

Teaching What is Good – The Homemaking Concentration at Southwestern

They are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, pure, good homemakers and submissive to their husbands, so that God's message will not be slandered.

Titus 2:4-5 (HCSB)

In recent days, it has been no secret that the Bachelor of Arts in Humanities with a Homemaking Concentration now offered in The College at Southwestern has come under some intense scrutiny. As Dean of Women's Programs at Southwestern, and a woman in SBC life, let me dispel some myths, refocus some misperceptions and bring a little calm to the house. What exactly is this Homemaking Concentration?

It is biblical. Beginning with Genesis and moving to Revelation, God weaves into His Word the analogy of the home and family. We refer to God as Father, we are His children, The Church is a family of brothers and sisters, and The Church is preparing Herself to be the Bride of Christ. Deuteronomy 6 reinforces the priority of the home, Proverbs 31 offers a role model and Titus 2 outlines the curriculum. Scripture is replete with examples of women using their homes as a center of ministry and hospitality. If we are to teach and consider the whole counsel of God, then we must not ignore the priority of the home.

It is relevant for today. We must equip women to use what they have through the venue in which they serve to reach women and families for Christ. Many churches today are returning to home based Bible study and community groups as their foundational Bible study program. A majority of the women commissioned by the IMB and NAMB are serving in North America and around the world using the home as a primary place of ministry. Consider the Pastor's home. What a wife does there as a partner in ministry can propel a ministry forward if done well. To echo the words of Emir Caner, Dean of The College at Southwestern, "We are a 1st century church in a 21st century world." The priority of the home as an important ministry venue is relevant for today.

It is part of the mission of Southwestern. Southwestern's mission is to provide theological education to those engaged in Christian ministry. From its inception, the priority of the home as a place of ministry was recognized by Southwestern's founders with course work in "Domestic Sciences" offered in 1909. Southwestern has been, and remains today, focused upon equipping men and women to best minister to and reach a lost world for Christ. How I wish that women today were so living Titus 2 lives that this program was absolutely unnecessary. Many young ladies have this influence; many more do not. Regardless, is a woman not free to choose this course of study as her primary call to ministry?

It is more than a "cookie making degree". Yes, there will be a cookie or two made (and who doesn't like a nice hot chocolate chip cookie to temporarily fade the day's concerns) but it is so much more than that. It is teaching a woman how to use the home for hospitality, ministry and the family. A woman in this degree will have studied Greek or Latin, completed a significant block of biblical and theological studies and read many of the world's great philosophers and classical primary sources. She will be able to engage women of diverse religious or cultural backgrounds. It is a complete, well-rounded and challenging education that truly lays a foundation for any direction God may take her.

It is only one of many opportunities for women at Southwestern. Women may enroll in any of the programs offered at Southwestern, whether in The College or as a graduate student in the seminary. In fact, women are enrolled in just about every academic program Southwestern offers. While our many women's programs have a specific focus towards women, I will be the first to say that the Homemaking Concentration is NOT for everyone. It is specifically targeted to those women whose call is the home. My goal is to help a woman find the best training for what God is calling her to do and to be. For some, the Homemaking Concentration is just the ticket, for others, it is a different course of study.

I am amazed at the level of discussion that has occurred. Likewise, it has been interesting that many of our fiercest critics have been men, while we have been inundated with emails, phone calls and letters from women voicing their support and encouragement. Most women, when honest, readily admit that whatever they do outside the home, it is the home that constantly tugs on their hearts.

What is the bottom line about this program? The Homemaking Concentration is simply 23 hours of a 131 hour bachelor program that gives women a foundation for life. It is one piece to a puzzle in which we are trying to "teach what is good . . . so that the message of God is not slandered." It is biblical, reinforces the God-ordained roles of men and women, is challenging, practical . . . and yes, they will be baking some really good cookies.

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