

# *Finding Time for Self After Marriage & Children*

by Sonya Cherici

In my single years, I spent a lot of time with friends who had become wives and mothers. It appeared to me that these organized, educated, well-traveled women had turned into matronly, home bodies! The once polished and manicured women walked around in 2-day old tee shirts and sweat pants with hair that desperately needed a brush and some mouse. I vowed that I would be different when I had children. I deluded myself by saying that I would be a modern woman with children. I envisioned walking down the street or into stores with disciplined, well-mannered children beside me. Ha! Only after marriage and children did I come to the shocking realization that life actually changes. The children were messy, active, cry babies, that needed all of my attention. I had no time to think of anything else. Sweats became my uniform. There were days when the twins were newborns that I went without showers. My hair looked like I walked through a wind tunnel. Two years later, I had progressed very little. In fact, it wasn't until the twins were four years old did I realize that I had indeed become the woman I vowed never to be.

Most women give up a lot of themselves when they get married and/or have children. This happens naturally. We sacrifice our desires for our family... it is a "sacrifice of love."

Like many women, I neglected myself for a season. It is easily done when one becomes a caregiver. Being a caregiver is truly a blessing, but at times it can become consuming. However, at some point women need to reclaim some of the independence given up. It starts with doing something nice for yourself. Making time for those things that make us smile inside. This takes effort and planning. The first time I went to lunch with girlfriends after my sons were born, my only topic of conversation was the children. It took a while to change, but I actually started to relax and enjoy myself.



Eventually, I made time to take swimming and tennis lessons and I became adept at several the computer programs. Each year I focused on something different. Here are a few simple things you can do to get started:

Finding Time for Self continued...

- 1) Soothing candlelit baths - try using aroma candles and soft music. Wine would be nice if you indulge in it.
- 2) Read a good book - this one may be difficult if children are younger than 7 years of age.
- 3) Long walks - take your time and soak in the surroundings and free your mind. With younger children, you can use the stroller, they usually sleep.
- 5) Get a new hair style.
- 6) Treat yourself to manicures and pedicures.
- 7) Girls outing - luncheons or dinners are loads of fun with friends or sisters. Don't forget to plan date nights with your husband.
- 8) Try a new hobby - you may have to squeeze this one in, but if you find the time, you will be rewarded.
- 9) By new makeup - change your look if you wear makeup. You can make an appointment at a makeup counter.
- 10) If you are really adventurous, go for a weekend away (include your spouse if he can get away. This may prove difficult with younger children. If you cannot get away without children, try planning a trip with friends who also have younger children.

The idea of finding time for self is to take time out for relaxation and appreciation. Do something that you enjoy. Keep life interesting. The last thing you want is to be a nagging wife or a nagging mother, because you don't have time to relax and regroup. You don't want to nag your husband when he arrives home because you've been managing the children all day and need some relief. On the other hand, you don't want to consume your child because you have had nothing to do but wait around for him or her to come home. If you have a career, after working all week take some private time for self even if it is half an hour. In other words, find something interesting and fun to do for you for a brief time, then share yourself with your family.

Remember, you are not a machine simply there to maintain the house and the people around you. Keep in mind that a family is a blessing. You want to be the best mother and wife you can be without totally losing your mind in the process. Your husband c-h-o-s-e the woman he married. There was something about you that caught his attention and hooked him. Your role may change and you will mature, so why not have a little fun in the process.

During the season of nurturing a family, remember to enjoy them and enjoy yourself. In all things, be prayerful. Look to the Lord for guidance and he will direct your path.

Sonya Cherici