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## Module 1: Your Life, Your Story, Your Priorities

Where are you in your life right now? Currently, I'm a mom with five kids at home and five adult kids out of the house. I have four kids who live close (and grandkids, too!). I have one daughter in Europe with her family. My 92-year-old grandma lives with me, too.



I'm still writing books. I've written three this year. In addition, I write articles, and I have a podcast called **The Tricia Goyer Show**. I interview a guest every week for that. I also have an online subscription group for writers called **Write That Book**. I'm homeschooling, too. And that sounds like a lot.



I've chosen all the things I'm doing. They fit in my priorities.

I also have help. I have a house cleaner come once a week, and I have a few assistants who help with social media, my podcast, and other important stuff. And I'll talk about that later, too.

My life is full. There are also hard things ... HELLO 2020 (and 2021!). But "full life" doesn't have to mean crisis. And as much as I'm doing, I've said no to much, much more. What about you?



### Where are you in your life right now?

- With each passing year, does more and more get added to your plate, and you feel you're moving from crisis to crisis?
- Or maybe you had it figured out, but you've discovered what used to work no longer does.

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- Are you waiting for life to get back to normal?



- All moms work. Some work outside the home. Others work inside the home for your family or an employee. Of course, you'll need lots of Jesus, lots of passion, and love – but you really can work to the best of your ability and be a wonderful mom and wife at the same time!



- Maybe your trying to follow a dream. Or perhaps you're just trying to balance the life you have.



- If you feel frustrated, frazzled, and guilty, I promise, that is not the life God has for you. Instead, you can feel happy and fulfilled.



- You can discover the abundant life that God promises.
- “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” -Jesus.



- Coming up: getting control of your schedule, putting first things first, and involving your family in a well-run home.
- But first, you must realize change is possible.

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And that's what I mean by MANAGE. Manage means "be in charge of." Also, to direct and guide.

I'll be talking about **Managing Your Kids, Your Home, Your Marriage, and Your Work**. We will never be able to control any of these perfectly (especially the kids!). Unexpected things happen every day. Crisis comes up. But I will be giving you tools to help you direct and guide these areas of your life. And then redirect them as needed.

The goal in "managing" is not to direct everything with an iron fist ... no one will enjoy that! Instead, I'll help you choose what to focus on and when. And to do this well, we'll start making positive changes to choose our priorities and to only focus on what matters.

While it may seem impossible now, by the end of this course you'll know how to bring tranquility in your life.



As Ecclesiastes 4:6 says, "Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind." We're going to work on that "one handful with tranquillity" part. But, remember, you get to choose!



My chosen work-from-home career is writing and speaking, but you can make changes no matter what your work involves.



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I want to start by telling you my story because **I know what it's like to feel like you're at the end of your rope.**



Not long into my working-from-home-while-homeschooling years, there was a day when everything fell apart. I was **exhausted from homeschooling and writing** and mostly **feeling overwhelming guilt for following my dreams** when my kids always needed something. Finally, my husband came home from work hungry and tired – there were groceries on the counter, and my **kids were screaming and fighting**. I cried and said, “I can’t do this!”



That was a hard day, but it was a crucial day, too. Until that day, I thought, to be a work-from-home mom, **I had to do everything perfectly**—be a perfect homeschool parent, discipliner, and carpool driver. Perfect wife, cook, lover. An ideal writer, speaker, and volunteer.



But as followers of Jesus Christ, we're not called to perfection. We're called to walk in faith and freedom! There are so many verses that confirm that for us:

- 2 Corinthians 3:17 (ESV)- “Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”
- John 8:36 (ESV)- “If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.”
- Romans 8:2 (ESV)- “For the law of the spirit has set you free in Christ Jesus.”



For years, I wanted to prove my worth. Prove I didn't mess up my whole life by getting pregnant as a teenager.

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I also tried to prove my calling. I knew I felt called to write, but felt guilty for taking time away from my kids to do it, so I tried to make it up to them.

Finally, I tried to prove my ability. I wanted to be applauded for my clean house, my excellent worth, and my exceptional kids.



We want to fit in, belong, and for others to appreciate what we do. But we'll never be fully seen or feel truly significant by our efforts. We can only do so much and go so far before we burn out.



Proving ourselves is exhausting. A better way is to choose what's most important to us and, even more importantly, choose what is important to God.



**We often try to prove ourselves to unrealistic ideals** in our minds – like immaculate homes, well-mannered children, or working harder than others.

We are often **trying to make everyone happy**, but we are making ourselves exhausted in the process.

We are often trying to **please people who don't have our best interest in mind** and who don't have to face the consequences of our burnout (unlike our families).



We are **trying to fit into other people's molds** instead of discovering our true selves.

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**We feel guilty** asking for help.

**When we choose the right priorities**, everything falls into place.



Having the right priorities can help us

- 1) organize our time,
- 2) streamline our days, and
- 3) find a sense of tranquility even when our to-do list seems too large to handle.



Pause & Reflect: Pause this video and **make a list of ways you've been trying to prove yourself.**  
There is a worksheet for you.

In what unhealthy ways have you tried (or are trying) to "prove yourself" in your work or home, marriage, or parenting? What is the truth you are learning?



We're striving for better, not perfect.

It took many years, lots of prayer, and many strategies, but I feel like I've made great strides in balancing work and home life.



Still, for every "yeah" moment, there's a failure.

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- Yeah! Many times I've been in the writing flow, and I've patiently stopped to turn my attention to a kiddo who needed me.
- Fail! Many times I've been grumpy when I've had to put my work aside. After all, the work gets far more kudos and acclaim than playing Matchbox cars.
- Yeah! On most nights, I manage to make dinner, and we eat around the table as a family.
- Fail! I'm terrible about procrastinating, and the closer it gets to my book deadlines, my family is left to fend for themselves, or we get fast food.



But living in my freedom in Christ means I know that on my best days and my worst days, there is grace!



The Message version of 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, “My grace is enough; it’s all you need.”



Pause & reflect: Pause this video and make a list of your own “yeah” and “fail” moments. Then, across the paper, write “Grace is enough.”



So many people ask me, “How do you do it all? The truth is, I don’t! I have to forego some things to do other things. Throughout this course, I’ll walk you through exactly how and when to do that.

Perhaps the most important step to balancing your life, though, is to figure out what YOUR priorities are.

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For years I did the things I thought EVERY mom should do.

I cooked and cleaned.

I signed up my kids for activities and sports.

I volunteered at church.

Put on elaborate birthday parties for my kids.

Planned playdates and outings.

At the same time, I was trying to launch my writing career.

I was on the go constantly. I was stressed and overwhelmed. I felt like I was running in circles and not getting anywhere. I know now that I wasn't living my life from the core of who I was.



**Lack of purpose.** I hadn't decided what was most important to my family in the long run, and so I did everything.

**Lack of focus.** I had no vision for what I wanted my family to look like down the road, so I had no goal to shoot for.

The problem was, I had no vision for the future.

In upcoming modules, we're going to go into more detail about choosing your priorities for yourself, your family, and your schedule.



Still, we're going to start by tackling some big-picture questions:



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Where do you want your family to be ten years from now?

What do you want to accomplish as a family?

What do you want to accomplish as a couple?

What do you want to accomplish as an individual?



**More** big-picture questions:

What values and godly qualities do you want to embrace as a family?

What daily rituals do you want to be a part of your life?



Pause and Reflect:

**Homework:** - Pause this video and write out answers to these questions:

- Think about your family ten years from now. Where do you want to be?
- Where would you like to be five years from now?
- Where would you like to be next year?
- What do you want to accomplish as a family? What do you want to achieve as a couple? What do you want to accomplish as an individual?
- What values and godly qualities do you want to embrace as a family? As an individual? What daily rituals do you want to be a part of your life?



Taking time to consider what you desire for your future can help you pick your priorities now.

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I encourage you to go over these priorities individually and with your spouse. You can even talk about them with your older kids.

Also, take time to pray over your priorities and ask God to guide your thoughts. What does God think of your priorities?

Better yet, pray and ask, “God, what are your priorities for my family and I?”



Eleven years ago, I was perfectly content with my life. I had two adult kids and a teenager. I was writing and speaking. We had a great church. Then God placed adoption HEAVY on our hearts. John and I had a feeling we weren't supposed to graduate our last kid and move into empty nest mode. Instead, from 2010-2016 we adopted six kids!

Life looks radically different when we dared to ask, “God, what do you have for us? God, what are your dreams? What are your priorities?”



The good news is that God puts desires on our hearts and THEN He helps us fulfill them. When we focus on what matters most to God, He becomes the partner in our work.



Colossians 3:2-3 (The Voice) says:

Stay focused on what's above, not on earthly things, because your *old* life is dead and gone. Your *new* life is now hidden, enmeshed with the Anointed who is in God.

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God’s priorities should guide our priorities. Here’s a secret, instead of fighting for what we want (and not getting far), what if we focused on what God wants—what He puts on our hearts—and try that?



**Pause and Reflect:**

Pause this video and write out answers to these questions:

“God, what are your priorities for my family and I?”

What do you want to accomplish as a family?



While I want you to focus on the big picture, I also want to leave you with some encouragement and practical tips. First the encouragement.

My goal for the course is to help every mom, but I also have a heart for work-at-home moms trying to complete work projects for other people while balancing everything at home.

I want to end this first module by encouraging you that even though it’s easy to focus on all the hard stuff at being a work-at-home mom, there are benefits, too.

**Ways Being a Working Mom Benefits You**



1. Working from home helped me to use my skills to provide income for my family.
2. Working from home taught me how to juggle projects and focus on priorities.

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3. Working from home gave me the flexibility to serve in my church and community, which became a training ground for leadership skills.



4. Working at home provided a crash course in time management,
5. Working at home allowed me to depend on God more, which has wonderfully impacted every part of my life!



Working from home has expanded my prayer life. There have been times when I sit down at 9:00 to finally work and think, “I’d rather be scrubbing toilets, or doing ANYTHING else, except for this.” So I pray Isaiah 48:17: “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, and directs you in the way you should go” (NIV)



Other very practical benefits:

You get to spend more time with your kids.

You save money on childcare.

You save money on the commute, clothes, eating out, and other expenses.



You (often) have a flexible schedule.

You (often) get to pick work you enjoy.

You model a good work ethic, and new skills, for your kids.



**Homework:** If you're new at working from home, list the "benefits" your job will offer. If you've already been working from home, list the things it has taught you.

This list will be vital for you to glance at during hard days!



Finally, we're going to end this first module with some **high-level tips** for balancing your life. I know, there are already so many things to think about and ponder. And that's okay. Feel free to take your time. There's no rush. As for me, I just love sharing what I've learned in my 27 years of balancing kids and choosing to follow my dreams and work from home.

1. Take time to focus on God first. Spending even 10-15 minutes in the morning reading your Bible and praying can help get your mind and heart-centered on what's most important.
2. Pick two or three things to get done each day. This is my #1 tip. Long to-do lists are discouraging. So every night before I go to bed, I think of two or three important things to do each day, and I number them. It helps me to know exactly what to focus on. (And you'll hear me repeat this tip a few times in this course because it just works really well.)



3. Set aside time for fun and play. Just as important as picking things on the to-do list, it's important to schedule FUN ... and let the kids know. For example, I will set aside time to play Legos for 10-15 minutes with my son. Or I will ask one of my teens to make

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cookies with me. This helps me remember to relax and enjoy my life, and not just stress about all that needs to be done.

4. Schedule naps/quiet time, dinner, and bedtime. Kids thrive on schedules. For years I set aside 2:00-4:00 pm. as nap time. Then, when they got older, I hired a babysitter for this time, and when they didn't need to be watched so closely, this became their independent play/quiet time.

Also, we have dinner at 6:00 pm each night, and everyone knows that's when we'll all be gathering together. So, depending on what I'm cooking, I also know when to start making dinner. (We'll talk more about dinner, chores, and prepping meals in an upcoming module.)



5. Seek help. As soon as possible, find help. I'd barely started earning money, and I hired a teen girl to come to help clean my house once a week. I've also found older teens who could help with childcare for toddlers. Even having someone to play with my little kids 2-3 hours a day makes a huge difference. Also, I've found working with a virtual assistant helps, too. I like to hire people who know how to do things quickly for things that bog me down. I'll go into this more later, but the more I can work from my sweet spot, the more productive I will be.
6. Turn to God for wisdom and strength. No matter how well you plan, things WILL go wrong. The good news is that God can help you at any time of the day.



**Next Module: Module 2: Working and serving from your core**

Remember, you can find worksheets and tips in your workbook!

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## Module 2: Working and serving from your core

In part two we're going to talk about work and working with a purpose. There is work we all have to do: like housecleaning, laundry, cooking. And there is work that we feel called to do. This work comes from our core.



The thing is, we have to do both types of work. I can't stop cleaning or cooking simply because I feel passionate to write and speak. The heart of it comes down to service. When we work from a heart of service then *everything* will matter more.



- Focus on serving. I love this mantra that author and speaker Sam Horn replays in her mind when she gets up to speak “I am here to serve; not to show off. I am here to inspire; not to impress. I am here to make a difference, not make a name.”



- Think about your mantra for your home, your work, your service to God, and your family.



Mine is: “I want to live the type of life I want to write about. I want to serve others with the love of Jesus pouring through me.”



- Pause & reflect- Pause this video and write out your mantra!

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- Remember, Jesus didn't come to earth to impress. He had legions of angels at His disposal. He could have given His followers quite the show. But instead, he wanted to inspire them so they'd turn to God.

(And He made that possible!)

WE ARE HERE TO POINT OTHERS TO CHRIST



- **Hard truth:** You might do great work, but you might not be impressing others as much as you think. You may not impress those you work for. You might not impress your family with dinner or a clean house.
- But this is good news! Your children keep you humble, grounded, and eternally focused as you work from home.

It's easy not to get a "big head" about our work when we're having to clean up after our kids at the beginning, middle and end of our days.

This doesn't mean we give up or throw in the towel. Instead, we have the unique opportunity to shape our world.



### **Mom, it's Your Job to Shape Your World**

Everything we do, and everything we allow to enter our lives is up to us.

If we're stressed and overwhelmed (for the most part) it's because of the things we've allowed into our lives and the expectations we've put upon ourselves.



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Yet there is a better way. Let's get to shaping.



### **Form then fill**

God did this as he created the world. He formed the earth before He filled it.

We are made in the image of God. As moms, we shape, form, and create our world. In order to succeed we have to ask the right question. Not, "What do I need to do?" Rather, "How did God do it?" In the Creation story, God's wisdom is displayed.

First God formed. Then He filled!



In the first three days, God "formed." He established supportive systems necessary for life and man's existence. He created the heavens and the earth. He separated the waters from the land. He made the stars and sun. He built the framework that would sustain His creation.

The second three days, God filled. He filled His created world with plants, flowers, animals, and man.

Formed:

Day One = Light, formed heavens and earth

Filled:

Day Four = Filled with sun, moon, and stars

Formed:

Day Two = Separated water and sky

Filled:

Day Five = Filled with fish and birds

Formed:

Day Three = Formed land and vegetation

Filled:

Day Six = Filled with animals and man

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We have to form the world we're creating before we fill it.

We have territories, boundaries, and calendar white space to form BEFORE we start scheduling!



### **How to form your calendar before you fill it:**

There was a time when I was utterly overwhelmed, and John asked if we could sit down and go over my schedule to look at what I had committed to.



I listed everything out, and John had a great idea: to rate everything on a scale of one-four.

Ones: Things I had to do (i.e., Feeding the kids and homeschooling)

Twos: Things I should do (i.e., laundry, housecleaning)

Threes: Things I enjoyed doing that help me (i.e., exercise class, Bible study)

Fours: Things I did because I was afraid to say no. Or things I did because I wanted to look good.



### **Your choices today will make the days – and years-- to come so much easier!**

After everything was listed, I started by cutting out all of the fours. Then, I cut out some of the threes, realizing that even though they were good, it wasn't the right season for them.

Pick 5-10 things you want to fill your calendar with (family dinners, church, time with God, your child's favorite sport, ETC)



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Evaluating my activities gave me a glimpse into my heart, and I realized that I was trying to get others and God to love me because of the things I did. I need to focus on the fact that God loves me already.

“When I focus on Him and His plans for me, I find peace—and have confidence in the things I choose, knowing I’m doing them for God alone.”



“Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.”—German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.



**Homework:** Now it’s your turn. List out all of your daily, weekly, and monthly commitments. Label them using the 1-4 system.

1. Things you have to do (feed children, get them dressed, homeschooling/homework, work projects, Bible study, and prayer).

2. Things you should do (laundry, cook dinner, bathe your kids, serve others, church attendance).

3. Things you want to do (things you enjoy doing/things that help you: Facebook, Bible study group, exercise class, coffee with a friend, your child’s favorite sport or activity).

4. Things you are doing to look good or are doing out of guilt (volunteering because you couldn’t say no, extra extracurricular activities, things that you think will make you a good mom)

- Now, cut out all the fours.
- Limit your threes
- Pick 5-10 things you want to fill your calendar with (family dinners, church, time with God, your child’s favorite sport, ETC)

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### **Module 3: Becoming the architect of your schedule**

One spring, I had a book deadline on April 1 and May 1, with a devotion project due on April 15. We moved to a new house on April 1, and I had various trips the week of our move and the week after. Along with that, I had a child in his last year of high school that I was homeschooling, a toddler, and an additional family living with us. It was crazy!

So how did I manage that? How DO I manage that?



- First, I rely on my calendar and routines.
- I create slots for each thing I needed to do:
  - Morning quiet time
  - Time with my husband and kids
  - Homeschooling responsibilities
  - Running errands
  - Paying bills
  - Meetings
  - Phone interviews
  - Bible study
  - Blogs I need to write
  - Grocery shopping.... and so on.



• But my scheduling doesn't end there. Because no matter how I plan, life happens. Thankfully, even when I set a course, I know there is someone who determines the way.



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- I consult God.
  - Each morning, I held my schedule up to God and asked Him what He wants to do with my day.

It may seem strange to ask God. I don't hear an audible voice. Instead, as I sit quietly in prayer, I get a "sense" of things I should do and things I shouldn't do.

There was a time when I was offered a multiple book contract. When I thought about it, there was a heaviness that came over me. Even though I wanted to do it, I had this feeling that I should not do it. Good thing, too. A few months later, my grandmother, who lives with us, broke her back. For the next six months, I was her caretaker. I had to wake up multiple times a night and help her throughout the day. There is no way I could have written those books. God knew.



### **I Consult Others**

- I also have many wise people speaking into my life, including my husband and my agent.

I talk about writing ideas with my agent. I talk about everything with John – every kid activity, every speaking request, every weekend activity, everything. We plan our grocery list together. We talk about bills. Wise people in my life give me insight and help me make better decisions.

And it's important to remember, no matter how much we plan and schedule, we will not get it all done. We will never get it all done. And that's okay.



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**“Any progress is still progress”** - This is a quote from my friend Traci Depree, and I’ve created a motto: **“Just do what you can.”**



When the house is messy, and I have 15 minutes to clean, I say, “just do what you can.” I can unload the dishwasher or sweep the floor in 5 minutes. When I have a writing deadline but only 10 minutes to work, I use the time to jot notes or write compelling dialogue. Too often, we feel like if we don’t have an hour to do something, it’s not worth doing-- but the truth is, little moments of progress add up.



Little moments of progress add up.

Where can you find little moments in your day?



**Homework:** Now it’s your turn. Figure out a method to keep track of your schedule. Whatever you choose, start writing in it right away.

Coming next:

**Part 4: Successful (not stressful) family living**

#### **Part 4: Successful (not stressful) family living**

- **STORY-** A number of years ago, I spoke to a friend on the phone, spilling my scheduling concerns. I had books to write and kids to homeschool, but then day-to-day stuff would get in the way: my grandma (who lives with us) would ask me to run her into town, or my kids would ask me to pick things up for them at the store. My friend had a brilliant idea-: why didn't I designate one day to take my grandma into town, one day for shopping, and one day for freelance stuff? Not only was that great because I could plan for things, but my family would also feel like they weren't vying for little scraps of my attention.



It was amazing how one little idea changed my thinking. By scheduling certain things at certain times, and sticking to it, I accomplished two things. 1) I made sure the needs of my family members were met and 2) I scheduled time for the work I needed to get done.

Instead of being stressed, I felt success – like I was actually getting things done.



Often when we are feeling stressed the right question to ask is: “What’s a small fix to this problem?”

Let me explain.

Just as our three biological kids were launching into the world, John and I had felt drawn to adoption. In the course of six years we finalized the adoption of seven kids, six of them from foster care, each with numerous histories, hurts, and needs. Even though God placed the desire to adopt on our hearts, and even though we were giving children forever homes, it was one of the hardest periods of our lives. Anger, drama, fits, and hurt feelings happened on a daily basis as the kids struggled with the neglect and trauma from their pasts. Likewise, John and I struggled with losing every form of comfort, control, and cleanliness.

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Overrun with emotional kids, clutter, and laundry, I soon found myself falling into old habits. My needs multiplied as I ran nonstop to meet the needs of everyone in our home. And, not wanting any of these kids to feel unwanted or a burden, my mode of expression returned to grumbles—many voiced, but even more piling up inside, stacking one upon another, building a wall around my heart and stopping the few good emotions from breaking through. I had no joy. I had no order. I had no peace. Every day I woke up with dread. It would be another day where I had no control, and no hopes of gaining it. It was a recipe for disaster.

Knowing I needed help, I turned, during that time, to my friend and life coach Alice. Alice had been my life coach since 2009, and she'd helped me move through a lot of life changes.

One of the first activities Alice had me do was to get a piece of paper and on one side—in black ink—list everything I believed was wrong at this time.

I began my list:

- My house is always a mess.
- The laundry is never-ending.
- My work and writing are getting behind as I focus on the kids.
- The kids seem to always be angry and fighting.
- Nothing seems to be right. They grumble constantly.



There were about a dozen more things that I wrote, and then Alice asked me to read the list to her.

Remember what I said earlier, “Often when we are feeling stressed the right question to ask is: “What’s a small fix to this problem?””



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After seeing my issues, Alice gave me a new assignment. She wanted me to write a small fix for each issue in blue ink. For example, for, 'My house is always a mess,' you can write, 'My children are capable of helping me clean the house.'"

Just hearing those words kicked my mind into gear.

Small Fixes:

- Create a chore chart.
- Teach older kids to do laundry.
- Set 10-15 work hours a week and hire some to oversee kids.
- No electronics for fighting.
- Share about grumbling/gratitude during family devotions.



- **Teamwork works-** I used to set myself up for failure assuming all the responsibility rested on my shoulders.

Two big fixes:

1. Ask for help. Most guys are eager to step up to the plate when given the chance!
2. Merge family time and chores. Chores can be a team effort, and that leaves more time for playtime, too!

Offering to help, John's idea was to merge family time and chores. Tasks like raking leaves and cleaning out the garage can be a team effort. and that leaves more time for playtime, too!



Principles for Successful Family Living

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- Here are some principles we laid out to help:



### 1. Focus on Family

- Slide: **“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.” - Annie Dillard, author**
- I’ve been guilty of focusing on the wrong things-- worrying about what my neighbor thinks about the weeds in my flower bed, for instance, and ignoring the fact that John and I haven’t had a heart-to-heart in weeks. Or, I’ll spend an hour decorating cookies for the church bake sale but tell my family to fend for themselves for dinner.



Jesus said, **“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul? -Mark 8:36**



- Likewise, what does it profit my family if I’m a great volunteer, have a perfect flower bed, or keep in shape through daily exercise, but I don’t spend time with the people I’ve committed to love forever? Of course, focusing on family may look different on different days, but I have to choose them first.



### 2. Step out of the safety zone

- Don’t get me wrong, I still worry about someone stopping by unexpectedly and judging me for my house.



- My nature is to live a safe, simple life. I want to have a clean house and complete control over every part of my life. But the truth is, that's just not possible as a work-from-home mom. I can't work, care for kids, and keep my house perfect all the time. I've learned that people will still love me if my house isn't clean, and life won't fall apart if I leave the dirty dishes in the sink overnight.

As a work-at-home mom, it's not always possible to have a perfect house, perfect kids, and do work that matters. I have to have balance.



**Truth:**

- So what if everything isn't perfect, especially if perfection means a cranky, frantic family?
- Instead, I'm trying to pay closer attention to the messages I send to my family. I never want them to feel like the house is more important than they are.



“Every day is important. So if my house isn't beautiful, I'll try to make my heart more beautiful to compensate!”



**3. Remember that rigid people are brittle and break easily**

- Have you ever felt so tense and rigid that if one more responsibility is placed on your back, you'll break? Me too.
- I'm learning to be flexible and give myself grace as God gives me grace. I can quickly bring down my family's morale by having unrealistic expectations for things that don't matter. I don't want to create rigid little people who break easily, either. I need to be

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intentional about who I am in ALL parts of my life: my work, relationships with my family, and attitude.



- Intentionality can be a lifestyle. This doesn't mean over-scheduling my life-- it means looking at my to-do list and deciding what matters in light of being intentional.



- Most spiritual success doesn't come when things go perfectly. It comes when the house is a mess, the kids act up, and I miss a deadline. But then, when I'm able to keep a godly attitude, I can remember that this journey is about love, faithfulness, obedience, and service in the long haul.

**Homework:** Get a piece of paper and jot down some answers to the following questions:

- How can I be more intentional about my daily living?
- How can I be more intentional about my attitude and heart?
- How can my family be part of the team and work together to benefit the home?
- How can I use my expectations to benefit me, not to hurt me?



**Coming Next: Part 5: Don't Do it All**

## Part 5: Don't Do it All

- I get asked all the time, “How do you do it all”? My answer is always, “I don't!”



- Here's a list of things I haven't done lately:
  - I haven't
    - Put away my laundry
    - Dealt with the pile of mail in the kitchen
    - Had a weekly date night with my husband
    - Called to talk to long-distance family



But I'm learning to be OK not being able to do everything. Instead, I focus on what's most important:



- Time alone with God each day



- Some type of exercise
- Morning prayer and conversation with my husband



- Storytime, snuggle time, bath time, and playtime with my kids



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- Having at least one “focus on the eyes” conversation with each person in our home



- My most important work and most important deadlines
- “Future work,” like ideas and proposals
- Dinner together as a family and hang out time every day.



How do we know what’s most important?

- Key point: Only Jesus knows what’s important from an eternal standpoint, so I have to stay close to Him every day and let Him point out what I need to do.



- We can learn to listen to God’s voice concerning our work
  - Think about the men God called out in service to Him. Peter and James were called while they were fishing. Elijah was plowing. Moses was tending sheep.



Many times, Jesus taps you on the shoulder when you’re doing other stuff. I’d say 80 % of my best ideas come when I’m sweeping, doing laundry, or bathing kids. Try to write them down as you work!



- Have you ever heard the story of Operation Auca?

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- Many years ago, five missionaries ventured out to share the Good News of Jesus with a vicious tribe of people. They planned to fly into a remote area and share the love of Jesus with the tribe. However, when their plane landed, things went wrong. The tribesman turned against them, slaughtering them all. As a result, the missionaries never had a chance to tell of Jesus' love and died on the river rocks.
- Yet later, others followed, sharing the Good News. The hearts of the natives changed. And the stories of the men went all around the world, reaching many lives and becoming a major motion picture.



- Those missionaries couldn't have known how God would use them. In the same way, that's how we have to view the things God calls us to do. We may never understand how it fits into His plan, but sometimes, we may get a glimpse.



- This happened to me several summers ago...
  - **STORY- Gen X parenting book.** After conversations with other moms, I started thinking about how my generation's parenting is different from the one before me. I read some statistics about how divorce rates raised 300% while Gen Xers were being raised. As a result, Gen Xers tried to raise their kids differently than they had been raised. God put it on my heart to write a book for Gen X parents. I acted on the prompting, things fell into place quickly, and the book was published exactly a year after God first laid the idea on my heart. It was amazing to see God's hand in the whole process.

For every one of my 80 books there is a story behind it—a moment when I paid attention to what God was speaking around me and in my heart.



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- Takeaway: Are you willing to trust God with your work and your life? Are you ready to listen to his still, small voice?



- When I first prayed a prayer of surrender, giving my life to God, I said, “If you can do anything with my life, please do.”



Since then, there have been many times I’ve tried to take control back, but when I leave it in Jesus’ hands, He does more with it than I could ever ask or imagine.



- If you’re willing, pause this video and say this prayer: “Lord, give me the faith to believe that when You want me to do or not do a particular thing, You will find a way of letting me know.”



- Still, even when we put our lives into Jesus’ hands, I will get frustrated in the day-to-day moments. That’s when I have to remind myself that my decisions determine whether or not my day is amazing.



### **How To Make Today Miserable**

- Open your eyes in the morning and think about all you didn’t get done yesterday
- Push aside your Bible reading and jump into sorting that dirty laundry
- Compare your house/office/yard to the perfect pictures you see on Pinterest
- Remember what it used to feel like to wear your skinny jeans





### **How to Make Today Truly Amazing**

- Thank God for everything your new day holds
- Do something spontaneous with your husband
- Hug your kids and tell them what you appreciate about how God made them.



- Relax in your favorite part of the house for 10 minutes. Thank God for what he has provided
- Read your Bible and ask the Creator of the universe to guide your day.
- Go through your closet and pull out clothes you haven't worn in a while and give them to Goodwill.
- Appreciate your health and pray, asking God to help you in all areas you are weak.



**Homework:** Choose three things on the “make today amazing” list, and do them! Choose three more to do tomorrow, and so on.



Also today, choose a verse about giving thanks to God. Here are a few options:



“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.” 1 Chronicles 16:34



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“I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.” Psalm 9:1



“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.” Psalm 95:1-3



“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



Your day is up to you. What you choose ... Who you choose makes all the difference.

Next:

**Part 6: Being a mom AND following your God-given dreams**

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## **Part 6: Being a mom AND following your God-given dreams**

My face glows when I'm talking about my writing projects. I just get so excited. One day, I spoke to my friend Stacey, a mom of three little boys, and I saw a dreamy look in her eyes. She said, "I wish I had something of my own, some type of special purpose I knew was from God." Stacey's problem wasn't that she didn't have dreams – she did have dreams. They were just lying dormant in her heart. All she needed was someone to give her permission.



- So what are God's dreams for you? What are the dreams deep in your heart that you just need permission to let grow?



- Here are some questions to ask to find what God's dreams are for you:
  - "If I could be doing anything for God's kingdom, what would it be?"
  - "What is God asking me to do now in this season I'm in?"



### ***Permission to Dream & Freedom to Follow Through***

- Once we've permitted ourselves to dream, the next step is giving ourselves the freedom to follow through.



- Here's an acronym that has helped me:
  - F- Find time to spend with God. Ask Him to show you how to make the most of your potential



- R- Research the area you want to pursue. For example, if you desire to develop your talent in art, discover what's available at your local community college.



- E- Expect to make adjustments to your schedule. Focusing on God's calling for your life will not be easy. Make a list of your daily responsibilities and decide which are essential and which are simply time-consumers. Decide what duties follow the path God has called you to.



- E- Enjoy the process of striving towards your dreams. Oswald Chambers says in My Utmost for His Highest, "We have the idea that God is leading us toward a particular end or a desired goal; but He is not. What we see as only the process of reaching a particular end, God sees as the goal itself."



- D- Develop relationships with others who share the same talents and goals. Be available for encouragement and prayer.



- O-Openly communicates your dreams to your family and ask them to share theirs. Brainstorm ways to help one another reach God's best.



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- M- Make daily appointments with God to ensure you are on the right track. God will never ask you to follow Him if it means turning your back on your family.



- But to follow our God-given dreams, it's essential to care for ourselves and our creativity. Here are a few ways to do that

### **1. Find One Person Who Understands**

1. Many people will not understand what it means to balance working from home and being a parent. For instance—my husband lives with me but doesn't fully understand the writing part. If possible, find a few people who can “talk the talk” with you. For example, my friend Cindy is also a professional writer and mom of older and young kids. When we laugh, we share the humor and grace and ups and downs of the balancing act!



### **2. Care for Yourself**

1. On questionnaires, I'm often asked about my hobbies. Hello? I have ten kids, write numerous books a year, and run our teen mom support group. Who has time for hobbies?
2. While I don't take time for traditional hobbies, I do have some “me” time. I enjoy riding on my exercise bike and reading. I enjoy the morning quiet time before the kids are awake. I enjoy cooking, browsing through bookstores, libraries, and antique shops. I squeeze in time for haircuts and coffee with friends. It's crucial we take care of ourselves, not just for ourselves but for our family, too.
3. When we feel rested and healthy, our family benefits. If we aren't physically, spiritually, and emotionally healthy, what good will we be to anyone?



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### 3. Be Inspired

Being creative is hard when there are people, paperwork, and piles to manage. So when I feel uninspired, here are some things that help me:

- Call a friend with a good sense of humor.
  - Sit outside, listen to birdsongs, watch busy ants
  - Open a book of poetry. Absorb the symbolism and fresh word combinations
  - Open a cookbook and find a recipe you've never tried before, then go shopping
  - Visit Etsy. Enjoy the new colors, textures, and ideas.
  - Pray and thank God for His creativity. Thank Him for your favorite people, places, tastes, and the beauty of nature.
  - Read your favorite Bible verses in a version you don't usually read
- 
- Write a greeting card verse and send it to a particular person



### 4. Be Open to Change-

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”—Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*.



1. I’m a person who thrives on routine—but my life has also been one of constant change. Every day, we have new homeschool assignments and topics. I write new books on different subjects. I can’t count on summer breaks. I’ve been through BIG changes like leading Teen MOPS, living in the Czech Republic, moving 2,000 miles from the northwest to the south. The only thing that hasn’t changed is my kids needing me!

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2. But it seems like that change has been thrust upon me. Sometimes, if it were up to me, I'd stay home and live the same day over and over again. You might think I'd be frustrated with God for making me a person who likes routines and giving me an ever-changing life, but I'm thankful. It's in the constant change that I find and lean on Him.

3. Is there change happening in your life right now? That's to be expected! Are you hopeful yet anxious? That's understandable. Just realize God is waiting for you just beyond your comfort zone.



**Homework:** Jot down the four ways to take care of yourself and your creativity: 1) Find one person who understands, 2) Care for Yourself, 3) Be Inspired, and 4) Be Open to Change. Now, prayerfully write a few ideas under each category.



Next, what can you do to stay inspired on a day-to-day basis? Ask God to keep His spark of life and hope in you and give you ideas for staying close to him each day.

## Part 7: The Freedom of Knowing Yourself



- There was a time in my life that I was so busy serving God and working for Him that I didn't have time for Him. Does that remind you of someone? There's a story about two sisters in the Bible, Mary who sat at Jesus' feet and Martha who busily went about serving.



- "But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me,'" Luke 10:40 (ESV).
- Like Martha, you may think that tasks won't get done if you don't focus on them. And that may be true! Both Mary and Martha were doing good things, yet



- One problem with working from home is you never leave your work. It's always there. So we must ask ourselves what really needs to be done each day.



- Truths to Remember:
  - We are human and can only do so much in one day.



- Spending time with family, and spending time with God through Bible reading and prayer, are important things.



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Simple events like family dinners are good to have as priorities. They're the daily moments that will be cherished forever.

Now that I have grown children, these are the moments I miss and the moments I appreciate when we're all together.



- Important things will get pushed to the side if we let other projects press into that space.
- Creating a to-do list is like building a fence around the tasks that are **most important** that day.



That's why I want you to think about to-do lists differently. A to-do list shouldn't be a long list of everything that needs to be done. That's stressful and overwhelming. Instead, only consider two or three of the most important things.

This goes back to Module 1. Choose two or three of the most important things for your to-do list. Write those down. Do those first. If more gets done, fine. If you finish two or three things consider it a success.



- It's hard for me to ignore the needs I see around me. For instance, we live 15 minutes from inner-city Little Rock, and I know that there are teen moms who need help every day. But God keeps reminding me that while I can do some things, I can't do everything.

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I *can* do the tasks He asks me to do and recruit others for help. At the end of the day, I just have to trust Him.



- **BONUS TIP: Four Keys to Working Faster**

- Some people call me a speed writer. Maybe I am, but the reason is that I have a lot of practice! I've been writing since 1994. I write most days except Sundays. There are days I write far longer than three hours.
- So if I were to be conservative and say I've written 3 hours a day for 26 years (except for Sundays), that's over 24,000 hours! What could you accomplish if you had 24,000 hours of practice?

Don't feel as if you can't give three hours then it's not worth it. Even 30 minutes a day adds up!



- So the first tip to working faster is:
  - 1. Dedication: setting your mind on something even if it doesn't feel like you're succeeding**
- When I first started writing, I got dozens of rejection letters. Eventually, I started improving, my craft got more manageable, and I got faster at writing. But I had to persevere in the beginning without seeing any significant results.



- 2. Faith: knowing God will show up as you work**

- So many times, I've sat down to do my writing and stared at the blank page for 15 minutes, feeling discouraged. When that happens, I say a prayer and start thinking about

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why I want to write, and then just start writing, knowing in faith that God can do something more than I could ever imagine with it.

I have a prayer journal filled with urgent requests for God to show up, and He has 100% of the time.



### **3. Focus: Fixing your mind on the task at hand**

- No matter what you're doing, fast working happens when the television is off, the email is ignored, and the laundry sits and piles up. If you wait for your schedule to clear or compare yourself to people who have been doing your craft longer than you, you will never finish anything. You must focus on what you're doing at that moment.



### **4. Free Yourself Up: Letting go of negative thoughts and feelings**

- Especially if your craft is writing: if you are worried, stressed, or carrying around burdens from past sins, you won't work quickly. I learned through going to therapy with our adopted kids that if our emotional brains are turned on our thinking brains our turned off. It's impossible to worry and be creative at the same time.

Take the time to take all your worries, fears and even regrets to God. Hand those things over to Him and ask Him to do His good work in you.



Freedom inwardly allows your work to flow outwardly.

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Side note, you also can't give others what you don't have. The first five years of my writing journey was allowing God to bring forgiveness and healing to my life. As I was healed, I had more to share with others. I share from experience now, not from ideals. People know the difference.



Another way to find freedom is knowing WHO you are.

- **Understand your personal and family themes.** We spend so much time spilling our wheels in work and in life by trying to be like other people. Or trying to be some ideal that we set up in our minds. Instead, we need to understand who we are and who God made us to be.



- As a writer, I've tried to copy other writers and got only rejections. Now, I know who I am and what I can write. Throughout the years, I've come to understand my eight life and family themes. Finding your themes will be especially helpful if you are into the arts (writing, painting, or poetry) but it can also be beneficial if you are still searching for what kind of work you want to do.



- Why eight? A list of eight gives you enough space to express what's inside you, but it's not too much to scatter your intentions. When you can sum up who you are simply and accurately in eight points, you can abound with strength and passion.
- In Hebrew, the number eight is Sh'moneh, from the root Shah'meyn, "to make fat," "cover with fat," and "to super-abound." As a participle, it means "one who abounds in strength."



- Here are my eight things. I have many interests, so it took some time to figure out my core. These are things I write about, but more than that, **they are themes that I live.**

- **My Eight Life Themes**

- Hope beyond unplanned pregnancy
- Following God's dreams for your life
- Being shaped by God in your role as a wife and parent
- Stepping out of yourself to impact your community and world
- Mentoring
- Replacing lies with truth
- Finding hope in God's Promises (His Word)
- Adoption

Everything I choose to do, or everything I choose to write, will tie back to one of these areas. People think I write about a lot of different things, but each topic is centered in one of these areas.



- I've also identified eight focuses for my family
  - **Family meals** establish patterns of health, family togetherness, and community.
  - **Family service** to be ambassadors of Christ. As our children see us serve others, they know what our faith means to us doing missions work in the Czech Republic, volunteering at a pregnancy center, and attending a multi-ethnic church.
  - **The foundation of God's Word**—putting God's Word deep in our hearts builds a foundation that lasts a lifetime. We accomplish this through children's church, homeschooling, and the example we set when they see us doing our study.
  - **The power of story**—there's nothing like a story to ignite the imagination, so we spend a lot of time reading at night, writing, and communicating in story.

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- **Mentoring**, walking alongside those in personal relationships, and encouraging our children to do the same is essential. It's the same thing Jesus did with His disciples.
- **Friends matter!** We seek a healthy community for our kids through sports and other activities.
- **Traveling** allows us to enjoy God's world and each other.
- **Opening our home** to the elderly, emotionally needy, and orphans are foundational to our faith. James 1:27 (NIV) says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."



- I love sharing the idea of "eight" at conferences because I see lights going on all around the room. Figuring out our themes will help us know our life's purpose. Figuring out our purpose helps us determine our goals, and defining our goals helps us plan our days.

For example, because Bible learning and enjoying stories are important to me, I homeschool. Because family dinners are important, we limit extracurricular activities that take us away from dinners together as a family.

Yet, because friends and community matters, we join co-ops and attend church and church events. Because I know what's important to ME I know what to say yes to and what to say no to.

When you know your 8 life priorities you can make better decisions about everything in life.



- When you turn the 8 to the side, it's also the symbol of infinity! When you discover your life themes and commit them to God, the possibilities are endless.



**So how do you determine your themes?**

“All great books come from the heart of the author and from the essence of the author’s life experiences,” - Robin Jones Gunn.

I believe this goes beyond writing. All great work comes from our hearts and the essence of our life experiences.



- When you pay attention to the high spots and low points of your life, you’ll discover it was in those places that God did the most work.



**Robin Jones Gunn has been a mentor to me through the years,**

- Two questions Robin encouraged me to ask myself were:
  - What purpose has He given me?
  - What is His desire for my life?



- Robin encouraged me to write out my entire life story, paying attention to:
  - Key people who helped shape my choices or influenced me
  - Key events, some of which I had control over and others I had no control over
  - Key lessons I learned along the way
  - Key lies I and others told myself, some of which I still believe and need to cast off.

Each of these areas helped me to better understand who or what impacted me and how I, in turn, want to serve and influence others in positive ways. It also helped me to look at lies that were planted in my mind but have no right to stay.

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**Homework:** Now it's your turn! Write out your life story. Pay attention to the key themes listed above. Use that information to determine your eight life themes and eight family focuses.

Next: **Part 8: Balance isn't the goal; knowing God is**



## Part 8: Balance isn't the goal; knowing God is

- I've waited until the end to drop the bombshell. After everything we've talked about, balance isn't the goal. Knowing God is the goal.

What do I mean by this? As I've said over and over with each section, the most important thing is seeking God. Having a well-run and organized life matters little if we're missing out on a growing, thriving relationship with God.

Sometimes we want to be organized and balanced so we will feel capable. Yet, the temptation is leaving God behind.



- A quest for balance can lead to frustration and exhaustion. There will always be interruptions.
- Jesus wasn't balanced.
- Pastors Henry and Richard Blackaby pointed out that Jesus – and other people who God has used to make a huge difference—were noticeably unbalanced! For example, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting and praying, then spent days preaching to crowds, and other times prioritized meals with his disciples.



- “Jesus lived his life with passion but not necessarily with balance. Yet at the close of his life, he concluded, ‘I have glorified You on the earth by completing the work You gave Me to do’ (John 17:4). Likewise, at his death, Jesus triumphantly cried: ‘It is finished!’ (John 19:30).

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**What was his secret? He constantly sought his Father's agenda, and his Father consistently showed him what he should do that day."**

## **TURN PAGE**

Remember when I said that we can turn to God to know who or what to focus on? I always think about Zacchaeus. Crowds were pressing around Jesus, yet when He saw Zacchaeus, Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, come down. I'm going to your house today." So I always ask God to show me who my Zacchaeus is in my day. Who (or what) needs my attention and focus.



It's also important to be diligent about the work we've been given.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.  
Colossians 3:23 NIV



## **Scheduling Your Work**

Once you know your priorities, these tips are guaranteed to help you be more productive.



**1. Be realistic about how much time it will take to do an excellent job on that project.** Figure out how much time you need. . . and then double it. There will always be emergencies, kids who don't cooperate, and unproductive days.



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**2. Figure out the hours you are most productive.** For example, I write best when I've had quiet time with God, and my heart is full-to-overflowing, yet this is also the time my children start waking up and needing my attention.

I've started waking up earlier to capture these "golden" hours, even if that means I need a nap later.



**3. If possible, schedule office hours.** I can't create a set weekly schedule. I don't always work Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from noon to four (or whatever schedule that would be). My plan is flexible depending on what appointments or therapy my kids have, but I know it's work time during those hours. When I'm done, I'm done. I let my little know ahead of time that Mom is working, and give them a general time frame of when I'll be done.

There is nothing more frustrating for the kids and me to continue to work, not having the focus I need on my work, and not giving my kids the attention they need from me.



**4. Find a parenting helper.** For example, during my work time, I have someone come to the house and, if possible, take my kids out of the house to a park or other activity.

I've also swapped childcare with a friend at times. This works excellent for homeschooling moms, too.



**5. Set a schedule within a schedule.** I often break up my work hours into manageable chunks. I've trained myself to be able to concentrate for thirty-to-fifty minutes at a stretch, but anything more than

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that drains me—I soon find my mind wandering. So I write for fifty minutes, then answer emails or do social media for thirty.

Moving from project to project helps me not to become bored. Instead of shifting a few things ahead in significant steps, I move many things forward one or two steps.



**6. I give myself word count/project goals or a time goal, and then I set to work.** When the task or time is done, I can check email, get up and stretch, or switch to another task.



**7. I schedule the most demanding tasks first.** I don't like packaging books to mail, and I don't like phone calls, so I do these first. There are also writing projects that are harder than others. Once I get those things marked off my list, the rest comes easy!



**8. Don't let the chatter distract you.** I ignore most phone calls during my work hours. I turn off Facebook and Instagram. So many things want to pull my attention away, so I choose to mute the noise to focus on the project.



**9. Say yes to your family.** Just as you schedule in work time, make sure to schedule in fun family time. If possible, schedule time with your kids first.

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Your husband and kids have an easier time letting you concentrate on your work, knowing their time is coming up. I also like to reward my family when I finish a project with a new family game, dinner out, or a fun activity. They are part of why I'm able to do what I do, and I want them to reap the rewards.



I've given you many ideas for organizing your time, but often it's our thoughts and worries that hold us back. There is nothing worse than setting aside specific hours for work and then feeling completely stuck.

### **Clearing out Your Inner Clutter**

It's not just the outer stuff that hinders us, but the inner stuff too. It's the worries and the concerns. Here are more ways to clear your inner clutter.



**10. Make a list of everything holding you back.** How many of them are real issues you need to address? How many of them are fears or worries that may or may not transpire? Once they're written out, hand them over to God by putting them in a prayer box—they're His now. Picture them in His hands.

I don't want to skip over this. I learned a long time ago, from going to therapy with my kids, that if your emotional brain is turned on, your thinking brain is turned off. You will not be able to think or plan, organize or work with overwhelming emotions.

Even if it takes you thirty minutes to seek God, pray, and turn your worries over to God, it is time well worth it.



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Peace in our lives is a gift from God.

“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.” John 14:27



**11. If things aren’t going right with a work project, ask yourself, “What is the worst-case scenario here?”** One worst-case scenario was asking an editor for more time for a project (which has happened to me).

Even worse than this is NOT doing the work God has asked me to do.

Even worse is not modeling my kids what following God’s dreams, with trust and faith, looks like.



We always tell our kids we want them to do great things for God. We need to model what this looks like.



**12. When it comes to ANY kind of hard work, the first thing I do is just start.**

Seriously, I open up a blank document and “clear out” my mind. Today, I did this for a new book I want to write. This morning I had nothing, and this afternoon I had enough of the idea down to email a basic outline to my agent. For me, the best way to deal with a blank page is to make it un-blank.

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You'll be amazed at how that inner storehouse magically fills up the page.

Yet, this applies to any other work you do, too.



**13. Create a system for chores that clutter your mind and spirit.** One of the most brilliant things I've ever done is training my kids to help around the house. Even before my oldest son could read, he'd used the washing machine with the help of an angel sticker on the dial to show him where to start. Not only does this help me, but my kids learn good skills, and they have pride in their work. My two married kids have made great spouses.

When you teach your kids to do chores, you help yourself, and you help them!



**14. Submit to the Prince of Peace.** Every day I start my day by reading my Bible and praying. What a difference it makes! As I turn my thoughts to God and submit my will, my steps follow Him and not my desires. When I turn to Jesus, peace comes.



- **Final Tips and Thoughts** – I want to leave you with some last parting thoughts. When you are stuck in your work-at-home-ness, here's some good advice you can come back to over and over again:



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### **Think positive**

1. Remember, you can do more than you think.



### **Value your time**

2. Turn off Twitter and Facebook.



### **Output not Input**

3. Turn off the television.



### **Stay focused**

4. Don't multitask. Every one minute of interruption is a loss of more than one minute of work. It takes a while to get your mind to focus again.



Give yourself grace

5. Cut anything out of your schedule you're only doing because you feel guilty.



Don't try to keep up!

6. Cut out anything you're doing because you feel you *should* do it.





**Use your time well**

7. Schedule all of your errands one day a week.



**Get organized**

8. Use the Crock-Pot or Instant Pot more.



**Lower your standards**

9. Let your house be dirtier than you usually would. (You'll survive, I promise!)



**Listen and obey**

10. Life doesn't have to be crazy-busy. Just because the people around you are trying to do it all doesn't mean you have to. Just do the things God's shown you to do.



**Just do it**

11. Don't give yourself an excuse to put your calling or passion to the side. "When the kids start school," or "When the children are out of the house," are excuses. If God is calling you to start, then just do it.



**Choose wisely**

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12. Make sure your work is worth the cost. Work takes time, and time isn't free. You have to pay for it. You have to buy it by cutting out other things.



**Evaluate**

13. As one person, you can only do so much. You are your kids' only mom. You are your husband's only wife.



**Be an example**

14. Remember, you are an example in life, not just in work.



**Be wise**

15. When you first start working at home, don't depend on your income to pay the essential bills.



**Be frugal**

16. Don't spend the work money before you get it.



**Listen**

17. Listen to good advice.



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### **Slow down**

18. If someone thinks you are taking on too much, listen.



### **Pay attention**

19. If you don't feel comfortable about something, pay attention to that inner nudge, even if you're afraid you're going to miss a good opportunity.



### **Go with peace**

20. Ask, "Is fear or is peace guiding my choice?" Go with peace. That is where Jesus is. Trust that.



## **BONUS SECTION: Finances and working from home: How to make it work.**



### **Steps to take to maximize the financial benefits of working from home:**

- Making money while working from home can feel frustrating at first. The truth is, you may not always see results. It's not realistic for you to depend on your income to pay the essential bills at first.
- It's also vital that you don't spend the work money before you get it. You may inadvertently dig yourself into a hole. So here are some steps to take to maximize the financial benefits of working from home:



1. **After you're established, create a budget and stick to it.** You will want to wait until working from home is established to flex your family's budget based on the extra income you will be making. Or, if you're transitioning from working full time to working from home, you'll want to think about the income decrease you may experience. Once you've worked from home regularly for six months to a year, then you can start creating a new budget.



2. **Consider your spouse as your teammate.** Regularly talk to your spouse about your experience working from home, especially the financial side. If you anticipate making more or less money at a specific time, clue your spouse in. Seek his counsel and advice. My husband has been invaluable in helping me navigate business at home.

## TURN PAGE

3. **Create a game plan.** Many work from home jobs require you to log your hours, so find a reliable system to do that. You will also need a billing system—research what works best for you.



4. **Be honest with your employer.** Life happens, and situations change. Instead of stressing yourself out or even just quitting, it's essential to be honest with your employer if you need to adjust your hours. As I tell the people on my team: "I have ten kids. I understand." If your employer doesn't understand rare life situations at home, then you may want to find another boss who does.



- 5. Look into possible tax deductions.** There are potential tax deductions for people who work from home. Carefully look them up and talk to a tax advisor.



- 6. Update your social media accounts.** No matter what your work-from-home job is, most of the interactions will be virtual. Ensure all public social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Linked In, Pinterest) are updated. You don't necessarily have to post regularly, but make sure there's a decent picture of you and be careful what you post. That way, when you're interested in taking on more jobs or perhaps charging more, your online presence speaks well for you.



- 7. Seek advice and counsel from others who work from home.** If you don't know anyone personally, look for Facebook groups! When you encounter a dilemma related to finances and working from home, you must have wise people around you who can help you discern the right decision.

### **Let's pray**

Go through the workbook and watch the video again.

Find a friend to join you. Ask questions in the forum.