In spite of the conveniences of our modern world, the need for homemaking skills is still great. The creation and management of a home as a pleasant place to live invites the spirit of the Lord and promotes harmony within our families. The Relief Society and Young Women themes both include statements about strengthening home and family. Unfortunately, our increasingly busy lives often prevent us from learning these skills or passing them on to our children.

What is Homemaking?
The definition of homemaking is “the creation and management of home as a pleasant place to live.” According to the Wikipedia definition, a homemaker is a person whose prime occupation is to care for their family and/or home. The term homemaker is originally an American term, and while it has entered mainstream English, it is not in common usage outside the United States.

“Homemaking,” said Belle S. Spafford, former general Relief Society president “as I view it, falls into two major divisions: homemaking and housekeeping. Homemaking takes into account the spiritual values: love, peace, tranquility, harmony among family members, security. It makes of a place of residence a spot to which family members can retire from a confused and troubled world and find understanding and rejuvenation. Housekeeping involves the work of keeping a house clean, orderly, and well managed.”

Why Are Homemaking Skills Important?
They instill and preserve within our culture the following vital values and skills:

- Self-sufficiency
- Preservation of culture
- Connection to past/heritage (reminds us of grandparents, etc.)
- Resourcefulness
- Working alongside parents
- Personal growth
- Children learn independence and self-care
- Beautification of living environment

Homemaking skills benefit us and our families in every area of our lives: spiritually, physically, intellectually, and emotionally.

President Ezra Taft Benson has said: “No nation can rise above its homes. The church, the school, and even the nation, stand helpless before a weakened and degraded home, in building character. The good home is the rock foundation — the cornerstone of civilization. If this, our nation, is to endure, the home must be safeguarded, strengthened, and restored to its rightful importance.”

Susan W. Tanner, General Young Women’s President, has said in her 2004 President’s Message: “Listen to the power of these words from the [Family] Proclamation: ‘By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of the children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners’. Fathers have the huge responsibility to preside, provide, and protect. Mothers have the sacred responsibility to nurture. What a rich word is nurture, meaning to train, to
educate, to foster development, to promote growth, and to nourish or feed as in the Savior’s injunction, ‘Feed my sheep’ (John 21:16).

“So today I would like to affirm motherhood, to talk about the beautiful recent addition to our Young Women theme—‘be prepared to strengthen home and family.’ I want you to hear it from me, and I hope your young women will hear it from you. Here are five things we must teach them: (1) We must teach them how to strengthen their current homes and families. (2) We must prepare them with skills, both temporal and spiritual, that will bless their future homes. (3) We must inspire them to want to be wonderful wives, mothers, and homemakers. (4) We must help them have the courage to face a world which is desecrating families and family values. (5) We must emphasize the eternal responsibility and privilege of motherhood and help them understand that each of them will make a home and influence children whether or not they have the opportunity to marry in this life. We must make sure that they know that their righteous womanly role in the home is, as President Hinckley said, ‘the one bright shining hope in a world that is marching toward self-destruction.’

“We must prepare young women with skills, both temporal and spiritual, that will bless their future homes...How do we fortify our girls? Like Moroni’s people, they need places of refuge from the world in the home and Church...And they need to be armed with the temporal and spiritual skills that will prepare them to go out into the world and establish strong, righteous homes. I believe that one way we can arm our girls spiritually is to give them temporal skills, or talents. We know that to the Lord, all things are spiritual. As He tells us in Doctrine and Covenants 29:34, ‘I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal.’

“An example that illustrates this is cooking. If a young woman learns how to cook delicious, nutritious meals, she will acquire skills to bless her future family, not only temporarily but spiritually. Cooking skills can provide young women a way to create enticing times in her home where people gather to talk and to bond with each other. Cooking skills provide a chance for important spiritual things to happen in a family. Sister Janette Hales Beckham thought of her dinner table as a place where the family gathered not just for physical nourishment but for spiritual food. Those who learn to make homemade meals have a skill that can help them also make good homes.

“Homemaking skills are becoming a lost art. I worry about this. When we lose the home-makers in a society, we create an emotional homelessness much like street homelessness, with similar problems of despair, lack of self-esteem, drugs, and immorality. In a publication called The Family in America, Bryce Christensen discusses this issue. He writes that the number of homeless people on the street ‘does not begin to reveal the scope of homelessness in America. For since when did the word home signify merely physical shelter, or homelessness merely the lack of such shelter? . . . Home [signifies] not only shelter, but also emotional commitment, security, and belonging. Home has connoted not just a necessary roof and warm radiator, but a place sanctified by the abiding ties of wedlock, parenthood, and family obligation; a place demanding sacrifice and devotion, but promising loving care and warm acceptance’ (‘Homeless America: What the Disappearance of the American Homemaker Really Means,’ The Family in America, vol. 17, no. 1, Jan. 2003, 1).

“So we must teach homemaking skills, including practical ones like cooking, sewing, budgeting, and beautifying. We must let young women know that homemaking skills are honorable and can help them spiritually as well as temporally. Making a home appealing physically will encourage loved ones to want to be there. The temporal preparation is spiritual to the Lord, for it will create the kind of atmosphere that is conducive to the Spirit.

“In such an atmosphere, spiritual skills like peacemaking and selflessness will be more readily learned. Surely the Lord’s pattern for preparing His temples is the pattern we should follow in our homes: ‘Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish

Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest; Home-keeping hearts are happiest, For those that wander they know not where Are full of trouble and full of care; To stay at home is best.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God’ (D&C 88:119). Using any talents, practical or spiritual, for the purpose of making a home will invite the Spirit into your home.” (Susan W. Tanner, 2004 Spring Presidents’ Message).

What do Homemakers Really Do?
The following story from an unknown author illustrates: One afternoon a man came home from work to find total mayhem in his house. His three children were outside, still in their pajamas, playing in the mud with empty food boxes and wrappers strewn all around the front yard. The door of his wife’s car was open, as was the front door to the house. Proceeding into the entry, he found an even bigger mess. A lamp had been knocked over, and the throw rug was wadded against one wall. In the front room the TV was loudly blaring a cartoon channel, and the family room was strewn with toys and various items of clothing. In the kitchen, dishes filled the sink, breakfast food was spilled on the counter, dog food was spilled on the floor, a broken glass lay under the table, and a small pile of sand was spread by the back door. He quickly headed up the stairs, stepping over toys and more piles of clothes, looking for his wife. He was worried she may be ill, or that something serious had happened. He found her lounging in the bedroom, still curled in the bed in her pajamas, reading a novel. She looked up at him, smiled, and asked how his day went. He looked at her bewildered and asked, “What happened here today?” She again smiled and answered, “‘You know every day when you come home from work and ask me what in the world I did today?’ ‘Yes,’ was his incredulous reply. She answered, “Well, today I didn’t do it.”

The May 1987 Visiting Teaching Message called “Homemaking” further illustrates the importance of preserving and teaching good homemaking skills: “A woman who was required to move frequently because of her husband’s employment was planting flower bulbs in her yard. Her neighbor stopping to watch asked her, “Why do you bother planting these bulbs when you know you won’t be here when they bloom next spring?” “I may not be here,” the woman replied, “but someone else will. I always try to leave my homes, temporary as they may be, a little more beautiful because I was there.” Whether we live in a cottage, apartment, shack, or mansion, each of us — married or single, with or without children — is a homemaker. Our challenge is to make our earthly homes like the heavenly home we so recently left and to which we hope to return.”

President Spencer W. Kimball has written: “Heaven is a place, but also a condition; it is home and family. It is understanding and kindness. … It is quiet, sane living; personal sacrifice, genuine hospitality, wholesome concern for others. It is living the commandments of God.” (Faith Precedes the Miracle, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972, p. 265.)

President Ezra Taft Benson said in a General Conference address in 1981: “One great thing the Lord requires of each of us is to provide a home where a happy, positive influence for good exists. A home is more than mortar, brick, wood, mud, or thatch. It is a place where something of heaven is built into its foundation. It is for this reason that the psalmist wrote, ‘Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.’ (Ps. 127:1).”

The Fruit of Her Hands by Camille Curtis Anderson addresses the difficulty in our busy, modern society to give homemaking the time and attention it requires: “Whereas our foremothers battled limited resources in order to enhance home life, one of our major battles might be battling limited resources as well as challenging society’s attitude. Learning and practicing homemaking skills is not popular among the sophisticated in today’s world. But Latter-day Saint women have a unique perspective on building homes: we build them for eternity, understanding that the efforts we make today can reap rewards forever.

“I’m sad that many women today have almost no time, or feel that they have no time, for domestic art, whether it be sewing, cooking, knitting, gardening, making home decorations, or any of dozens of other activities that serve practical needs as well as offer creative outlets. There is a joy that comes from sewing a pair of pants, designing curtains, or even scrubbing floors to make one’s home shine. As my
hands shape the environment of my family, I love even more that place in which I labor. ‘For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also’ (Matt. 6:21).

“We live in a world driven by materialism. As a result, the value of domestic art is often overlooked or undefined. But although homemaking chores can be wearisome in their repetition and intangible rewards, even a simple task, if approached with an artistic eye, can be meaningful. [My] great-grandmother Sarah left me another relic. It is a simple infant blessing gown, inventively made from a rough flour sack. A casing at the neck has a string that gathers the garment around the baby. The gown is crude but serves as a reminder that we can build a legacy with the common materials available to us. We can feel satisfaction, as did sisters of old, in spinning, cooking, nurturing, and loving with our hands — finding fulfillment in the fruit of our hands (see Prov. 31:31).”

Julie B. Beck, in an article from November 2007 Liahona entitled “Mothers Who Know” put it well:

“Mothers who know are nurturers. This is their special assignment and role under the plan of happiness. To nurture means to cultivate, care for, and make grow. Therefore, mothers who know create a climate for spiritual and temporal growth in their homes. Another word for nurturing is homemaking. Homemaking includes cooking, washing clothes and dishes, and keeping an orderly home. Home is where women have the most power and influence; therefore, Latter-day Saint women should be the best homemakers in the world. Working beside children in homemaking tasks creates opportunities to teach and model qualities children should emulate. Nurturing mothers are knowledgeable, but all the education women attain will avail them nothing if they do not have the skill to make a home that creates a climate for spiritual growth. Growth happens best in a “house of order,” and women should pattern their homes after the Lord’s house (see D&C 109). Nurturing requires organization, patience, love, and work. Helping growth occur through nurturing is truly a powerful and influential role bestowed on women.”

James E. Faust, in an article entitled “A Message to My Granddaughters: Becoming ‘Great Women’,” from the September 1986 Ensign has said: “Granddaughters, do not be deceived in your quest to find happiness and an identity of your own. Entreat ing voices may tell you that what you have experienced in your own homes—that which you have seen your mothers and grandmothers do — is old-fashioned, unchallenging, boring, and drudgery. It may be old-fashioned and perhaps routine; at times it is drudgery. But your mothers and grandmothers have sung a song that expresses the highest love and the noblest of womanly feelings. They have been nurturers and teachers.

“I join Brigham Young in saying, ‘Daughter(s), use all your gifts to build up righteousness in the earth.’ I hope you acquire all of the knowledge you can. Become as skillful as you can, but not exclusively in new careers at the expense of the primary ones, or you may find that you have missed singing the song you were supposed to sing.

“Some divisive voices would suggest that the wants and needs of women in society have changed and that political power is the primary interest and need of women in this day. This is not so. A recent poll indicated that the individual priorities of U.S. women today are: 1) A strong family; 2) raising children; 3) growing spiritually; 4) economic equity. This means that the values of women in the United States are comparable with the values of women in our Church. You need not be defensive or ashamed of these priorities of family, children, church, and equal economic opportunities.”

What Homemaking Skills Are Necessary in Today’s World? Are they the same skills our mothers and grandmothers needed? Perhaps many of the “old-fashioned” skills such as tatting, knitting, crocheting, and quilting are not as vital as they once were, and have become a form of art or a means of crafting, but the basics must still be taught and learned:

• Cooking
• Organizing
• Cleaning
• Money management
• Child care