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**A Review of Aimee Byrd, *Housewife Theologian: How the Gospel Interrupts the Ordinary*.  
Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013. 240 pp. \$12.99.**

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This book is for women. It is for all women who want to know God, or better yet, want to be known by God. Striving to find meaning amidst the mundanity of everyday living, many of us feel swallowed up in mixed messages of purpose and significance, all the while merely wanting to contribute, to connect, to share joy and suffering. (11)

With these words Aimee Byrd begins her book *Housewife Theologian* and invites her readers to discover the meaning of true womanhood. Byrd wants to elevate the term “housewife” by understanding the value of a woman’s connection to the home and calling women to greater intentionality in understanding and living out their faith in Christ.

Intended as a group study (even including journaling questions), Byrd divides her book into twelve, topical chapters. These chapters cover a number of relevant topics such as the unique roles of women and wives, the nature of true beauty founded in Christ-centered humility, theology and the life of the mind, sexuality, hospitality, and involvement in the local church and community.

### **A Few Highlights**

As a housewife myself I can personally attest that each of these topics are important, and Byrd has several incisive things to say about each of them. First, I have often felt the temptation to “check out” after a hard day. My job as a stay-at-home mom is *do... and redo*. I *do* the dishes in the morning, *redo* them in that afternoon, and *redo* them *again* at night. I make the beds on Monday morning and *redo* them the other six days of the week. I feed people at breakfast and *redo* the job several times throughout the day.

You get the point. Do . . . redo. Every day, every week . . . the work is unrelentingly repetitive.

At the end of a day filled with such relentless redundancy, after being constantly pulled in so many directions with so many tasks to accomplish, it is tempting to fade into the la-la land of Facebook, or drift into the mindlessness of a Netflix movie. In response to this temptation to check out and enjoy the ease of passive entertainment, Byrd encourages all of us to foster the life of the mind and commit ourselves to learn theology. Byrd says many do not see the importance of learning theology because they see it as a “specialized form of knowledge for a select few” (65). Byrd, however, reminds us that our “faith has content” (13). In order to love God more and grow in faith we must know Him.

Second, Byrd appropriately warns us that when we do not commit ourselves to knowing God and studying His Word we open ourselves up to temptation, just as Eve did in the garden. When we begin listening to the voices around us that compete for our attention and do not focus on the truth of God’s Word we can so quickly wander. These exhortations can seem obvious, but are frighteningly easy to forget in a world filled with noise, distractions, and competing worldviews.

Third, another helpful part of the book was Byrd’s chapter on hospitality entitled “Welcome In.” To put it bluntly, you need this chapter. There are many days, when after hours of cleaning, cooking, and laundering, I feel like my day has been full of “monkey work.” Many people in our society might look at my life and think I am “wasting” my college education. The society sees the tasks I do as necessary, but menial. Byrd seeks to “recover the dignity” (124) of the position of the housewife. She makes the worthy point that “if keeping a home is for the

uneducated, how come there are so many women these days who have no idea how to cook or clean well? Aren't *they* the ones who are uneducated in these basic skills of life?" (125) She then goes on to encourage us housewives not to be isolated while doing these tasks, but to include others in them. Including our children, husbands, and others in our sphere of influence can provide for quiet times to connect with them and pass these skills on to them. This was a helpful reminder to me, and I suspect it will be to other moms of small children, as it is often easier to simply complete a task rather than to welcome others—especially my children—into the experience and take the time to teach.

Finally, Byrd reminds us to think Christianly about hospitality. The biblical command for the believer to extend hospitality is intended to cause us to share our lives with others for the sake of building each other up and point each other toward the gospel of Christ. It is not to show off our immaculate homes and perfectly behaved children. This is a good reminder in a world where Pinterest has set the bar for birthday cakes and interior design at an impossible level.

### **A Message Christian Women Need to Hear**

The message of *Housewife Theologian* is one that women in the church need to hear. Aimee Byrd calls the women who read her book to greater faithfulness, theological fervor and intellectual excellence as they seek to live out their roles as Christian women and wives.

*Housewife Theologian* is an excellent book with many helpful insights and applications of God's Word. Byrd's book provides a good jumping off point for the group discussions. The tone of the chapters is very conversational and accessible to the average reader. My primary critique of this good book had to do with the meandering nature of the chapters. Byrd seemed to wander a bit and get off message at times. While these wanderings had generally good content, more concentrated focus throughout the book would have made it easier to follow.

Overall, *Housewife Theologian* is a valuable resource for women in the church. It is a helpful

tool that will inform and challenge women to use both their unique roles as women and their God-given intellect to glorify God and serve those around them.