and fabrics.
- Only allow things in the room that also serve a purpose. Pretty is good, but pretty and useful is better.

## *Have a Place for Everything*

You've heard the saying, "A place for everything and everything in its place." This is important, sanity-preserving advice in a busy homeschooling room.

- List all the activities which take place in the room each day. Do the things you use for each activity have a "home"? Have a spot for each thing, and then eliminate everything extra.
- Eliminate visual clutter by working to have matching baskets, by keeping bookshelves neat, and by using furniture that hides things (such as dressers, cabinets, and armoires).
- Get rid of everything you don't really use. Be ruthless! Do you really need 100 video tapes from the 1990s? Do you really need all that china? Do you really need so many books? (Gasp!)
- Children can have assigned seats around the table, too. In a large family like ours, we've found this really helps keep order.

## Create Storage Throughout the House

When space is tight, you get a chance to be creative with storage solutions. Who says that everything has to be stored right in your school room?

- We use plastic milk crates to hold each child's school books and supplies. In the morning, the kids bring their crates to the table, and at the end of school, they put them away on a shelf in the basement. At other times, we've stored their crates under the beds, in the garage, or even in the van on trips. The crates slide under their chairs, so it keeps the clutter down during school time.
- Other years, we've used inexpensive cloth grocery bags to hold school books. They don't last an entire school year, but it's cheap to replace them.
- We've also used kitchen space to hold school supplies. Often, kitchen cupboards are filled with items and gadgets that are rarely used. Why not clean out all that stuff and convert some of that space to school storage?
- In closets, my husband installed hooks along the walls and extra shelves up high. These hooks can hold bags filled with supplies, too.
- My husband also built bed frames for our beds from inexpensive 2×4 lumber. He built them up higher

than regular bed frames so that we could store large plastic totes under our beds. This has given us quite a bit more storage, at a very good price.

## Daily Upkeep Saves Sanity

It's fun to plan out how to organize everything, but if we don't maintain it, we've wasted our time.

- Just like you need a place for everything, you also need a time for everything. Schedule when you're going to pick up the room each day.
- Put things away before you get something else out.
- Teach the little ones to put their toys away before they get out new toys.
- Teach the older ones to put away each subject's materials before starting something new.
- If someone habitually forgets to put away her shoes, her book, or her toys, you might need to "help" her remember by charging a fine, confiscating it for a week, or asking her to put it away 30 times in a row.
- Don't allow drinks at the table with the school books. (Don't ask me how I learned this...)

## *Some Clutter Is Mental*

Sometimes the clutter just hurts my head.

- Reduce noise, if possible. We have hardwood floors, so our house can get noisy. Area rugs can help, as can pads on the bottoms of chairs. Pencils and spoons will still fall on the floor (bang!), but every little thing helps.
- Seek quiet times each day, away from “the crowd,” for prayer and Bible reading. Yeshua did!

- When you’re with the crowd kids, be “all there.” Don’t multi-task, or check email, or talk on the phone. Be mentally present with them.

You know, it’s great to get good ideas, but sometimes, it’s comes down to learning to be content with what you have. A thankful heart can make the most crowded conditions into a happy home.

I hope these ideas help you, but I also hope that I don’t stir up covetousness in any hearts. Make your home as lovely as you can, then let a thankful heart carry you the rest of the way.





# 03

## TIPS ON KEEPING A HOUSE CLEAN WITH MINIMUM EFFORT

### *Planning*

- It helps to make a list of everything you wish could be done to keep your house clean. Take several days to really think it through, writing down every job, from the simple things like wiping the toilet to the larger, seasonal jobs like cleaning the walls. Next, take your list and decide when you'll actually accomplish each task – daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally, or annually. You can find an exhaustive list in the book, *Home Comforts*, by Cheryl Mendelson.
- Decide who will do each chore. Be sure to include your children. They need to learn responsibility and life skills, but it's also good for their hearts to help their family members with a good attitude. Use a chore chart so there is no confusion about jobs.
- You will have to be consistently "tough" when establishing new cleaning habits. If you'll require each person to make his bed as soon as wakes up, for instance, it will soon become as natural as brushing his teeth. Until then, though, it's up to you to be sure all

jobs are done.

## *Daily*

- Make your bed as soon as you get up. If you start your day with this simple chore, you'll be more likely to keep the rest of the house clean, too.
- Put all the dirty clothes into hampers as soon as you take them off, rather than throwing them on the floor or in a closet. If you'll sort your clothes immediately, you'll save time.
- Wipe the bathroom counters, sinks, and toilet every day when you take your shower.
- Get in the habit of cleaning up the kitchen immediately after each meal, so that dirty dishes don't pile up. Wipe the table, countertops, and stove right away, too. You'll be discouraged if you procrastinate, because all the mess will harden and be much more difficult to clean later. Never, ever go to bed with a messy kitchen!
- If you have a busy household, you would be wise to vacuum and sweep high-traffic areas every day. Pay special attention to areas around the doors and eating areas.
- Only touch a piece of mail once, immediately sorting it into categories such as "bills," "to do," or even right into the trash can.

- Require your children to clean up their toys before playing with something new. Small messes are much easier to put away than large messes.
- Set rules about where family members eat. Only eating in the kitchen or dining room will save your furniture, carpet, and walls from stains, crumbs, crease, bad smells, and pests. Help your children learn that preventing a mess is a way to show love to the owner of a home.

## *Weekly*

- I like thoroughly cleaning my home one day per week. Others prefer to divide all their household chores over six days, so that they only have to do a little each day.
- On "Cleaning Day," divide the chores among all the family members, and spend time cleaning together. Work is always more pleasant when shared.
- Have supplies handy on each level of your home, so that you don't have to climb stairs to get a rag, spray bottle, or dust pan. Wear an apron while you clean, so you can put stray toys in the pockets or carry some supplies with you.
- Clean in an orderly way around the room, from left to right, or from high to low (to knock dust down).

- Race yourself, and clean as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- When a room is done, spray essential oils into the air, light a candle, or put a flower into a vase, to give you a “well done” feeling. <https://www.remnantremedy.net/idevaffiliate/idevaffiliate.php?id=128>

As soon as you realize something is too worn out to keep, throw it away immediately. If you no longer need it, put it in the “Give Away” box right away. If you aren’t using it but are sure you’ll use it later, put it in the attic or garage right away.

## *Monthly*

- Choose one room each month to completely organize and thoroughly clean. Spend some periods of time throughout the month, and by the end, it will look great.
- Have a designated box or plastic container for giving things away, to help you continually simplify.

## *Annually*

- We enjoy deep cleaning our home before major holidays, such as Passover or Sukkot. It’s especially fun at Passover to look in every corner and under every bed for dirt and leaven.





# 04

## IS IT OKAY TO USE PAPER PLATES?

"I apologize for the non-homeschool question, but I need some kitchen advice! I have a large family, and I am torn lately between using paper plates and cups for mealtimes or doing loads and loads of dishes three or more times a day. I would love to hear what other moms do or any tips! Thank you!" ~Annie

### **Anna replies:**

Oh my! I could have written this myself! I actually did purchase paper plates out of frustration. My husband asked me to get the biodegradable ones so that they are at least compostable, but they still

aren't the cheapest. I have to be honest. I LOVE not having to do the dishes. It is just a big load off of me.

I tried cutting back how many cups we had so that the kids had to use the same one, I tried not cooking at lunch, and a few other things. Nothing seemed to help.

So no it isn't the financially smartest thing, but it saves my sanity and that I think is worth more than the few extra \$\$ I spend on the disposables.

### **Jennifer replies:**

I alternate. I know the paper isn't good for the environment, and I feel guilty, but

sometimes we are in a hurry or have had a long day. I too would have to do 2-3 loads daily.

**Kate replies:**

Running the dishwasher is less damaging to the environment. The other goes in a landfill, and we are running out of room. Use an environmentally friendly product like Seventh Generation dishwasher soap. Make a chore list, and have the kids help!

**Janelle replies:**

I know it is not earth friendly.... but I use paper plates for the ease. If I had a dishwasher, I would use it, but mine bit the dust. There is no way I can do it all, laundry, cook, dishes, school, etc. So, paper plates is one area I give into.

We still use a lot of dishes, and I still have to wash them several times a day, but it is easier to manage. I have my teen put away the clean dishes, but I am the only one that washes them (only because, clean dishes is the only area I want perfection; I want to pull out a clean dish to use, not one with last weeks crusty cheese left on it!).

**Angela replies:**

I wish I had a dishwasher. :-)

**Shanee replies:**

I always advise that a kid older then like 8 can easily do a set of dishes. And then I try and not use them for lunch to help out. And I don't use normal plates on Sabbath to really give me a day of rest.

**Micki replies:**

At Sukkot everyone has their own eating ware and is responsible for it. Perhaps you could do something similar?

Also, do it the [Flylady](#) way—you can do anything in 15 minutes! For myself, I have the sink all ready to go with soapy water before I start cooking. Doing dishes as we go makes all the difference!

**Liz replies:**

I'm from a large family, and we didn't have a dishwasher. The load should not fall on Mom! Get the kids involved with the post-meal dishes, and it becomes a 20-minute part of the day, three times a day.

**Kendra replies:**

Well, we live in an apartment with no dishwasher, so we use paper plates for breakfast and lunch. For dinner we use regular plates.

I also save on washing a ton of cups daily in that I purchased lidded cups for each person in the family, and we just rinse and reuse the same cup all day long. It gets washed at night and ready for the next day.

**Kelly replies:**

I know it's still a dish to clean, but we use melamine plates and bowls so we can eat outside (no indoor clean-up) and they don't break. Our family is huge on environmental issues. We also plan simple meals with minimum clean-up.

**Michelle replies:**

I would use the paper sometimes, but I would also say that if your oldest are around 5 or 6 years old, there is absolutely no reason they can't be washing. If you have several dishwasher loads full, washing by hand is faster anyway.

However, I understand that you may NOT even have a dishwasher. But you have little ones. My 5 and 6 year old children both wash dishes for me all the time. They aren't always clean, and they get water on the floor, but after a year or two of practice, it will so be worth it.

**Jennifer replies:**

We use both, but I prefer not to use paper plates. I DO prefer to have the kids do the dishes, though I often help.

One thing I did when my kids were younger is that I gave each child a bowl, plate, and cup that was "theirs"... actually color coded since we have employed that system here... and then they needed to rinse their own dishes and could pull them back out of the dishwasher to use again.

**Amy replies:**

I have 4 boys, and I'm pregnant. I use paper plates for lunches and whenever company is over. I don't have a dishwasher, and probably won't for another 3-4 months (basically after baby comes). I do use regular silverware, bowls, and cups. (We mainly drink water, so everyone keeps the same water cup for a couple of days before getting a new one).

If I had a dishwasher, I'd still probably use paper plates, cups, and napkins for company but not for everyday. I don't like feeling like I'm wasting money, but I have to balance the monetary & environmental cost with how I use the precious energy I have each day.

When I get my dishwasher, I will train my older three children to load/unload, and my oldest (10) is learning how to help handwash dishes right now. I don't expect a lot from him in that area currently because he already does most of the daily farm chores, vacuuming, and the next two oldest assist him in that and chasing after the toddler.

**Darci replies:**

We do the kid wash thing. Its dangerous with a newborn, 2, 4, and 6 year old. They break so many dishes.

Definitely go with plastic plates and cups, and watch your bakeware.

I cried when my 6 yr old chipped my favorite mixing bowl. Sometimes it's easier just to do it yourself. I am nursing the newborn all the time, and my husband just has the older kids do the dishes... and it's a mess.

**Mary replies:**

On the busiest days I use paper with plastic forks.

**Ann replies:**

To expand on easing the kids into "chores," they can also be doing their own laundry by the time they are 8 or so. Mine have their own set of towels and sheets that it is their job to wash regu-

larly. If they don't have clean towels, not my problem.

**Hattie replies:**

I have 6 children, and I've assigned them their own color. Each child has a cup, plate, bowl and mug in their color. They are all responsible for washing and putting away their own stuff. Even a child as young as 3 can do it properly with a good stool or with help from an older sibling.

The rest of the dishes are done by an older child. I am never afraid to pull out the paper in a pinch though!

**Jennifer T. replies:**

Not everyone is blessed with a dishwasher. It's easy to load the dishwasher 1, 2, 3, or more times a day. Big deal.

For those of us who have had to live without a dishwasher, or for those of us who ARE the dishwasher in our homes, paper plates do help to cut down on the amount of time we are standing at the sink, handwashing all the dishes a big family can dirty.

I do agree that the kids can help, IF you have older kids that understand that the dishes should be cleaned on EVERY possible surface, not just the top...

The great thing about paper products is they are biodegradable and more trees can be planted. Moms don't need to be so bogged down in cleaning dishes and maintaining our homes that we neglect what made us moms in the first place. Finding practical time saving techniques to spend positive quality time with our

children shouldn't be a sense of shame.

**Michelle replies:**

We are a family of 6 and have no dishwasher either. We used to use paper plates and towels, but have since stopped all that.

It takes getting use to. My oldest son has been washing the dishes, and each other child is responsible for clearing the table and putting food away.

Take the time to train your children. Even my 5 year old can wash dishes. Teach them how to sort and wash laundry. This is a life skill they need to know.

If you're looking for enviro-friendly, look at the Seventh Generation website. Sometimes I can find coupons.

Hope this helps. Blessings.

**Erica replies:**

Handwashing dishes uses a LOT more water than a dishwasher. The few months we were without a dishwasher my water bill went through the roof.

When all the kids were little we used a lot more paper, now we use more dishes, but I have a dishwasher. We are able to burn our soiled paper garbage so they aren't going in the landfill.

I also used "boats" from Costco rather than full paper plates for most things. They are officially called food service trays.

**Bobbi replies:**

I think either way you're being resourceful. Using the dishwasher, you're not wasting paper, and using paper plates, you're saving water. That

being said, paper plates all the way! So much easier than all those dirty dishes!

**Michelle replies:**

Oh one other thing: I do inspect the dishes, and if he or any of my other children do not do them properly, I make them rewash them. It gets very old for them, so they tend to take their time as well to ensure a proper washing.

**Vickie replies:**

I can't remember who or where I read it, but someone did a comparison in price....paper vs dishes. With the amount of water, dishsoap, etc...the cost was virtually the same within a few pennies.

We use regular dishes the majority of the time. Each of the kids have a water cup with their name on it, and they sit stacked next to the frig. They drink water all day except for dinner. They each have assigned lunch plates that have to be handwashed. Everything else (except my stainless pots and pans) can go in the dishwasher. We run it every night.

Company is only Sabbath get togethers (occasionally), and depending on the meal is to what type dish we'll use (glass or paper).

Each of my kids have a meal chore. A different person is washing/loading the dishes at each meal. So the weight doesn't fall on any one person's shoulder. A different child will set the table. It has worked out very well, and my sinks/counters rarely have any standing dishes in them. The kids know their

chores and they know what I expect of and from them.

**Sydney replies:**

Pray about it. If Yah leads your family in one direction or another, it doesn't mean another family's environmental issues have to be yours.

**Brandy replies:**

I honestly find that I can handwash dishes (then set them out to dry) quicker than I can rinse, load, unload, etc. the dishwasher.

We still use paper plates at times, but I just do small loads of dishes throughout the day as needed. It saves me time in the long run.

And, yes, the family knows that if you are about to use something that is currently "drying," you better use it instead of getting something else out of the cabinet. lol

**Allison replies:**

Paper plates all the way!!! At least for lunch and breakfast. For dinner, real plates, unless we are having pizza.

**Lorraine replies:**

We do not have a dishwasher. We use paper for breakfast and lunch most days, and we have the washable plastic cups from Walmart in different bright colors, and I assign the kids each a cup in a different color so I only have to wash one cup per person each day.

I also line baking dishes or the crock-pot with oil to avoid having to scrub a lot of pans.

I still end up spending on average an hour a day hand washing dishes.

**Brandy replies:**

With our dishwasher, you have to rinse all the food off before you can put it in. The commercials they show with dirty dishes going straight into the dishwasher have never been possible here. I realized one day that by the time I rinse off the dish I could have already washed it and been done with it.....so that is when we switched to just handwash.

**Denise replies:**

Paper plates for lunch, regular plates for most dinners. Each kid has their own color cup they use daily. They just leave it in a particular spot on the counter.

**Andrea replies:**

I remember when the kids (5 of them) were little, I did go through a time where I needed to use paper plates for my sanity. Now that they are older and I can assign chores and the kids are good helpers, we use the regular dishes.

I had a dishwasher for 10+ years, and we used Corelle plates and cloth napkins all the time. In December we moved into a very large house in the country that needed a lot of work. I still have virtually no kitchen cabinets, no sink in the bathroom, no dishwasher, and the list goes on and on. Since this is a very stressful time for all of us, I have let up a little, and we do occasionally use paper plates.

However, we now have a well and, mostly, the kids wash the dishes. My oldest also mows the yard, cleans the

toilet, etc. My youngest helps fold clothes, dusts, sweeps, cleans off the table, etc. It is definitely worth it to teach the kids to help!

**Sarah replies:**

We do the same thing with colored plates, but we have had trouble finding enough different colors (5 kids here).

As for paper plates, we try to only resort to them in times of real need, such as illness, company, after a new baby....and I have rheumatoid arthritis, and some days are just bad days...we do the best we can, and try not to sweat it.

My kids and husband are amazing at picking up my slack! And we use cloth diapers, so when we do resort to paper products, I try not to feel bad. :-)

Also, one thing I try to do is plan for a "bowl" breakfast and a "plate" lunch, or vice versa. The kids unload the dishwasher while I make breakfast, then we run it after lunch. We unload it while prepping dinner, run it after dinner, and if there is too much for one load (rarely; we cook fairly simple dishes), then I'll run it once more after the kids are in bed. It's great to wake up to a load of clean dishes, and none dirty! Doesn't always happen, but it works pretty well! :-)

**Heidi Anne replies:**

I brought the stool in, and my children began to help more in the kitchen. I started this 5 years ago and it has been a blessing ever since!

**Shawna replies:**

We use paper towels a lot for lunch.

Sandwich, fruit and crackers fit well on it. Takes up a lot less trash than a plate. We also use them at breakfast for bages, toast, etc. If we use paper plates, we burn them with our leaves, etc. out back. We only burn the paper ones, not styrofoam. Cuts down on trash too.

**Geri replies:**

Clearing the table and scraping the plates is part of our boys' chores (11 & 9). We do have a dishwasher (portable) in our old kitchen. They both know how to load the dishwasher to a point.

I also try to handwash the pots & pans as I finish with them. We only use paper plates for messy snacks because of the landfill space they take up.

**LaShawn replies:**

My husband works for a manufacturing company that makes trash bags, paper plates etc. So I get my plates for free so I am biased, but they are compostable so that helps.

Even using paper plates we still have enough dishes to run several dishwasher loads a day. My older kids are responsible for all kitchen cleanup.

I say, use both, but have kids do the kitchen clean up. They need to learn.

**Shannon replies:**

We use paper plates at lunch or whenever we just have sandwiches, and the kids usually have toast for breakfast. Occasionally we will use paper for our supper.

**Angie replies:**

My suggestion would be to have the children wash their own dishes, if they are old enough, and buddy up for the younger ones. Give them each a bowl, plate, cup and silverware in the morning. Buy plastic so you don't have to worry about them breaking and getting cut.

When they are finished with a meal or snack, have them wash by hand. That way you are only washing yours, your husband's, and any dishes you use to cook with. This teaches the kids responsibility and relieves your work.

I do this in my home, and I only have three kids, ages 9, 6 and 2. Even my youngest attempts to wash hers, then I go behind her and finish.

**Jeannette replies:**

In our family of 7 children in the house, often with friends, we used paper plates. Often it would have been two loads in the dishwasher after every meal. We bought VERY inexpensive (CHEAP) paper plates, but used plastic plate liners. Seemed to decrease the negative effects of paper plates.

**Jill replies:**

We use paper for breakfast and lunch, and then real dishes for dinner time when dad is home. My two older ones each have a week of putting up dishes. My little one (4) helps to put things on the table and clear it, too. We all have our own water bottle that we use throughout the day for water, and they get washed at night.

Every family functions differently, and if you can't justify the cost either way, then do what works for you. That choice may be different as your kids grow. We have gone through phases already, and we adjust when we need to. If it stresses you out, do something different. :)

**Mandi replies:**

A dear sister I know has a very large family, and she faced the same dilemma. She decided to do a little research and experimenting to determine which was more cost effective and better on the environment. What she found was that washing dishes actually cost more than buying them, and surprisingly, because of all the water usage, was more taxing on the environment. They switched to using paper plates and such and have never looked back. :-)

**Stephanie replies:**

One thing I do for the kids is make them use toothpicks instead of forks! For cut-up chicken chunks, chunks of fruit, etc. Saves having to wash forks :)

**Lisa replies:**

Ha! I'm so cheap! We have color coated dishes which each child washes after breakfast and lunch. (But as I have more children, we're running out of colors...) We run the dishwasher every 24-48 hours. Sometimes I send 'em outside with sandwiches and paper towels.

Sanity and love at home are important as well as the environment and saving money. Finding the balance is always going to be an issue. Paper plates can

be burned or composted if you have the room.

And pat yourself on the back! 'Cause dishes are only a problem when the majority of your meals are the home cooked, nutritious, economical kind! Way to go, all you super moms! You don't want to know how some families eat and about all the trash collected from school lunch programs everyday.

**Janis replies:**

Growing up I laughingly said I was the dishwasher! Seriously, having your children participate and do things is wise; the whole burden should NOT fall on you. I am working to better implement this strategy with my children.

Right now the standard is that each one clears his/her own place, rinses the dishes and puts them either in the dishwasher (if it's dirty) or in a bin (if the dishwasher is clean).

Bottom line, they eventually need to know how to do dishes, laundry, cleaning, so it's beneficial both now and in the future to get them doing these things!

**Deb replies:**

I just read an encouraging book called [\*Large Family Logistics\*](#). I don't think it's a new book. It's just new to me! :-)

**J.J. replies:**

Annie, just keep at it. Keep praying, keep training, and keep breathing!! ;0)

Ours are 8, 7, 5, 3, and 1... and we have the same problem. I just send the older ones into the kitchen when the 1yo is occupied with something else. And

for the record, we generally use plastic plates but keep paper on hand for “those days.” Do what works for you!

**Annie:**

Thank you, sisters, for ALL for the encouragement!

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PROVERBS 31:25

STRENGTH  
& DIGNITY  
ARE HER CLOTHING;  
SHE LAUGHS  
*at the* TIME TO COME.

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