

# **How Dream Dinners has Changed My Family's Life**

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This past year, when my schedule flew out of control and my neat little routine fell apart, DreamDinners didn't just save time, it saved my family. On September 12, 2005 the charmed life that I took for granted came to an abrupt end with the type of phone call everyone seems to fear. My Mom was distraught on the other side of the line as she slowly said, "It breaks my heart to tell you, Katy (long pause) but, the doctors said *I am filled* with cancer."

I had just seen her a few days earlier dancing at my brothers wedding ... she thought she had a cold. And now she was telling me it was cancer! We soon found out it was Transitional Cell - in the fourth stage and my life went into a tail spin. I felt helpless, not knowing how to jump off the merry-go-round of circumstances and the roller coaster of hard feelings. As a wife, home schooling mom of two active young girls, seminary student, church lay leader and Sunday school teacher, I began to make changes in order to care for her.

I was able to put my classes and some of my ministry obligations on hold in order to travel back and forth to her Glendale home, over 100 miles away. Between her medical procedures and surgeries, I worked swiftly to plan her backyard wedding in mid-October. Sadly, in spite of excellent medical care and countless prayers, after just 3 weeks of marriage, my Mom passed away on November 7, 2005. Although we never seemed to agree on spiritual matters, I immediately went to work on planning two beautiful, nonreligious memorial services. I was quite blessed by those who attended and by the words that were spoken about my Mom and her life. However, when I returned home from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Memorial Service in Michigan, I was still mourning and extremely exhausted.

And *then* I learned that I was the executor of my Mom's very, *very* complicated estate. The estate involved her 6 children, new spouse, 4 rental homes, 24 various accounts and probate courts in 2 states. The workload and struggle and battle and grief began to take its toll on me and my family. A faithful God was with us, but I felt as if I needed something *more* tangible.

By February, things at my house had lost all structure and seemed chaotic and joyless. The girls and I were squeezing in their schoolwork while on the road, in lawyers waiting rooms and on the week-ends. Once the daily estate and school obligations were met I ran myself ragged trying to keep up with the groceries, laundry, shopping, bills, meals and other household tasks but I admit that I did a less than adequate job. Family dinner times had become obsolete in the disarray of our scattered home life.

With a Masters in "Strategic Planning" I had always prided myself on being a happy, neat and organized homemaker. Thus, the "falling apart" process was all the more discouraging because on top of everything else, it seemed I was failing at the one thing I loved the most. I became increasingly exhausted from the stress, emotional overload and sleep deprivation. I knew I was in a downward spiral but did not know how or where to turn. I desperately wanted help and remember crying out to the Lord for something to lighten the load and help me and my family recover.

In March a friend told me about DreamDinners. I thought that it was a clever idea and that it might save me some time in the kitchen. I did not recognize, at first, that it was the answer to my prayers.

The first session I attended marked a fresh beginning for the Scott household. I came home hopeful and enthusiastic about actually eating something other than pizza or microwavable dinners. To show the seriousness of my recommitment to decent meals - together - I immediately posted the meals for the month, with side dishes (thanks to DreamDinners) and our family meal times each day on the 24X36 family wall calendar.

Next, seeing how I was on a role, I wrote the weekly grocery list, and my husband surprised me by a new willingness to pick up the groceries. I figured my enthusiasm was rubbing off on him, but in reality he had been looking for a way to help, but hadn't know where to begin. He also started driving the kids to and from their after-school activities so that I could "whip up our family dinner" and he even started joining me at the sessions so that he could help prepare the meals (he has subsequently realized the 'joy of cooking'). Likewise, the promise of a renewed family meal time inspired my kids to take more initiative in the kitchen and around the house.

Having an assigned time for dinner, and having something ready to prepare has helped us get back into an evening routine. Everyone has gotten excited

about "What's for dinner?" The meals have been easy to prepare, great tasting, and not to mention healthy, well-balanced and more affordable than the last minute fast food we had been consuming. A freezer full of meals, a new routine that includes time together around the dinner table and a family working together to make my household hum were the catalysts that turned things around for us. Our new schedule helped us to redefine our priorities - with God and family at the top of the list (lawyers and laundry have been moved towards the bottom).

Although my days are still quite busy, dinner time now provides me and my family an opportunity to reconnect and be supportive of one another - to laugh together, to do family devotionals, play games and yes, even eat together. I don't think any of us realized how central a daily meal together was until we had lost it. As basic as it sounds, my 'hard knock lesson' this year has been that the most valuable moments in my life are those spent with my loved ones. With the help of the Lord and DreamDinners, my family received a refreshing new enthusiasm for dinner time and now enjoys and looks forward to our dinner together - while savoring "our dream" around the Scott family table.