

Debbi Kennedy Homemaker Portrait - 3:15:22, 12.41 PM

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SPEAKERS

Allison, Debbi Kennedy

A Allison 00:02

Hello homemakers Welcome to the Art of home podcast where we are exploring how homemakers cultivate a place to belong. I am your host Allison weeks. I am a wife. I'm a mom to four grown kids. And I have been practicing the art of home for nearly three decades. Yes. 30 years. Well, we are closing in on the end of our fifth season of The Art of home. And we just passed our one year mark on March 11 of this year 2022. If you're following us over on Instagram, you already know that we have some fun things happening during the month of March in order to celebrate our podcast birthday. And we are inviting you to join in the celebration with us. You know that feeling you get when you learn a tip or hack that's a game changer for your home making. And then you want to tell everyone you know about it. Well, that's the idea behind our special birthday episode. We want you to tell us in our audience all about your favorite homemaking tip. The deadline to submit your homemaking tip is on March 19 2022. So when this airs, you will still have a few days to submit yours. It can be a tip related to any area of homemaking. And it doesn't have to be something that originated with you. It doesn't have to be one you invented. It can be one from your grandma, or from Pinterest or from your neighbor down the street. Just something that has made a difference in your everyday homemaking. We all learn everything we know from somebody else. Remember when you submit a homemaking hint or tip you are automatically entered twice into our birthday giveaways. Winners will be announced on the birthday episode which will air March the 30th. Everything you need to know and the links to leave your tip are on our website. Just click the birthday link in the show notes or go to the art of home podcast.com/birthday. And we can't have a show if you don't give us your tips. So please, please don't be shy. We would love to hear from you. In today's episode, we are talking to seasoned homemaker Debbie Kennedy, who has been keeping a home with her husband Ken since 1977. They are parents to 13 grown children for birth and nine adopted and they have spent much of their married lives on the mission field in Haiti and Mexico. Debbie has some great stories to share with us about large family life, adoption and mission work with kids. So whether you're cleaning the baseboards or cooking something yummy for dinner, I know you will enjoy hearing Debbie's story of home. I'm here with my friend Debbie Kennedy. And before we go back to the beginnings of your story, why don't you just tell us a little bit a little bit about who you are today, Debbie?

D Debbi Kennedy 02:41

Okay, today, I'm a wife, and a mom and a grandmother. I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. My husband and I work in ministry together. A lot of our ministry focuses on Haiti and southern Mexico. And our children were raised somewhat in the mission field, some at home here in the States and some out there. And so that we have kind of a different, they had a very, very different upbringing, I homeschooled my children. And so we had all that, that we the Lord just brought it together. And I know that he uses that in each of our lives and has definitely used it in my life.

A Allison 03:27

Did you homeschool your children all the way through? Oh, wow. Okay, I'm sure we're gonna talk some more about that. So. All right, well, let's go back to the beginning. And why don't you tell us? When did when did you first become a homemaker?

D Debbi Kennedy 03:41

Um, Ken and I were married in 19. August of 1977. Okay, so I feel like that's kind of when it's like you, you get put into it. Yeah. Like, I had come up with a working mom. And so I had done quite a bit of house cleaning before, and keeping helping her so that when she got home, it wasn't a disaster. Because that meant a lot to me.

A Allison 04:09

Yeah. Were you an only child or did you have siblings?

D Debbi Kennedy 04:12

I had three brothers. Oh, okay.

A Allison 04:14

So you're the only girl. Are you the oldest or are in the middle?

D Debbi Kennedy 04:17

I was third born. Okay. Interesting.

A Allison 04:21

So did you feel like you carried a lot of the weight of the responsibility of the homemaking for

So did you feel like you carried a lot of the weight of the responsibility of the homemaking for your mom?

D Debbi Kennedy 04:26

Yes. Because my brothers when they were outside, they farmed and helped on property and stuff like that. So they had things outside of the home and so I that was where I really poured myself into was trying to make it where it wasn't troublesome when my mom got home and just crazy.

A Allison 04:47

Yeah. Did you grow up in a rural area? You said your brothers were they farmed and whatnot. Did you grew up on a farm,

D Debbi Kennedy 04:52

right? Yes. I most of my upbringing was on a farm and I learned to drive watermelon field, an old truck. And you better not mess up with a truck full of watermelon. So oh my goodness. Anyway, yeah, that was that was my first learning. I think I was about 12. And you know, they needed somebody to drive the truck because they were working on getting the trailer loaded and that kind of thing. So I was the obvious choice for that. Instead of actually hauling the watermelons back and forth.

A Allison 05:26

Oh, wow, what else did you guys grow on your farm?

D Debbi Kennedy 05:29

A lot of hay. And we had cows. And that was pretty much it. Maybe some peanuts. I was I was raised in Florida. And

A Allison 05:41

for you did I know that? Because I grew up in Florida.

D Debbi Kennedy 05:45

Okay. Yes, Ocala, Florida, if you know when?

A Allison 05:48

AMISON 06:16

That's kind of in the middle, a little bit north of Orlando area. I grew up in the Panhandle in Panama City. I didn't know that. Yeah. That's so interesting. And what Ocala that's very much cattle and horse country

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Debbi Kennedy 06:02

horse farms now. Pretty much. Yeah, it used to be orange, it was a citrus belt area. And so my ancestors, my grandfather, and some of my relatives, they all worked in packing houses and of orange with orange groves and that kind of thing. And even my husband helped fire the groves when he was in high school because it got you out of school. It was an acceptable out

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Allison 06:29

And so firing the groves is that when it got cold, and you had to go out,

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Debbi Kennedy 06:34

they had smudge pot things. And they would get them going, if it was going to be at a certain temperature for a certain amount of time. And so once it got down to that they started. young guys would go out or you know, high school age or so. And they would go out and get those lit and going and keep the trees warm enough. But then when the fuel prices went up, they became not not a good thing for the orange industry in that area. So the orange industry moved south in Florida,

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Allison 07:09

because you're less likely to get a hard freeze that's gonna ruin a crop because citrus comes to it's ready to harvest what around Christmas time. Exactly. Yeah. That's so interesting. Yeah, really cool. So did you grow up when you were growing up and helping out with your mom while she was working? And did you have extended family around you?

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Debbi Kennedy 07:29

Yeah, my grandparents were close by. Okay. And, and trying to think some my aunts and uncles were pretty close by.

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Allison 07:40

So were there other women that were family members that had an impact on you growing up as far as keeping a home or as an example or anything?

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Debbi Kennedy 07:48

Debbi Kennedy 07:10

Well, my, one of my grandmother's one passed away earlier on and but the the one that was there, through my teenage years, probably had an impact on not so much housekeeping because she was a very poor woman. And it was, but she kept her house very nice and neat. But her hospitality, part of it meant I really have always just admired her my whole life and wanted to be like my grandma Mack. And, and of course, my mom taught me how to keep a house clean. And that kind of thing more so than, than them that grandmother but

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Allison 08:33

what were some of the ways that she modeled hospitality for you,

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Debbi Kennedy 08:36

meals with all the family Emma's teeny tiny little house, we can hardly all fit in there, but nobody cared. We wanted to be together as a family and, and she would she loved to cook, she gardened and she cooked a lot of that out of her garden. And she just was a real simple lady. Probably had a second or third grade education, but chess full of the love of the Lord. I mean, she just when when you think of her, you think of a servant of Christ. And that was she prayed for us grandchildren down on her knees, and at nighttime. And I always remembered that and I thought we were being rotten little things doing bad things, you know, and yet she she was determined to pray, pray for all of us. And she did. And to this day, were the cousins we talk on the phone and text each other and in my my oldest cousin kind of brought us back together not too long, probably five years ago. And so we're just I love that relationship. And I love we talk about grandma Mac all the time.

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Allison 09:49

That is so cool. What a wonderful legacy that she left for your family so great. Well, okay, when you first got started, you said you probably brought some skills with you Because you had already been keeping and cleaning the house, and but what was something that was really difficult for you to learn as a new wife and keeping your own home? Was there anything that was a real steep learning curve for you?

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Debbi Kennedy 10:12

Yes. And it still is. I'm not organized. I'm not. I mean, I, I can, I can put a nice facade somewhere, you know, but as far as organization, I'm not great at that. And my girls were, and they helped me tremendously. And as they left, it was like, No, I need you.

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Allison 10:33

So would you say it was more of a challenge for you to be organized in your, in your environment or more with your time management kind of stuff? Or both?

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Debbi Kennedy 10:43

Some of that, that I would say more of my environment, okay. Because I have my rooms that are like, really? This is bad. I'm always afraid that somebody might come in here. Are these hoarders are?

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Allison 11:00

Where, what's your biggest trouble area? What do you struggle with? Which room is the worst for

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Debbi Kennedy 11:05

you? Well, it's, it's all this storage stuff. Because with so many children we have a lot, then as they left home, they didn't take stuff with them. Why? Why is that? I have the same problem. And then, let me think, pictures. Because we've been in ministry for so many years, we have mega mega pictures, and you know, we have tons on the computer. That's easy, because you don't see them. But we got and a lot are organized in books, but a lot are not. And so pictures and people that write and my correspondence, I have a hard time with, you know, just how long do you hang on to it? Yeah. And yet, it's some of it's so sweet. You know, we just

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Allison 11:55

end right? Gosh, writing letters, handwritten letters are such a rare thing nowadays. It's almost like you don't, you wouldn't want to get rid of that.

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Debbi Kennedy 12:02

I know. It's hard.

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Allison 12:05

Let's talk a little bit about balance in the home. Did you ever work outside of the home?

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Debbi Kennedy 12:11

Yes, we were. When we were first married, Ken had an autoparts store. And I worked there with him. And we had our two girls. And I was still working. And yet that I took him to work with me, which was a little crazy. But yet, it was something I wanted to do. And Ken wanted that to be able to happen. And so we made that work. And then when we our first adoption, I had a baby born My son, at the same time when we adopted our first sibling group of three boys. And so once once that happened, I was no longer working outside the home. Okay, now for a number of years with the ministry, we have worked inside the home. Right?

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Allison 13:02

So I mean, you would consider the ministry work as almost like a part time job that you're that you're running out of the home.

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Debbi Kennedy 13:09

And yes, and even somewhat full time and a lot of ways said that. Yes. And we traveled a lot with it. And we took out because we homeschooled. That was one of the I mean, amongst many others. That was some one of the extremely positive things about homeschooling for us is that as we traveled and spent time in Haiti and Mexico, our children, just, you know, with the same

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Allison 13:32

with you, yeah, yeah. Well, what about balancing all of those things with ministry or working in the auto parts store and then having children and then adopting children and homeschooling children? How do you get it all done? How did you keep spiritual growth a priority so that all the priorities stayed in the right place?

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Debbi Kennedy 13:55

Well, probably didn't all stay exactly in the right place. Because when you're dealing with children, that many children and it was quite a few children. And then everyday life all at the same time. It's not going to all fall as she as you, you know, really would prefer it to say you just deal with what's going on at that time, and do the best you can. And that's all and I think we can do is the best we can with the different circumstances. And we schooled as best we could. My school day didn't look like a typical school day. Right. But yet to us, it was important that we were serving and so if our children were out doing things with and for the ministry, we felt like That is part of their schooling that and in a lot of ways it's even more important than some of the things that you kind of get bogged down with. Yeah. Homeschooling so right,

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Allison 14:57

so let's let's go ahead and just clarify for For the record, How many children do you have?

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Debbi Kennedy 15:02

We have four birth children and nine adopted children.

A

Allison 15:06

Okay. And you adopted them over the course of several years. And in groups?

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Debbi Kennedy 15:12

Yes. We had a sibling group of three, a sibling group of four, and two single adoptions.

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Allison 15:19

Okay. All right. Okay, I just wanted to make sure we had all the numbers correct. So what were your expectations, going into marriage and becoming a wife and then becoming a mother? We have certain expectations of what we think it's going to look like. And then it usually ends up looking totally different. Right. So what about you? What were some things that maybe surprised you about your life as a wife and a mom?

D

Debbi Kennedy 15:46

When Ken and I married, I think I was saved, but I'm not sure exactly where and all that. But he was not saved. And we did not want any children. And it wasn't until after we got saved, and or either I rededicated my life to the Lord, because I did have a Christian upbringing. But he, he did, but he, he wasn't really walking with the Lord. So then we, we dedicated our lives and our marriage to the Lord. And it made a tremendous difference, because we were having some marriage issues. So that was what wound up bringing him to the Lord. And so it was a sad, difficult time. And yet God made it, turn it around for good. And so we you know, that also? Thank you, Lord. Yeah, time. But anyway, I didn't think going into marriage that we even have any children. And then of course, God changed our heart after we got saved that, you know, maybe he has a way for us to not have children turn out like we did. Like we had been, you know, full of ourselves and not walking with the Lord. But we thought, okay, well, you know, if we can just love them enough and nurture them. And, and, you know, we did that to the best of our ability and with them. So that was a big, a big change or a big surprise for me. Yeah,

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Allison 17:22

sure. Sure. Were there particular challenges. I mean, obviously, adopting that many children has its own unique set of challenges. You know, was there something that really stands out to you as, as a particularly challenging time as a homemaker? And maybe it's not about the adoption, it could be about anything? Just what special challenges have you faced and what did you do to work through that and grow through that?

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Debbi Kennedy 17:48

We had some pretty crazy things go on. And, and I will not, I won't go into that. But let me think. Yeah, we had a bunch of firstborn children. Oh, wow. So you have a bunch of leaders of a family group, a sibling group? Yeah. And I said that I always thought that's really interesting. I didn't think of it going into it. Yeah. And so that was a, we had our own firstborn, who was who was very, all the firstborn attributes that come with that. That's her character qualities. Yeah, she was very much that way. But so were the ones that we asked that we adopted.

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Allison 18:33

I never thought about how birth order would be play a role when you're talking about adoption, that never occurred to me.

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Debbi Kennedy 18:40

and we adopted older than our birth children, which they advise against that. But you know, we were like, That's okay. It'll all work. Oh,

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Allison 18:53

so let's just talk for just a second since we're on this topic of large families and adoption, what are maybe some of your best tips, because I imagine logistically, there were just a lot of things to manage, you know, logistically, with with a lot of kids and homeschooling. What are maybe some of your best tips if you could go back and tell your younger self, to do this, and don't do that? What would you what would you tell a woman listening out there?

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Debbi Kennedy 19:19

Spend as much time as you can with them, and you can't have a lot of individual time. It just with that many. It doesn't work that way. If you I mean, and we were blessed to have that opportunity with them serving with us on the mission field. They did all kinds of things, our girls and our boys and so that was really good for us. And we we would we were working alongside them to some things they knew how to do much better than we did. So you know, they would get into a position of something that they really enjoy doing. And we'd let them go with it. And so some of them could build. I mean, we in Mexico, we built houses, that was after we had been in Haiti and came out, that they were very good at. Some of them went into carpentry work, but they were very good at those things. And it taught them a lot of common sense kind of things. Yeah. And so I'd say, just spending that time with them and pouring what you can what God's given you to put into them.

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Allison 20:33

Yeah. How did you handle mealtimes with that many people?

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Debbi Kennedy 20:37

Well, at first, it was mostly on me, but my girls did learn to cook early. And they were very big help. There was years that I did not even I didn't even go to the grocery store, didn't have to plan any of the meals. And they because they took over. And even the teams that came with us to build houses in Mexico, they took care of all that they would go into San Antonio and hit

Sam's and, and the grocery store and have everything ready to go down for a week with 40 people. Wow. They just they learned to do it. It became second nature to them. And of course, they were very organized. And I was grateful for that.

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Allison 21:25

That's really cool. Yeah. So I want to move into talking about hospitality. And I think this might be a really great place to talk about your ministry as well. Okay, so I usually ask the guests, you know, how did you show hospitality to one another, as a family making each other feel welcome and belonging in your home? And particularly with adopted children? What were some ways so we'll get to the ministry in a second. But what were some ways that you guys were able to help sort of gel your family with all of these new people coming in, you know, adoption and whatnot? What were some ways you helped them to feel like they belonged?

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Debbi Kennedy 22:03

Well, as they came in, we were mom and dad right away. And some people had, we've heard him be called Aunt so and so and uncle, so and so on, we just said, now we're mom and dad. And they, they, I think that helped them to feel more connected. And the children because we did devotions together, pretty, you know, as they were coming up on a pretty regular basis, they were able to, to walk out what they were learning about being a Christian. And whether they're their hearts, whether they really were following Christ or not. Yeah. But they were learning to walk that out with one another. And that was when problems came around which there were plenty of those. We would just try to handle it from, you know, as, as a Christian, and this is what you would do and this kind of go with it at that.

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Allison 23:04

Yeah. What about showing hospitality to people outside of your family? I imagine this is where your ministry really crosses over and comes in, whether you're bringing teams and to take with you let's, let's talk a little bit about your ministry. Why don't you just tell us kind of the basics of what our ministry is?

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Debbi Kennedy 23:20

Well, we we lived in Haiti from 95, to the end of 97. As a family, we went down with 12 children and came home with 13. So we got our youngest one down there, and, and she's precious. But anyway, she's grown and gone now. They're all gone now. But anyway, when we left Haiti, we thought we're done with ministry. God's bringing us out for a reason. We didn't want to leave but but the Lord did very. He picked us up literally and brought us out.

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Allison 23:54

And you were there to mainly do what?

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Debbi Kennedy 23:56

We were working with schools, feeding programs, and we helped with medical teams, we weren't medical, but we could set up a team and have doctors and nurses come in. And we would take the teams out. I usually stayed at home during that time with the younger ones, and our older ones, and Ken would go out and they would go remote and do that sort of thing. And then when we came back to the States, we didn't know what we were going to do. And we were just kind of floundering for a few months was very short. And then we were offered to come here to Texas and let's go to Mexico and see about well maybe build a house or something and we thought Yeah, we weren't. I mean, we did not come joyfully. I will tell you that we came a little bit dragging our feet and not excited. But we did it and then we kind of like the Lord said you can do this. This is something that will fit for your family because we had a bunch of teenagers at that time and and They were very capable, and they needed to be busy. And that is important for young people to stay busy. And so we, it seemed to fit. We started building homes, little their little bitty homes, but they were better than the 10 homes that the people were living in ER, then. Yeah, whatever. Usually dirt floors and that kind of thing. But it was a simple little house, we built the same one over and over again, we tried each time to get better and better at it, because we had no real skills there to beat when we started out. But the Lord was really gracious. And sometimes we were building two and four homes a month. And the children did the gathering of all the staff, the materials, we had to take down our own lumber, and things like that and get it over the border, they got to the point where they could do and all the not all the meals, I shouldn't say that. But they the girls would do most of the meals. And sometimes the ladies in the church would do a meal in the evening or whatever. So it was,

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Allison 26:10

so you were working with local churches to do this. That's where your funding came from. The churches are private individuals,

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Debbi Kennedy 26:19

and mostly individuals that we worked with over the years that came with us at different on different teams. And

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Allison 26:27

so it wasn't necessarily always the same team of people that were building the house. So no, definitely

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Debbi Kennedy 26:31

not. I mean, sometimes people would come back again, and do it again, a year or two later, but a lot of times it was completely new people and a new set and our children had to learn to deal with some pretty different things. Because you know, your i My our idea of a Christian was one

way and some Christian teams came that didn't look like and wow, it was interesting. Yes, it was really, even the people that we were ministering to could have difficulty accepting some things.

A Allison 27:07

Well, that was my next question was who were who were the recipients of these of these homes.

D Debbi Kennedy 27:13

You know, we worked with a pastor anywhere we went, we would work under a pastor. And so the homes the pastor would pick out. And that wasn't an easy thing, because everybody wanted, you know, but we didn't want to be the deciding ones because he is the one that was going to be staying behind and ministering to these people. So we we let that be his decision in that area. One area, we we worked in a few different areas in Mexico, but the area we worked in predominantly, we wound up building around 100, or a little over house and and we built a church and that was the Lord's you know, the Lord just put it all together. We we didn't have the money to do these things. But but God enabled, and that was exciting. And then after when the cartel got so bad. We we worked for a while just as a family, we wouldn't take things down. Then it was like in within a couple months, the earthquake of 2010 down in Haiti took us back again. And Haiti, we had a deep love for Haiti and the Haitian people always did. And so we didn't want to leave fully. And so then when that happened in the cartel got so bad in Mexico, it was like the Lord shifted us back around and and Kenny went down and work to help build a couple villages. He helped a ministry. And then we never really took teams ourselves into Haiti, but we would help or assist teams and at churches, and there's that sort of thing. There's so many needs, you can just stay busy for never ending and I in Haiti.

A Allison 29:06

So where are you at now with your ministry?

D Debbi Kennedy 29:09

We work there. Kenny's father in law and mother in law are Haitian and they work with our ministry. We actually knew them before any of their children were born. And so we we've known them for years and years.

A Allison 29:24

And Kenny is your son?

D Debbi Kennedy 29:26

Yes, I'm sorry. Yes, my son. And then we work with glissade and his wife and their family. And we have a school that we help with a feeding program. The teachers we do pretty much everything at the school. And this is similar in the last several years that we kind of have. It came to a school we were doing a feeding program for several schools. And that just wasn't quite what we were thinking we wanted to do. And so it went from that into I've taken a group of 130 children, and it's now grown a little bit. But we can only get so big in the school building that we have, and trying to really zero in on their lives and help them have a Christian upbringing in their school system. And there's a church attached to it. And so it's, it's very different than what we did in Mexico. That we just we do love those children and really hope to seek some of them come to the Lord and their lives would be very changed by that, which that's really,

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Allison 30:37

that's really amazing to hear your whole journey laid out like that. And as you're talking, I'm thinking about how you must have gotten some really unique perspectives on home. And what it means to these people, the Haitian people, the people in Mexico, who you were literally building them a home, right? I mean, maybe what are some of the things that you learned about home? Through these experiences?

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Debbi Kennedy 31:06

Well, I guess going into it, we know, you know, it's important, you know, that family time is important. But as you're you, you grow with your children, and maybe half a step ahead of them, or whatever. And sometimes they grow faster than we did. And we prayed for that for our children, they would spiritually far surpass us. But anyway, you just you just see how really important that is your time with them. And your, what you're putting into their lives, what they're seeing you do and walk out? And I'm not sure if that answers your question.

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Allison 31:47

No, no, that's a great answer. And then, along the same lines, what did you see in the the different cultures that you were experiencing, were your concepts of home challenged, by the way that people viewed home in Haiti, or people viewed home, what homes were like in Mexico and what homes were like in Haiti and these different cultures that you've experienced firsthand for a long time,

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Debbi Kennedy 32:10

it's very, very different in both countries than an American home. Because we can sit down to a very nice meal, and be able to enjoy that every day. Right? They don't have, they don't have the money to do that. Sitting down as a family is not normally done. And now that's I'm just saying in many cases, there are exceptions.

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Allison 32:39

But from your experience, yeah, the people that you were ministering to right

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Debbi Kennedy 32:42

in in general, it was very different. They love their families, they would love to be able to do those things. When we were in Haiti, and we had, because we had so many children, we made a lot of food, and we there would be schoolchildren all the time at our table with us. Then when we got done, we had leftovers, and they went right out the door to the neighbors. And that meant a lot to them to be able to have that little bit of food, you know, that they didn't know whether they were going to have a meal that day or not. And so a meal a day means a lot, to our school children, we can look at them and physically tell that they're in much better shape now that they are getting that one meal a day. And it's better it is for our family, a lot more than just the food itself. It's your time of coming back together. I don't and I remember there were times when the some of the children were out and doing gathering things for when we lived in Haiti for another missionary. And all I could do is pray. we had no phones to connect us. We did not know until those children came back in the evening that they were going to get back. And it was very, it really grew my faith in the Lord, my trust in the Lord with them. cause here, you know, in the States, there's so much more of a safety. Yeah, it's I don't know that it's true, but there but you can kind of feel more safe and secure. If you go to a police officer, you can figure you'll be helped, right? Most of the time down there. You have no idea if they're part of the gang or not. And you just have to, and there were good police officers, but they were also very, very corrupt system down there. So you, you really were watching God's protection on a daily basis, and you had to trust him that he was going to be with them and help take care of them. It was a huge faith builder.

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Allison 34:56

Yeah, for me, and I mean, I have trouble just like letting my kids go to college, you know, and they're going to be in a super safe environment with every you know, they're not going to go hungry. They're not going to do any of that. But to be in the situation that you guys were in, I can imagine.

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Debbi Kennedy 35:15

It was. It was hard coming back to the States because I knew that I was able to trust God so much deeper and had a deeper walk and a closer walk with him than I would here because there's so many safety factors here that we didn't have down there. So

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Allison 35:36

yeah, comfort, comfort definitely breeds some complacency in us. That's really interesting. That's cool. Well, thanks for sharing your perspective. And before we end, we'll make sure that we connect listeners with your ministry and you know, if they want more information about it, okay, they're interested we'll make sure we give you that information and we'll put it in the show notes also. Okay. We will get back to Debbi's story in just a few minutes. Right now it's time for historical homemaker hints. This is the part of the podcast where we highlight some of

the helpful and not so helpful hints doled out to homemakers throughout history. Today's hence come from the art of homemaking in city and country in mansion and cottage by Margaret Sangster published in 1898. Margaret has some helpful suggestions regarding a well appointed guest room, a guest chamber which fortunate people like to have always ready for the occupation of friends should be in the first place entirely comfortable. Let me say in passing, that comfort is the primate requisite for sleeping rooms, and that ornament follows a long way after one may have a gas chamber which is a marvel of beauty in the freshness of the toilet table in the ribbons and the lace and the beautiful pin cushions and the pretty knickknacks scattered about, but in which the bed is hard and lumpy. See that the accommodations which are essential, are attended to first and let the decorations follow. towels and plenty not new and slippery but soft and pleasant to the touch rougher ones for bathing purposes. Also, a washcloth and delicate soap should be part of the appointments of the guests chamber a few sheets of paper and envelopes and dipping an ink. A postal card or two should be at the guests disposal. And if you are very thoughtful, you may add a few postage stamps so that her letters may never have to wait for this convenience. Every bedroom should be furnished with a good strong lock and key or a bolt as many persons sleep better for knowing that they may safely lock themselves in at night. While I'm not so sure about a deadbolt on my guest room door, but I totally agree that it's the little touches that make a guest feel right at home. Fluffy towels, soft sheets, bedside water carafe and fresh flowers are some of my favorite ways to prepare a room for guests. And for a 21st century hostess. It is also very helpful to post your Wi Fi password in a prominent place in the guest bedroom. I printed mine out in a cute font and framed it in a little gilded frame. It sits atop the dresser in our guest room. And if you'd like to provide your guests with a proper coffee, Mrs. Sangster has some guidelines for you. Coffee to be served in perfection should be freshly made, it is better to grind the quantity you need just before using it. If you desire to make boiled coffee, mix the grounds with a little cold water and part of an egg. Put this mixture in your coffee pot and pour on as much boiling water as the quantity of coffee you wish to make people like coffee and such various degrees of strength that it is well to give but an arbitrary measure. By experimenting you can very soon discover how strong or how weak you like yours, but the beverage must be clear. If the coffee is the old fashioned boiled kind. You simply let it come to the boil on the front of your stove then push back and allow it to stand about five minutes before serving. So eggs and coffee grounds Margaret really, I took to the internet to find out what in the world she was talking about. And lo and behold, egg coffee is a thing. According to the spruce eats.com Egg coffee is a Swedish tradition in which a raw egg is beaten and added to coffee grounds before brewing quote. Adding the egg helps clarify the coffee allowing the grounds to separate from the water easily. The egg white extracts the bitterness from the grounds and enhances the caffeine. The result is a light clear brew with absolutely no bitterness, or acidity and a velvety texture that's easy to drink. This also explains why Margaret insists your coffee must be clear. I'm not sure I buy this one. I like my coffee dark and rich and definitely not see through. Well that's all for today's historical homemaker hints as always always, please remember, these hands are for entertainment purposes only. And we leave it up to you the listener to determine the safety and soundness of this advice. Now, back to Debbi's story. Alright, let's talk a little bit about the seasons of homemaking, we've kind of touched on this, you know, you've had some really unique seasons and changes and all, you know, different countries and all of that. How would you say your role has changed the most over time as a homemaker? What's been the biggest change that you've noticed?

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Debbi Kennedy 40:28

Well, when we, when we first started out with children, of course, no children, and then young

children, I was doing a whole lot more physically. With the home and, and that sort of thing. Cooking, doing all the laundry, we hung out our laundry on the line when we had lots of children, because the electric bill went crazy.

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Allison 40:53

And the dryer would just be running all the time.

D

Debbi Kennedy 40:56

Yeah, we actually had to washers and dryers a good part of our married life. But anyway. And so a lot of that fell on me. And then as they were able to do more things. As the children got a little bit older, it all fell on if I shouldn't say all but a lot of the work, physical work fell on them. And thankfully, they weren't resentful. They, you know, for the most part of mine say every time they were given a job that they just started cheering. And that didn't happen. But you know, they didn't mind. Any of the, I think they enjoyed working with each other. And they would challenge each other, you know, to contests and we had chickens at one point, and I don't know how to butcher a chicken, but my children do. And they will compete on who could get that chicken killed, gutted and feathered the fastest. So, you know, they had enjoyed, they made fun out of crazy things, I guess. We would do 50 at a time, sometimes.

A

Allison 42:08

50 chickens at a time?

D

Debbi Kennedy 42:10

yes

A

Allison 42:11

So you had him for meat, not just for eggs. Right? Definitely. Okay.

D

Debbi Kennedy 42:15

Every every animal we had was possible meal at some point. Yes. Okay. It was okay.

A

Allison 42:23

It worked. Well, that's a lot of mouths to feed. So

D

Debbi Kennedy 42:26

D Debbi Kennedy 42:26

yeah. And we gardened a lot. And they work together in the gardens. They had their rows that they were going to wait and take care of and and so we you know, it was a family effort, everything.

A Allison 42:39

Did you do all of this gardening and animal raising in like in Haiti or in

D Debbi Kennedy 42:45

mostly in Florida, in Florida? Okay. Yeah, we were. We were in Florida first and then lived in Haiti came out here and then started working in Mexico and spent about two weeks of every month in Mexico.

A Allison 43:00

Okay, so All right, so most of your your homesteading was done in Florida, which is a great climate to do that in. Because you can grow stuff year round, right? It's wonderful. Well, what about difficult transitions? What was the hardest transition for you? Throughout your career as a homemaker and a wife and a mom? Was it the first babies? Or was it the empty nest or.

D Debbi Kennedy 43:22

It wasn't babies. And it really wasn't even as the sibling groups came into the family, because it would stir things stir the pot, pretty majorly when we had new people, new children show up. Maybe getting used to them not being here. And we thought they would, some of them would continue working in ministry with us and Kenny and his wife did for years, that now they're they're here and not working in ministry with us. And so that was a surprise to us. And it's been, we're still working through dealing, you know, you want to be able to call somebody and call one of your children at and say, Hey, I need I need your help with this. And it's just not they're busy with their lives and their children and right, you know, getting their selves going, and we understand that, but but we thought it would be a little different. But that's it. I mean, that's just

A Allison 44:30

I think a lot of parents are in that same on that same boat. You have sort of ideas that you want for your children, you're like, this would be so great. If right. We all lived in the same town, and we all work together. And I know but that's just not Yeah, that's not typical.

D Debbi Kennedy 44:45

That's true. Yeah. And so that was a surprise and maybe a little bit hard for us. But we love

what they you know what they're, for the most part of the jobs they're doing and their little families are just a huge blessing. And we love that.

A

Allison 45:03

And you do have some literally right here. I'm looking at their houses in the backyard. And that leads us to the next question about what does homemaking look for you right now in the season that you're in? YYou had one your little grandsons on the back porch before we got started. And I imagine they're a big part of your, of your homemaking right now.

D

Debbi Kennedy 45:22

And I didn't know being a grandparent was going to be so awesome. And I just love it. And I, when they come up, everything else gets set aside and I get to spend time with them and read to them or, you know, whatever, I get down on the floor and play with toys or whatever. And I do love that. So and I'm able to kind of get things, I'm starting to get things better. I'm working on organizing more things in their own places. And, you know, all this stuff that I'm now have that I don't know what to do with. Do you save it? Or keep hanging on to it? Or do you just decide finally, Okay, it's time to deep six this? Yeah, yeah. So anyway, that's funny.

A

Allison 46:12

Well, that's good. Because that sounds like an area where you're challenging yourself to grow right now is in your organization. Right? What about passing on what you've learned? I mean, obviously, you're doing this podcast with me, thank you very much. But where do you see opportunities to sort of share your knowledge when it's wanted, in pass on sort of the Titus two model,

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Debbi Kennedy 46:35

I think it's really, really important for older people, and is funny to think of myself, I'm there now that they share their life experiences, with younger people, and especially within our family, as much as they want to hear about it, because they saw us walk it out. So they know a lot of it too. So that we have not just our children, we have their their spouses now in our family. And so that's one way that we are able to reach out more and, and include more family. I know. So, when the, when the girls were younger, we did a lot of things fast, I didn't have time to deal with, I didn't have time to deal with bad attitudes, you know, just wasn't going to happen, or else they were going to be in some trouble for it. So we just didn't have to deal with so much of that, especially younger on then then. And so it was like, Okay, we have to learn a lot fast. So I would show them just a little bit of something, and let them take it from there. Now my house, um, I couldn't be super picky, because they're not good, you know, when they're first learn, and they can't do it. Like you, you know, you want to see, so I'm not I'm not super picky. So that worked great for me. And so we would have a semi clean house. And and, and I don't think it ever got really terribly bad. But it was we we lived in a small house with a lot of children. So we didn't have room for a lot of things. And so they would, they would just pick it up and go with it learning to sew my girls, I showed him how to put a zipper and a collar on and

you know, to get a dress made or something like that. And then it was one time deal. And now they just ran with it. Yes. And they did and they love to sew, and they would sew with little girls in Haiti, or even in Mexico. And Sarah started a sewing ministry in in Mexico years later. So that sort of thing. And organizing for meals was kind of like, okay, this is what we're gonna have, I'll help you get it. So we, you know, did but as they got older and could shop themselves, let them go for it. And they're going to have some failures. And so did I get going into marriage? I mean, I certainly didn't know how to cook that great. And you know, it's just part of the learning curve. And yeah, but I let them have I let them have that experience. And I think it helped them in their lives. And then as far as getting fine tuned training, they worked for some ladies, two ladies in particular them really helped them to be able to clean an area look, stand back, look at it and know that it is thoroughly cleaned and nice. So it was great that they had those ladies in their lives as

A

Allison 49:44

well. That's awesome. Sounds like you did like boot camp style training.

D

Debbi Kennedy 49:48

That is about actually sometimes we even use that. The word for it as funny. Cool. All right.

A

Allison 49:57

Well, let's move on to this next little section. This is just for fun. It's like some rapid q&a. And you can give me a brief answer or you can tell me a little story if you want about the tasks of homemaking. Okay, so what's one task of homemaking that you love?

D

Debbi Kennedy 50:14

Laundry,

A

Allison 50:15

you love laundry?

D

Debbi Kennedy 50:16

I do. I bring my girls laundry home. If they give me a basket of dirty laundry, that is like a love language to me. I love it and I bring it home and wash it, dry it, fold it, put it back in their basket and I will sometimes deliver it to their house. So I just love doing laundry.

A

Allison 50:34

That's amazing. I think you're probably the first person to say that. Okay, what's one that you hate or you really dislike?

D Debbi Kennedy 50:43
Well, organization. I'm a failure.

A Allison 50:46
But you're working on that

D Debbi Kennedy 50:47
I am working on it.

A Allison 50:48
Okay. What's a task in the home that you grew to love

D Debbi Kennedy 50:56
probably dishes I, I do enjoy. I enjoy all parts of cleaning a house up. And so that I I don't know that I loved it at first doing dishes, but I am very used to it doesn't bother me a bit. But if somebody wants to help, I'll let him go with you know, do it with me. But if not, that's fine. And we'll just get the job done.

A Allison 51:21
It's very satisfying work because it's you do it and then it's all those clean dishes to look at. They're lovely. Okay, what about your worst homemaking fail? Hmm. Did you burn a chicken one time? Or did you

D Debbi Kennedy 51:38
Oh, we went to church one time and left something then the oven

A Allison 51:41
Oh no. Oh, no.



D

Debbi Kennedy 51:42

Forgot about it and went out with somebody afterwards. So it was literally nothing left in the pot. It was a massive amount of food too, because it was with a lot of children. It was in a cast iron pan.

A

Allison 52:00

Oh, did you have to throw that cast iron pan away? Or took a chisel to it?

D

Debbi Kennedy 52:05

No, but we definitely had to do some chiseling to get it out of there.

A

Allison 52:11

What about a memorable achievement and homemaking?

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Debbi Kennedy 52:15

Well, for me, I guess that seeing my girls being able to sew things, they are very craft oriented. I'm not they love to do just do the greatest things. And I'm thank the Lord for that. Because I couldn't really teach them. But they did. You know, God gave him that gift. And it's pretty much in all of them. So it's a that was the Lord and not me at all. I mean, not that very much at this was me anyway. Kind of only God's Grace that brought us all through this.

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Allison 52:57

That's a good, that's a good statement. What about your top three tips for homemaking? Do you have like a good cooking tip or a cleaning tip or something like that? Well, my

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Debbi Kennedy 53:08

My sister in law told me there's none of this original with me, but she said don't leave one room without taking things that go to another room with you when you're headed in that direction. So if you've got stuff laying all around, try to try to take some you may not can take it all at one time. Yeah. And then she said, when you're leaving your home, stand back from the door and just kind of look back and see. Okay, how does this look? Because I might be walking in with someone? And not, you know, and what are they going to see when they come through that door? Yeah,

A

Allison 53:41

that's a great tip

that's a great tip.

D

Debbi Kennedy 53:42

And then when we traveled a lot, sometimes people would stay in our home. So when we left our home to go somewhere, it was cleaned to the very best

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Allison 53:53

of our ability. So you mean people would stay while you were out of your home? They would stay in your home?

D

Debbi Kennedy 53:57

Yep. Okay, that would happen occasionally. Yes. So and you just then you get to come home to a clean home. Yeah. Which is really nice. Because you're coming home with all your luggage that we would come home from literally from Mexico, and have to get a laundry mat because we would have 30 to 40 loads of laundry took that needed to get done. Yeah. And eventually I did get a washing machine down there. But and I could kind of keep up with it. So it wasn't so massive when we came home but it for a long time. I didn't have that. And so

A

Allison 54:31

I love the rule of of cleaning your house before you go out of town or on vacation. Because it does feel great to come home to a clean home and you're usually tired, right? And you almost always have some laundry to do. Probably not 30 loads for the average person. But one or two loads. Yeah. And you don't want to have to do that in a messy house. Alright, we're going to end our time today reflecting on the art of home. All right. So to you. What is it mean when I say homemaking is an art?

D

Debbi Kennedy 55:05

Well, it's something you have to work at. It's the way I see it. It's not just an automatic. And for some people, it's more in depth than others. And you have to let, especially with your children, you have to let it their concept point, you have to let it go. And let them be there. They're a different person than than I am. And I can't expect them to do things exactly as I would do. And vice versa. And so that's that, but it is the art because you slowly it's like it develops and you and and your ideas change over time, too. And what you have to work with changes. Yeah, time for sure. Your circumstances. Yeah, so any, any thing like that I look at as a gift from the Lord, if you're crafty person, that's a gift from the Lord. And if you're artsy, or, or, you know, if that's not your thing, then God's given you giftings and other areas to pay if you can't, if, if you need a little help in your home, just get it you know, tell somebody I mean, assist if you can't pay someone to come in, there's always somebody that would i Hey, I'll come over for a few hours and help here or there, you know, whatever. That's the beauty of being in a church with sisters in the Lord that, yeah, encourage you in that way.

A

Allison 56:30

And, and they have certain strengths that you may not have absolutely swap, you swap services.

D

Debbi Kennedy 56:37

I can't do computer things, and I'd be happy to go clean somebody's toilets and get get their dishes done and laundry while they show me how to do something or exchange.

A

Allison 56:47

So yeah, no, and that that's such a great point, because we need each other so much doing this task of keeping homes and raising families and you know, so that kind of leads into to one of the next questions which is finding beauty and meaning and purpose in some very ordinary and very monotonous mundane tasks. We can help one another with that, but what are some ways that you are able to find beauty and sort of the everydayness of homemaking?

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Debbi Kennedy 57:18

Well, when you're done, when you're done, you can stand back and just feel like, Thank You, Lord, I got that done. Even if it's a small area of room or part of a room or whatever, you can just feel like, wow, this is nice. It feels good. I think a clean home feels good. Yeah. And I love when I've just washed my sheets that that night go to bed. It is wonderful. Yeah. To me, that's like, oh, wow, this is this is great. So it's like a no, no, I guess a little feeling of accomplishment. And I thank You, Lord, that that I was able, you know, with his help to get these things, what I've been able to do, and to learn from other women and some are sisters in Christ and whether they are or not that they've helped me to learn things out today like that.

A

Allison 58:16

Yeah. How do you think that homemaking keeping a home whether you do it full time or not, but just somebody has to sort of be the, the keeper of the home? And that keeps things running? Right? How do you think that adds value to communities to society as a as a more of a whole?

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Debbi Kennedy 58:36

Well, I think in our country, we're now getting to see the result of no longer having homes were intact families and families that are walking with the Lord and, and just struggling in their homes and in their marriages. And you know, and just because you're struggling in one area doesn't mean you necessarily are struggling in another area. But I think it makes a huge difference. A mom that can show love to other children in their area. Whether it's your family that lives close by I grew up, or our children started out on a farm where all the cousins and not

we all live close by each other. And it was we would have 1520 children over just because the ones from next door were going to be there and you know if they could get to come over and my niece called me one time and said My memories of you and uncle Kenny are the station wagon packed full of children and playing bull frogs and butterflies, that little song from me back in the 80s and just singing that song and just enjoying them with the children and those are those kind of things if you're out working a job You can't, you can do it, but it's much more difficult to pull it off. Yeah. If you're home with your children, and they are when they're having their friends over and whatnot.

A

Allison 1:00:12

That's really that's really good. What advice would you give to a young homemaker who's listening, whether she's brand new newlywed, or maybe she's a young mama with lots of littles all around her, and she's just up to her eyeballs, and diapers and bottles and all of that what what piece of advice would you give?

D

Debbi Kennedy 1:00:32

Stay the course. And don't look at it as as little. Because it's certainly not, it is a big thing. Because it's going to mean a lot to those children watching you. And, and at some point, maybe even grandchildren watching you and how you handle yourself in your home. And the dishes need to be cleaned. And the floors need to be swept and mopped by somebody. And instead of getting frustrated with it, just get it done the best to the best of your ability. And it's it's kind of like you're serving the Lord by serving your family in doing these things. I mean, it's if you think of only for your family, it could could make you very frustrated. Well, sure. But if you know that you're doing this as a service, servant, sacrifice to the Lord your time. Yeah, it makes it makes it much better for your for your attitude towards doing it.

A

Allison 1:01:40

Absolutely. I totally agree. That's, that's a really good answer. Thank you. Well, where can people find you online? If they want more information about your ministry? Where can they get some information about that?

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Debbi Kennedy 1:01:53

We have a website, only a servant ministries, okay, and you can go there, and the most, to me, the thing that's best on our website, it's not a real up to date website that we do have each newsletter, as in that tells you what we've done that month, or what we've been working on. And we've got years and years worth of them. And so it's not that it's gonna want to read that many of them, but it can kind of show you where we've come over the years, right? What the Lord was doing at different times through the ministry,

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Allison 1:02:32

okay, only a servant to ministry. And we will link that down in the show notes. Okay. Well

okay, only a servant to ministry. And we will link that down in the show notes. Okay. Well, thank you, Debbi. It's been such a joy to hear your story. I really appreciate you taking the time. Thank you so much for listening to this homemaker portrait of Debbi Kennedy. If you found some value in this episode, would you consider giving the show some love in one or more of the following ways. Number one, share this episode with a homemaker you know who could use some encouragement. We all need encouragement. And I'm sure you know someone out there who would benefit from hearing Debbi's story or really any of the stories in our catalog of homemaker portraits. Number two, leave us a rating and review wherever you're listening. Number three, you can leave us a tip in our virtual tip jar. Buy me a coffee. Tip amounts are for one coffee, two coffee or three coffees, and that would be \$5 \$10 or \$15. There's a link in the show notes or just go to [buy me a coffee.com/the art of home](https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theartofhome). Your financial support helps offset the cost of producing this podcast and our free resources. So we thank you. We have lots of information in the show notes, links to all of our social media accounts, links to Debbie's family's ministry so you can see what they're up to in Haiti and how you can pray for them. Well, that wraps up this episode of The Art of home podcast. We will be back in two weeks with our very special birthday celebration episode. Don't forget you have until March 19 to leave us your homemaking hint or tip. We can't wait to hear what you share. Until then, keep practicing your art of making a home