

MORE HOURS IN MY DAY

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■ PART ONE ■

Organization Basics

Me, Get Organized?

*God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

GENESIS 1:27 NIV

Over the years we've received countless phone calls, letters, and emails from women who want to know how to better manage their time. Some need only a bit of encouragement and a couple of ideas that will save them time and help organize their homes. Others need a complete overhaul and, in desperation, call us for hope and help. Either through coaxing from their husbands, children, friends, or clergy, they have realized they can be more effective if they could somehow get organized.

That word *organized* means many things to many people. For some it might be putting their papers in colored file folders and for others it means putting all their seasonings in alphabetical order. For some it means a clean house, and for others it means being able to quickly retrieve papers that have been stored. Webster defines *organized* as "to form parts into a functioning whole." That's pretty simply stated. The opposite of organized can be defined as *dismantle*. And many times *dismantled* is exactly what seems to define our homes and our personal lives. As women, wives, and moms, we're the primary makers of our homes; we have "authority" over our homes.

Authority doesn't mean power; it simply means responsibility and accountability. In our society, women have generally been given authority over what happens and doesn't happen in the places we call home. At the end of the day we are responsible for what is accomplished and what is left undone.

We don't profess to have all the answers for organization and time management, but we've found the following to be basic requirements when a person wants to become more efficient. By saving a few minutes here and there, you will have more time in your day or week to spend on your priorities.

- ❑ *Start with you.* What causes you to be disorganized? We find that organized people have a calmness and serenity about them that disorganized people don't have. Search yourself to see what is causing all that confusion. See if you can't get rid of that internal clutter before you move on. In some cases you may need to meet with your clergy or a counselor who can help you unravel the causes of this disorganization. (We didn't say it was going to be easy to get organized!)
- ❑ *Keep it simple.* There are many programs available, but choose one that's simple. You don't want to spend all your time updating charts and graphs. When Emilie began teaching organization and then writing about organization, there were few available resources. Today resources are available in books, magazines, and on the Internet. By taking some valuable time to research what works best for you and your style of cleaning and organizing, you can find the system best for you.
- ❑ *Make sure everything has a designated place.* One of our sayings is "Don't put it down, put it away." Another is "Don't pile it, file it." If there isn't a place for stuff to go, it's going to get piled. That's one thing you want to avoid. I (Sheri) promised my husband, Tim, that every time I am ready to make a purchase, I take the time to decide if I have a place at home for it. If there is, I feel free to buy the item. But if there isn't a

place, I wait for another time. Another good motto to adopt is “For every new item purchased, something else has to go.” This keeps you in the habit of rotating and eliminating items you no longer need or want.

- ❑ *Store like items together.* My (Emilie) husband, Bob, has his gardening supplies and tools together. I keep my laundry items in one place, my bill-paying tools in one area, my prayer basket and its tools together, my cups/saucers, drinking glasses, and dinnerware all in their general area. I (Sheri) keep my scrapbooking materials together near my rubber stamping supplies. My husband, Tim, keeps all his photography books and equipment in one area. We never have to look far to find exactly what we need. The less time you spend searching for an item, the more time you have to do projects and activities. Keep everything together in one place.
- ❑ *Even though you are neat, you may not be organized.* We suggest that women use notebook organizers. Choose a style that fits your personality. You might create your organizer using computer software designed for that purpose. There are two things to remember when using a planner: 1) write it down, and 2) read it. It doesn't do much good if you write a birthday date or appointment on your calendar and then forget it because you didn't read your calendar. Write *and* read. Another rule for organizers: Buy what you will use. Don't purchase a Franklin Planner if Post-it Notes work better for you. Don't purchase an electronic planner if technology isn't your forte.
- ❑ *Get rid of all items you don't use.* Read chapter 15, “Total Mess to Total Rest” in this book. It gives you great suggestions for getting rid of all the unused *stuff* that has accumulated over the months and years. As a side benefit you'll be blessing others with your unwanted items.
- ❑ *Invest in the proper tools.* To be organized you need tools: boxes, bins, hooks, racks, and containers. Watch for bargains and sales at your favorite stores.

- ❑ *Involve the whole family.* Delegate jobs and responsibilities to other members of the family. My Bob (Emilie) takes care of all the repairs at our house. When something is broken, he is Mr. Fix-It. My Tim (Sheri) takes care of all the gardening and

When delegating jobs to children, write the chores on slips of paper and place in a basket. Let each child pick two or three chores and add them to the family chore list. That way you aren't assigning the jobs, they are.

yard work at our house. When our children were young, we delegated jobs that were appropriate for their ages and development. All parents want to raise responsible adult children. That will only happen when they're given responsibility. Depending upon the ages of your children, you will need to tailor-make their chore list. Also, change off frequently so they don't get bored. Don't do something yourself that another member of the family can do. Delegating will save many minutes and

hours in your day. And people who are involved in decision-making, planning, and carrying out have a vested interest in the success of the venture. Don't hesitate to delegate!

- ❑ *Keep master lists.* Use a three-ring binder, 3x5 index cards, and journals to keep track of your possessions and tasks. You may think you'll never forget that you loaned that CD to Brad or that video to Christine, but you will. Write it down and keep the list in a place where you won't overlook it. And make sure to keep it in the same place all the time. That way you'll never have to search for it.
- ❑ *Reevaluate your system regularly.* Nothing is written in concrete. See how other people do things, read books to gather ideas, and continually evaluate your system. Change what's not working.
- ❑ *Use labels and signs.* If containers, bins, drawers, and shelves aren't labeled, the entire family won't be able to spot where things go. We have also used color-coding to identify items belonging to

various members of the family: blue for Bevan, red for Chad, and purple for Christine. Keep the color system consistent throughout the home. Even small children can identify colors.

We use fine-point paint pens and permanent markers to label clothes, glass and plastic jars, and wooden items. (Don't use water-based pens—the writing won't last very long.) You can also purchase a label maker, which makes the job neater and easier. Also, writing your children's names on their belongings helps get those items returned if they're lost.

Where should you start? Start with these suggestions. Get them under control, and then you can move to more specific areas. The important thing is to get started. Once you get going, your progress and the resulting order will excite and motivate you to keep going.