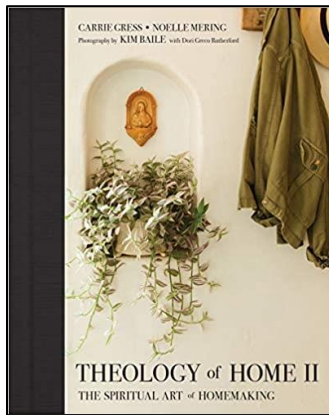


## THEOLOGY OF HOME II

### The Spiritual Art of Homemaking

by Carrie Gress and Noelle Mering

Book Shines New Light on the Art of Making a Home, Featuring Beautiful Photos, Inspirational Women, and Enduring Truths



Washington, DC: Though there has been a resurgence in the home, the domestic arts and a desire to live a simpler lifestyle, the role of a homemaker is still unpopular. Viewed as an unfulfilling or even oppressive, both women who work or who stay at home feel a sense of shame or futility in managing their homelife.

Turning this misguided notion on its head, a new book shines light on the role of a homemaker as it relates the deepest truths of faith with an honest and fearless understanding of the modern world. Rather than looking to the 1950s for inspiration, the authors forge a new path by looking at the gifts women can offer those they love.

Today, what was old seems new again – simple cooked meals, caring for your home and helping kids with their education. It looks like homemaking is making a comeback.

***Theology of Home II: The Spiritual Art of Homemaking*** (TAN Books) by **Carrie Gress and Noelle Mering** explores a renewed role of the physical and spiritual calling for any woman caring and nurturing her loved ones. Written for mothers at home or on the workforce the authors offer insight on the calling of homemaking including:

- **Comparison and Imperfection:** Seeking perfectionism in motherhood is self-serving and exhausting. God gives us certain abilities and interest that are truly gifts we should approach them with gratitude and mission. Comparing ourselves to others is pointless and begrudges the giver (God). Our gifts are meant to be shared by serving others through them.
- **Becoming Fully Ourselves:** We often worry we won't reach our potential by spending years raising children. This mindset fails to recognize that we become who we are meant to be when we draw closer to our Creator. Through this relationship, we understand who we are and what He wants of our lives.
- **True Beauty of a Woman:** Many women say they begin to feel invisible at a certain age – for some they feel undervalued and others it's because they lose their youthful beauty. The more we strip our understanding of beauty from its ultimate source, the more distorted and hollow our concept of beauty becomes. In the dusk of our lives we see and desire what is most essential and natural to us. But we need not wait, and can instead strive to see these things with clarity now.
- **Obstacles:** Our lives don't always go as planned, infertility, marital strife, illness and career frustrations can cause us to question God's plan. Even if we don't see the fruit of suffering, we can reorient our thinking and endure our trials with great love for Christ.

- **Community:** Social media can set a stage of interaction as performer and audience member rather than a truly human dynamic of as loved ones with intimacy and vulnerability. Women taking care of many children might need that online community to keep from feeling isolated. Still, in various ways and at different stages we can take steps to foster personal and vibrant community in our homes and neighborhoods.

Filled with beautiful photography and peppered with interviews of women at different stages and with varied circumstances, *Theology of Home II* will inspire women, whether they are single, married, working or staying-at-home, discover how to bring beauty, order, and meaning to the people and place you love most: Home.

“At the heart of every family is a mother because she brings order, connection between members, a deep sense of belonging, and the safety that comes from just being known and held,” says Gress. “This book is for every woman, the stay-at-home moms to the working mom who fulfill their calling to care for their loved ones and their homes.”

Some of the women featured who share their own stories on the sacrifice of homemaking and the deeply purposeful art of sheltering and nurturing the souls of others include:

**Kathleen Wilson** a mother of twelve including seven adopted children. She founded Mary’s Shelter in 2006, a shelter in Fredericksburg, VA for pregnant women with children up to three years old. They have helped over 400 women with opportunities for childcare, education and employment [www.marysshelternva.org](http://www.marysshelternva.org)

**Muji Kaiser** who emigrated from Nigeria to the US to receive lifesaving medical treatment for what doctors thought was an incurable bone disease. While preparing to be a mother herself, Muji started to Okaja Foundation (to honor her mother) which raises funds for an orphanage that is home to over 50 orphans and has cared for over 200 children up to college level.

**Leigha Doerr** is the mother of seven children. Her 2 year-old son unexpectedly and tragically died in 2017 from a rupture in his brain. She has found comfort knowing she will see her son again in Heaven and the peace and strength that God has promised to her through her grief (Matt. 11:29-30).

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About the Author:

**CARRIE GRESS** is a prolific writer and author of several books, including *The Marian Option* and *The Anti-Mary Exposed*. She and her husband, and five children, live in Virginia. She is also the editor of the online Catholic women’s magazine, [TheologyofHome.com](http://TheologyofHome.com).

**NOELLE MERING** writes regularly on the topics of politics, culture, and religion and has a background in philosophy as well as home design. She is an editor for [theologyofhome.com](http://theologyofhome.com) and lives in southern California with her husband and six children.

# Suggested Interview Questions for Carrie Cress or Noelle Mering:

1. Who is the intended audience for your book –stay-at-home moms? How has the perception and the role of a “homemaker” changed over the decades? What is your message to moms who are unable to stay at home with the family?
2. Your book is filled with beautiful photos, encouraging quotes and stories from women. Who are some of the women featured and what is their message? How did you choose these women to be featured?
3. You write that our culture traded fruitfulness for power and control, but women still desire to be fruitful and purposeful. Is a woman’s fruitfulness exclusive to fertility and nurturing? How can women exemplify fruitfulness in their physical and spiritual lives?
4. Why do you believe that while worry can offer a defense against the trials life, it can also create jealousy and envy? How can worry point someone to a virtue?
5. Why is it important for a woman to seek exterior silence? What should she be doing during her time of silence?
6. Many mothers compare themselves to other women for their accomplishments and their ability to multitask. Why should women remind themselves to not get caught up in this? How does comparison begrudge our gifts from God?
7. You write that a woman becomes who she is meant to be by drawing closer to God. What occurs when we do this? How does a woman change her self-perspective without becoming conceited?
8. The role of a mother is mostly servanthood and many hold their children too tightly which becomes more exposed as children get older. Why is detachment to our children necessary and the best thing for your child?
9. There is a great value and learning through suffering. How does trust and perseverance influence our understanding of God’s plan for suffering?
10. You write that we all have a fundamental desire for community. Even the busiest of mom can struggle with loneliness. What is the difference between isolation and solitude? Why is it when we become lost in life we yearn for home?
11. What are some of the messages you hope to convey to the readers of your book?
12. Where can we find more information about you (social media sites)?

## Notable Quotes from *Theology of Home II*

Today, we have come to applaud women for their toughness and power while neglecting the sad things that made them tough. We look at the exterior trappings while ignoring the interior wounds. This alluring new idol of power meant to overcome women's weaknesses spread like wildfire. The underlying premise stated that power was something men had and women didn't; to enact justice, women needed to get it in equal drafts. The shift was subtle, seductive, emboldening, and energizing. But this striving for power, rather than satisfying broken and hungry souls, wounded women all the more. Meanwhile, feminism targeted something unique: the fruitfulness of womanhood, both in virginity and motherhood. (pg. 29)

Women carry others, both physically in their wombs but also emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually in their hearts, minds, prayers, and in the willing of the good for others. Home, a word which is also feminine in romance languages, offers perhaps the keenest reflection of how our bodies and souls help contain others. It is at home where we grow and are nurtured, revitalized and set on our course to move confidently into the world. In so many ways, home ends up being a reflection of its inhabitants—particularly the homemaker—bearing a stamp of the labor, love, and dynamism contained within. The soul of a woman is meant to hold and transform those whom she loves. (pg. 42)

The notion that a woman should “submit” to the will of a man is so out of vogue that it seems utterly preposterous that anyone should take it seriously. And yet, the example of Christ is telling; though clearly superior in nature, he willingly submitted to Mary and Joseph and eventually to earthly authorities, despite its leading to his death on a cross. The leadership of Christ is a servant leadership. In a deeply loving marriage, the relationship between husband and wife is one of such habitual and instinctive loving submission to one another, one of such mutual friendship— with all the respect, discussion, and care friendship involves—that the idea of that fundamentalist caricature is as foreign to them as would be the opposite extreme of grave neglect. (pg. 65)

We can grow in tenderness through motherhood, caring for the delicate wobbling head of a newborn, keeping tiny fingers warm, and changing countless diapers, but it doesn't end there. Tenderness is a hunger in every person from birth to adolescence to ageing parents and everyone in between. It is received like a warm balm to the soul. Without it, the soul becomes jaded and calloused. Because our culture doesn't emphasize its value, at first it can be as awkward as young teens learning to dance; yet over time, it becomes second nature, drawing out the better part of us. (pg. 91)

Developing a habit of positive engagement with another's efforts to connect, even in little things, requires an attentiveness, an openness to the other. It also requires empathy and responsiveness. In this respect, it is not altogether different than prayer, which is less about what we do than it is about an interior disposition toward God, who vivifies the activity of prayer in us. Grace is received to the degree that we are receptive to it. The Church being the bride of Christ signals something with the use of the feminine word “bride.” While both men and women are called to be receptive to Our Lord, women, being receptive by nature, are especially oriented to this relational dynamic of love. (pg. 109)

Seeking perfectionism in motherhood is a self-serving and exhausting enterprise. The ability to multitask will vary among women depending on temperament and proclivities. Decisions will play out differently in different women's lives, and even at the many different stages within one woman's life. The reality is no woman is going to excel at every aspect of domestic life. Capitalizing on our natural strengths and maintaining some level of competence at the more challenging aspects of daily life are good ways to deal with this reality. (pg. 121)

The expression, “A face only a mother could love,” although usually meant as a cheeky moment of levity, actually points to a deeper reality. It is not that mothers see their children in a way that is out-of-step with reality but rather that they are given a window into the true beauty and irreplaceability of a human being. It is a window into how God sees us. Far from our vision being biased or obscured, it is instead sharpened. Real, ordered love is not blind; it is piercing and insightful. God is not ignorant of our faults and struggles, but he made us irreplaceable and unrepeatable. His unfailing love for each one of us is not unlike a steadfast lover fixedly pursuing his sons and daughters as though each were the only person on earth. It is ineffable, but we are given a foretaste of it in human love. (pg. 148)

We can either idealize or disparage motherhood from afar, but a person— small and needy, delicate and demanding—gives flesh and bone, quite literally, to what was an abstract idea. Love is personal and specific, and through the living of it, we more fully understand it. Like anything worthwhile, it can be painful. The sleeplessness, the relentlessness. It is a revolution in the life of a woman, and part of the adjustment is in relinquishing comforts that we never realized were so ingrained in us. It is a process of realizing our attachments and thereby our weaknesses. There is a fragility to love—the almost paralyzing reality that it could be lost. It is the sheer poverty and need of an infant which forces us to confront our own poverty, thereby softening us, and allowing us to enter into deeper and darker oceans, gently and bravely. This process is inevitably painful, as letting go of attachments always is. (pg. 166)

When we think of our own lives, there is a particular poignancy to suffering because oftentimes the thing of which we are deprived of is something of great worth. Most of us are not called to martyrdom, but our plans can be frustrated and thwarted in ways we’ve not chosen. Infertility, marital strife, illness, and career frustration can leave us wondering about God’s plan. Despite our best efforts, there is much that is beyond our control or our ability to understand. Sometimes we might be able to see the fruit of suffering well, other times we might not see any rhyme or reason for what we’ve been called to endure. Regardless, we can be assured that if endured with love for Christ, and united to him, the spiritual benefit for our sanctity and for our prayer intentions is immense. Deep suffering must be met with persevering fidelity and trust. But these are not things we can conjure up on our own. (pg. 173)