

“Our family is in its fifth year of homeschooling. We have six children.

I am usually very diligent and organized except that, in the last couple of years, I have not been successful in getting what I wanted done in school. I needed a plan and was frustrated with my lack of knowing how to go about creating one. I would try, but it would then fall apart because of all the little ones and the interruptions of the day.

When I saw Teri calling for people to be test pilots, I just knew that this was an answer to prayer. I was at the point of being desperate and despondent because of my frazzled school days. I wanted to be victorious and a joyful mother of my children, but I knew if I went on any more in the way I was going, I would be cast in the role of the Wicked Witch of the West.

So I went to work on my schedule, and it revolutionized my life! I was now feeling as though I really could do all I wanted to do and keep my sanity at the same time. There is a time slot for everything (devotions, exercise, computer, etc.).

I wasn't able to do my whole schedule all at once, but, little by little, I added to it until we were accomplishing much more than I ever dreamed we could! In those first weeks, where we only did half of my schedule, we accomplished much more than when we floundered around for a whole day without a schedule. Even on the days when we experienced blessed interruptions, I could keep calm and then quietly resume the next day . . . not worrying that we were going to be far behind since I knew that because I had been on a steady path it wouldn't take much to catch up.

I encourage all moms who have much to accomplish to consider this way of scheduling. I had looked at almost every organizational book there was, and I still couldn't get to where I wanted to be until I applied this method! It REALLY works, and it makes sense. It is a lot of fun; you won't be sorry you tried! Your children will rise up and call you blessed. Your husband will think that you are just the most wonderful woman who ever walked on the face of the earth . . . well, he will be pleased!”

—Corrie



## POWER OF A SCHEDULE

*Exhausted, Ashley collapsed into bed glancing at the clock—11:49 p.m. It's going to be another short night, she thought as she tried to gently settle herself so as not to disturb her already-sleeping husband. Despite weariness, sleep eluded her as memories of the day flooded her mind. She recalled her angry words and impatient spirit with the children during homeschooling time, and the guilt bit hard. Then she recalled her friend Julie who had dropped by to return the casserole pan and how she had been so embarrassed at the condition of the house that she did not invite her friend to come in.*

*Next Ashley's thoughts turned to the laundry she hadn't folded even though she stayed up way later than she had intended. She dreaded getting up and hearing the children bickering first thing in the morning, and she*

*knew she would never wake up early enough to spend time with the Lord before they were up.*

*What about all there was to accomplish tomorrow? She felt herself being pulled deeper and deeper into the abyss of discouragement. Being a stay-at-home mommy of four and homeschooling sure wasn't turning out to be what she had dreamed of before she was married.*

*Finally, in spite of the guilt associated with all the failures of the day and her racing mind, Ashley fell asleep. Only two hours later, startled from her dreams, Ashley realized the baby was crying. She hurried to his room to nurse him before he woke the other children. As she rocked her little man, the tears began streaming down her face. "Oh, Lord," she cried. "How can I keep this up? I need help."*

## Say “Good-bye” to Discouragement

Homeschooling moms can say “good-bye” to discouragement! How do we know? Because so many have shared with us about their discouraged, pre-schedule days and then the changes their scheduled life brought about. After the schedule, they are able to keep up, have a sense of accomplishment, see their children being diligent and responsible, and feel the joy and contentment in doing what they have longed for.

Pre-schedule, they were weary—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They were pressured and stressed. There simply did not seem to be enough of Mom to do all that had to be accomplished. If that is how you feel, we pray you will come to the realization that your current method (or lack thereof) is not working. What you need is “to work smarter not harder,” as the proven saying advises.

I have been Ashley. I have lived her life. I didn’t like it any more than Ashley did. As I cried out to the Lord, He gave a solution—a tool—a key—a helper—my personal assistant, so to speak. He showed me *scheduling*!

Is it possible for a homeschool mom to go from chaos, disorganization, time pressure, discouragement, and a stressful life to peace, contentment, productivity, and joy? I can answer with a resounding “Yes!” and so can the thousands of homeschooling moms who have learned how to schedule using this book. That is exciting for them and for us, and it can be for you as well.

## No Regrets

Surely every mom has lain in bed at night regretting not accomplishing important things while having spent time on urgent or non-critical things. A day is one thing to regret, but what about looking back over a week, a month, and even a year, thinking, “Oh Lord, I have not been preparing these children for life, and their childhood is passing. I am not being a good steward of these precious lives You have entrusted to me.”

Dear, dear, Mom, now consider looking back over five, ten, or even fifteen years, with regrets of wasted time that could have been used to prepare your children for life—precious time that is now gone for eternity. Do you want your children’s graduations—their passage into adult life—to be a time of great joy and not one of regrets?

What if you wasted only one hour out of a six-hour school day for 36 school weeks? Maybe that doesn’t sound like much, but it is at least 180 hours a year! That is equivalent to over *30 additional days* of preparation, training, and teaching for life for each year that wasted one school hour per day!

Often we hear from scheduling moms that they accomplish more in the morning with a schedule than they did all day before scheduling. That means they are benefiting from an extra three hours a day that were previously wasted.

By being productive with your time, you choose the path of being responsible not only for your time but for the children God has given you. You will reap great rewards, and your children are the winners.

## What Is Scheduling?

What, exactly, is a schedule? It is a preplanned trip itinerary for your day that enables you to achieve what you need to do, when you need to do it.

A schedule is a written plan for ordering your day and your children's day. Because you tie activities to specific times you won't waste precious time.

Then as everyone has the schedule memorized, it is like being in an airplane efficiently covering great distances while on autopilot—well almost.

Here are some other ways you might picture a schedule:

- A recipe for your day—giving you a delightful, lingering, satisfying taste after your day is finished. It is like chocolate chip cookies baking—you know that rich buttery smell. When those cookies are done, there is nothing better than eating a gooey, chocolate chip cookie.
- A shoe horn, gently easing all the needs of your day into the time you have available.
- A friend.
- A personal assistant.

Your schedule is not:

- A taskmaster.
- An idol.
- A burden.

## Say Hello to Organization and Consistency

Each mother has a choice: Will she be a home manager or a daily victim of circumstances? We urge you to make the choice to be a victim no longer. Choose to manage your home the way an efficient manager does in the work force.

Picture an office manager who confidently approaches each day. He arrives at his desk at the same time. He knows what must be done and has scheduled time to do it. He knows there will be interruptions, but because he is disciplined, they won't set him back from his goals. He provides those who report to him with clear direction so they do not have to run to him after they have finished every task. They have regularly scheduled meetings with him and resolve most of their questions during that time so they don't interrupt him. The department is highly productive, surpassing other disorganized ones and as such, is recognized for its outstanding performance in the company. People love being a part of a winning team.

The business world has perfected the use of time management and schedules for productivity that organization and consistency bring about. In most books on business productivity, you will find time management information that includes scheduling. There is direction and purpose to the work hours when they are scheduled.

Scheduling helps the homeschooling mom work smarter. She's organized and consistent, enabling her to manage time demands. Scheduling is a powerful tool in the hands of a home manager, just as it is in the business world. If I can do it, and if all those homeschooling

moms who have read and applied *Managers of Their Homes* can do it, you can do it, too!

## Schedules Are Stress Busters

We get so excited when we think and talk about the benefits of a schedule. They are astronomical, and they are attainable for each mom who will make the choices needed to use a schedule.

A schedule provides a mother with the availability of spiritual resources to meet the various demands on her life because she has daily time with the Lord. She has the emotional energy necessary to deal with her life as a homeschooling mom because she has fewer decisions to make each day. Lastly, she will have physical energy because she is receiving essential rest and also exercise while still keeping up with her workload.

As tasks become routine with a schedule, they require less physical and emotional energy. As you learned to ride a bike, it was tough work because it required much emotional and physical effort. Soon, though, it became natural, and you sailed along, not giving it another thought.

In the same way, a normal day is easier without having to make numerous draining decisions, answer questions from family members concerning their direction, or figure out what you might try next. You start your day with a plan already in place. You know you will accomplish what you need to do throughout each day unless the Lord brings unexpected circumstances. You don't feel discouraged with

being overloaded and overworked because you have scheduled time to keep up with your tasks.

Your schedule can give you an “emotional sugar-high,” without the unhealthy calories! It is a fantastic, wonderful feeling to have the emotional resources you need to be pleasant with the children since your day is not in upheaval. A schedule lowers stress levels by bringing ordered direction to each day. I utilize stress-busting methods in my life. Won't you join me?

## Schedules Accomplish Priorities

Scheduling enables you to focus on your God-given priorities. Just like the aroma of those cookies in the oven, you know there is a sweet reward coming. At the end of the day when your head hits the pillow, your mind will be at peace knowing you accomplished what the Lord had for you that day.

Your schedule is your “free pass” to activities that are important to you, ones for which there never seemed to be enough available hours. What would you like to have time to do? Maybe it is your personal Bible reading and prayer time or reading to your children. Perhaps it is sewing, a craft project, ministry, exercise, or writing. Your schedule will give you a specific time for the desires of your heart.

At the end of the day, you will look back and see that your time was used according to your plan. The urgent did NOT push out the important. There was a set time to accomplish each of your priorities. What a feeling of peace you had as you looked back. Doesn't that sound like a day you would love to live?

## Schedules Work for Your Children

There is no reason for your children to say “I’m bored” or be at loose ends ever again when using a schedule. Scheduling gives direction to your children. They know what to do and when to do it. Throughout the day, this will save you from having to tell them what to do. They go to their schedule for directions on their chores, schoolwork, music practice, room upkeep, personal hygiene, and devotions. Great personal assistant, right? Even young children quickly learn the sequence and time of your schedule.

Think of the advantages your children will reap from having lived with a role model who has chosen to implement the discipline of scheduling, which yields an organized and planned life. As teens, they should have the skills to be able to schedule their time and should come to value their time. When they have outgrown your management of their schedules, they will be able to manage their own. We want to prepare our children for the future, and we realize that knowing how to make and use a schedule will facilitate them in whatever the Lord calls them to as adults.

## Schedules Welcome Babies

The use of scheduling can greatly facilitate your desire for children and delight in them. For some of these families, there isn’t joy at the discovery of a pregnancy. They wonder how they will manage their household, chaotic as it is, when they add yet another baby.

For a scheduled family, when Mom has her personal assistant on board, it is possible to be excited by the news of Mom’s pregnancy.

Part of this is because there is no fear of fitting a baby into your lives or the extra work he will entail because you have a schedule.

Baby news for a scheduling family can be like a magnificent sunrise compared to storm clouds on the horizon for the haphazard family.

## Schedules Cover the Unexpected

There will be times during the school year when Mom is sick, away for a day or more, or for some other reason unable to participate in her normal daily routine. What happens then? Does everything fall apart because Mom isn’t able to tell each family member what to do? It doesn’t have to be that way. A schedule makes it possible for the family to keep doing what they are supposed to be doing even when Mom isn’t fulfilling her normal role.

Scheduling can even provide the framework to support gracious flexibility when the Lord brings unforeseen events into the day. Having used a schedule to keep up with her life, a mother feels the freedom to meet unusual needs knowing her home and family have been properly cared for. If a friend calls desperately wanting counsel, Mom can take it while the rest of the family continues on the schedule that they know how to follow. When the call is finished, Mom can step back into the schedule knowing that her faithfulness to her duties has meant that this need did not cause a major disruption to the family. What a beautiful picture of Spirit-led ministry a schedule enables!

## We Follow God’s Example

God has given us a dynamic example and analogy of scheduling in the natural world. Everything He has created, from atoms to the

universe, has a periodic cycle. Year by year, seasons come at their “scheduled” times bringing with them predictable changes. Here we have a picture of our daily-life schedule. These change, too, as the “seasons” in our families change.

God has planned for interruptions to this seasonal pattern of creation. They come in the form of weather events—winter snowstorms, spring showers, summer thunderstorms—that blow in unplanned. They might be significant, fierce, and demanding, but oftentimes they are welcome, gentle, and refreshing. Mankind cannot change the storms but relies heavily on weather forecasts to prepare for what is coming.

Likewise, God allows storms of interruptions in our schedules, too. They can be as fierce and demanding as a medical emergency, or they can be as gentle and refreshing as an unexpected lunch date with your husband. Although we cannot eliminate these “storms,” we can prepare and mitigate their effects.

Observing God’s dealing with His universe can give us the pattern and motivation to choose to plan a schedule and put it into use in our homes.

## A Biblical Mandate for Scheduling

Paul tells the young widows in 1 Timothy 5:14, “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” This is powerful direction for us mothers to determine to guide and manage our homes.

It is a poor testimony to always be sinking under the burden of our home workload. Have you known mothers who looked tired and

worn whenever you saw them? Their faces do not indicate that they are joyful mothers whose Savior is bearing their burdens. Perhaps that is your picture.

Scheduling is a key to gaining victory over our circumstances and time usage. It is within the ability and grasp of every woman who will decide to follow this path.

## Starts in the Mind

It takes a conscious decision to manage and own the outcome of our homes rather than letting “them” be in charge of us. It begins with “Lord, I will do this.” When our thoughts are God’s thoughts, they go like this: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13); “... My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9); “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Jesus Christ, around Whom everything must revolve, is the wisdom behind our schedules. He hears and answers the prayers we pray when we are preparing to plan a schedule. He gives us the creativity to design a schedule. We go to Him if there are rough areas in the schedule when we put it into use. It is His energy and strength that enable us to maintain a schedule. He is the One Who allows interruptions to our day and the One Who teaches us to be flexible with a servant’s heart. We rely on the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ as we schedule. “Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God” (Psalm 20:7).

## Is Scheduling Only for Organized Moms?

Perhaps you think a schedule is only for those who are naturally organized. While it is true that those moms will gravitate to a schedule, it is false that the unorganized mom is not cut out for a schedule. Who needs it more than she does? Who has the most to gain? It is the mom who will tell us that she is the most disorganized woman in the world.

We have watched those moms transform as they began to schedule. Although we like to see their productivity and their organization, what we love the most is the excitement and joy they experience with these changes that they never thought would be possible.

### Is a Routine Enough?

Some moms tell us that they function on a routine—a plan in their head for the order of the day. That is certainly superior to no organizational thought, but the cream of the sweetness of the day is left behind. A routine in Mom's head is known only to Mom. She must not only remember it all but communicate it activity by activity to each of her children. With a routine, there is no guarantee that all necessary activities will be accomplished, which brings with it the stress of those that aren't.

The parts of the routine that are to happen early in the day are the most likely to be accomplished, and they are likely to push out those that are to happen later in the day. Ongoing, this means a significant amount of life may be falling through the cracks.

As one of our test moms put it so well, “Routine is subject to change at any given time, but when there is a written plan, you feel committed to it.”

## Scheduling Challenge

We take road trips because the destination is worth the effort and expense to get there. So it is with scheduling! You have started a fantastic journey. Keep your eyes on the destination ahead—a productive, peaceful home with no regrets.

My life has been so very blessed by using a schedule, and we have been able to help countless moms receive the same blessing—from very organized moms to those who tell us they are hopelessly unorganized. We love the “Ashleys” who come to us discouraged and desiring change because we know what their lives will be like when they begin using a schedule. Yours can be, too!

In this book, we are going to share with you Ashley's exciting scheduling journey. She will speak directly to us in future chapters to share with us her thoughts about her schedule. We hope you will choose to join Ashley and utilize the powerful tool of scheduling to bring productivity to your time, order to your home, contentment to your heart, and joy to your spirit.

We love the smell of fresh cookies and their savory taste when they come out of the oven. I delight in having a personal assistant, and I couldn't get my tight shoes on without that shoehorn. We think you will be as excited about using a schedule as Ashley and I am.

Wouldn't you love to be one of those happy scheduling moms? You have started the journey, and we are right beside you the whole way.