

MINIMALIST HOMESCHOOL

BIBLICALLY BASED, MINIMALIST MINDED, HOMESCHOOL LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

WINTER 2018



Be still, and know that I am Elohim

Psalm 46:10

In This Edition



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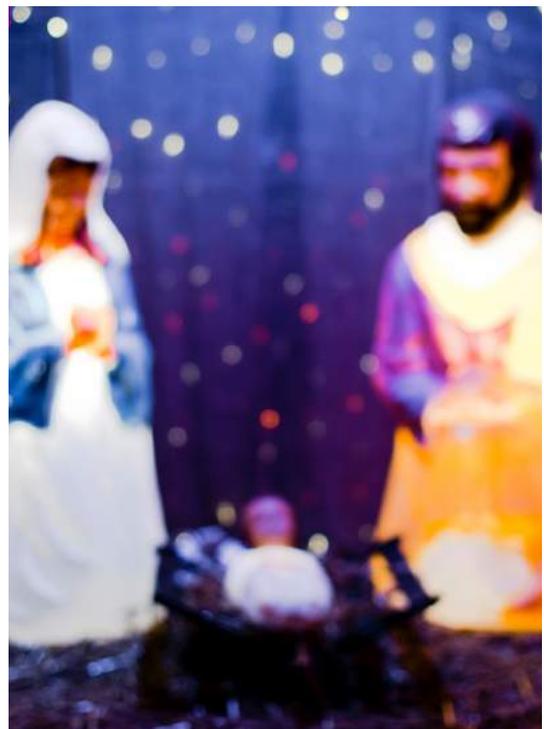
THE QUIET, FAITHFUL LIFE OF RUTH LEE

You don't need the attention of a million followers, the clicks of the crowds, or even the praise from the people who see you day in and day out.

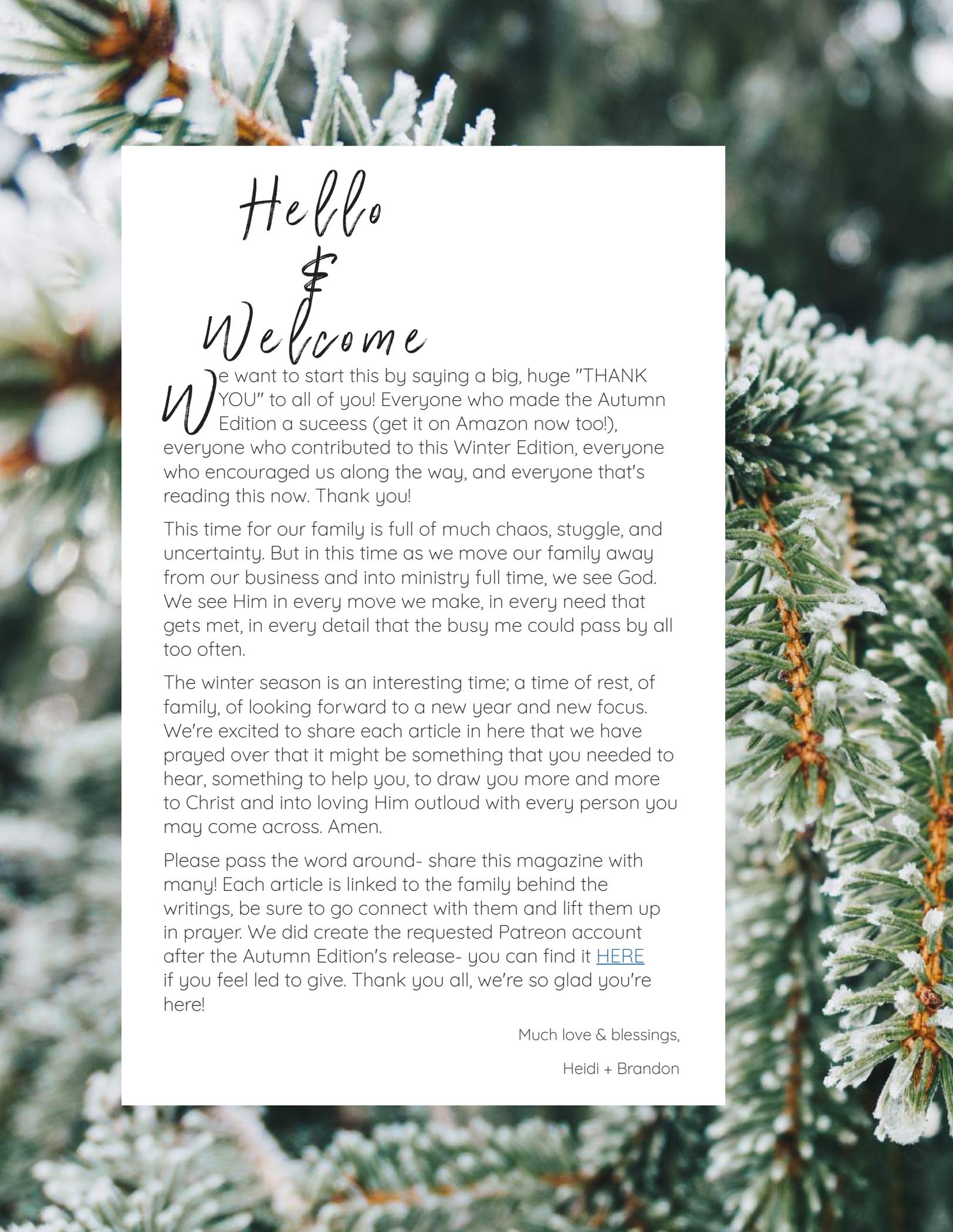
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CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS?

Let's discuss the origins of Christmas, our current cultural stance and an alternative- what is Christmas about and where do we see Christ?



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Hello & Welcome

We want to start this by saying a big, huge "THANK YOU" to all of you! Everyone who made the Autumn Edition a success (get it on Amazon now too!), everyone who contributed to this Winter Edition, everyone who encouraged us along the way, and everyone that's reading this now. Thank you!

This time for our family is full of much chaos, struggle, and uncertainty. But in this time as we move our family away from our business and into ministry full time, we see God. We see Him in every move we make, in every need that gets met, in every detail that the busy me could pass by all too often.

The winter season is an interesting time; a time of rest, of family, of looking forward to a new year and new focus. We're excited to share each article in here that we have prayed over that it might be something that you needed to hear, something to help you, to draw you more and more to Christ and into loving Him outloud with every person you may come across. Amen.

Please pass the word around- share this magazine with many! Each article is linked to the family behind the writings, be sure to go connect with them and lift them up in prayer. We did create the requested Patreon account after the Autumn Edition's release- you can find it [HERE](#) if you feel led to give. Thank you all, we're so glad you're here!

Much love & blessings,

Heidi + Brandon



It was you who set all
the boundaries of the
earth; you made both
summer and winter.

Psalms 74:17



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This is our ministry.

Diving into ministry full time, leaving our source of income behind, is exciting and terrifying all at the same time.

Our family is working hard every day to create material to serve other families; families seeking to grow in Biblical truth.

With much in the works, even more that we're praying over- it is a busy time as our family works to die to ourselves- to our own desires, and allow our lives to be poured out- to serve everyone we can as Christ calls us.

After the last magazine some of you reached out to us- and that was so kind.

If you feel led to give to this ministry, we have a Patreon account now to do so.

Visit our Patreon!



Thank you so much, I pray during this difficult time for our family that we will continue to grow and be strengthened so that we can serve all who the Lord puts in our path.

“ And don't be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don't worry about such things. These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.

Luke 12:29-31



Hello, we are Blake and Travis McDaniel, a husband and wife who started a business together and trusted God that it would all work out. First, let me tell you a little bit about what happened and what led to it all.

In November of 2016 we made the big decision to move our family from Fort Myers, FL to Peachtree City, GA. The reason was that we had felt a nudge in our hearts for awhile about moving to be apart of a church here. So, we sold our house, and my husband's business and made the move in the summer of 2017. While all that happened we were dreaming about what we should do for work once we moved. I had voiced to my husband that I would love to work together. I had been a stay at home/homeschool mom (which is a full time and then some), but I desired to build something and watch it grow with my husband. After many conversations about signs and future products we dove in and it has been amazing ever since!



Our desire is to make things that remind our customers of truth and inspire them to trust God. We have grown so much in the past year and now have an awesome team of people helping us. It is funny looking back at how it all unfolded, because if we combined both our interest and rolled the into one, you have Rooted and Grounded. This is definately only the beginning and we are working on some new products for after the new year, with a fun new website where we will be able to share more of our passion and what our company is about.

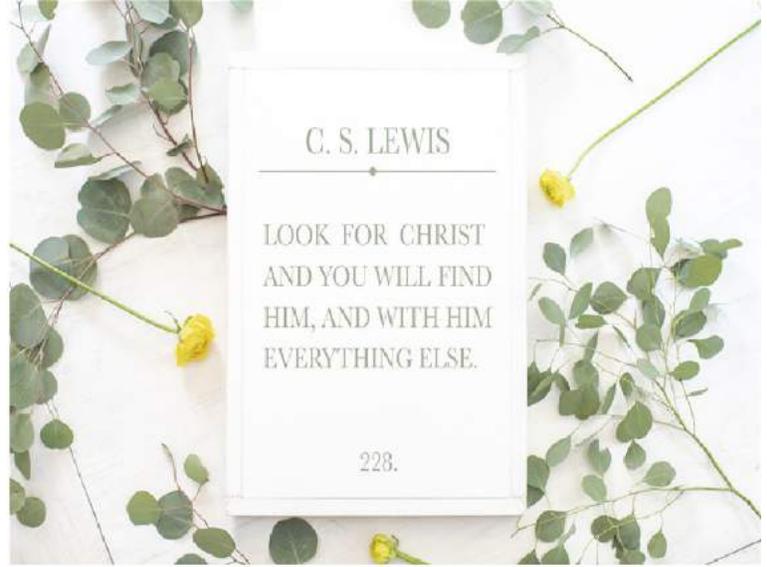
Written by: Blake McDaniel

To check out our shop you can check out our etsy shop at www.etsy.com/shop/rootedngroundedhome

We would love for you to follow our journey and connect with us on instagram: [@rootedandgroundedhome](https://www.instagram.com/rootedandgroundedhome)

Have a Very Merry Christmas!





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This is Not Our Best Life

by Sarah Beals [@joyfulleddays](#)

Today I read Psalms 17 and this prayer of David jumped out at me: "Deliver my soul...from men of the world whose portion is this life." I was mulling that phrase as I chopped onions for sauce and Swiffered my floors.

Too often I live as though this life is all there is... like my inheritance is here.

I've been enamored by the world, in love with its pursuits and pleasures, living like life owes me satisfaction here.

I'm too easily distracted, but in my saner moments, I know that as a child of God, it is my duty to *not* be swept up in the spirit of

this world. To plant my eyeballs on eternal matters and remember that after I die, my soul goes to the God who gave it and to the Source of my true satisfaction.

This world is not our best life, friends, even though we are so blessed in so many ways and we are to receive it with thankfulness. "Our portion" is elsewhere and where our "bliss is" there will our hearts be also.

Maybe with all the talk of voting and the calls for hope for change, or hope for control, it will help to remember that our hope is not in world systems, and that our "portion" is in the next life.

Sarah Beals lives in beautiful New England.

She writes about motherhood (six kids ages 4 through 25) , homemaking, homeschooling, hospitality, ministry, and choosing joy in the everyday mundane moments.

You can find her at joyfulleddays.com!



Slow Down, Weary Mom

by Chelsea Stanley, [@chelseastanley](#)

Originally published on [Desiring God](#)

I heard him cry in the monitor.

Seriously? I thought. Three straight nights of post-bedtime tears. I was so over it.

Walking up the stairs, I devised a scheme to get me out of his room as quickly as possible. But as my feet hit the hallway leading into his bedroom, I felt God's gentle nudge.

Slow down. He needs lullabies of grace tonight.

I took a deep breath of faith, and for the next forty minutes, I sang my scared little boy to sleep. My lullabies had calmed and quieted his four-year-old soul.

*Like a Weaned Child
with His Mother*

*I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother; like
a weaned child is my soul within me.*

(Psalm 131:2)

How does God calm and quiet our souls?
Like a mother.

Most of us have witnessed, in some way, the soul-calming effect of a mother's presence on her child. There is safety with a mother, just as there is safety in the Father's arms (Isaiah 33:2). The child hears peace in her voice just as the sheep hear peace in the Good Shepherd's (John 10:27).

When a child is hurt or scared or sick, he calls for his mother. He trusts her completely. If the mother he trusts teaches him that there is one in whom his soul can trust even more, then hopefully, one day, he will cry out for Jesus instead.

God's good purpose for mothers goes beyond feedings and diapers and taxi services. He designed you, dear mother, to be your child's first glimpse of his comforting love for us in Christ. No one is better suited for this job than you. What a privilege, then, for you to put God's soul-soothing character on display for your children.

Rooted in God

In the message "[Join Me in Soul-Satisfaction in God.](#)" John Piper says, "Psalm 131 is about a kind of contentment, or stillness, or quietness of soul, that is rooted not in circumstances, but in God — a God who never changes in his utter commitment to us in Christ."

If we desire for our children's souls to be rooted in God as he describes, then we as mothers have the great responsibility of providing a climate that is prime for growth. Root systems thrive in rich soil and sunlight. With ideal conditions early on, roots are able to absorb water and nutrients that eventually help the plant thrive in less than desirable circumstances.





Nourish Your Child

The monsters and thunderstorms that induce fear in our children's hearts right now will turn one day into real-life demons and tempests. We can begin the good work of preparing their souls for battle today. When our children come to us afraid or anxious, we have the God-ordained privilege of offering them rich soil and sunshine. Our hugs, snuggles, words, and lullabies are life-giving minerals to their souls.

How do we nourish our children? We offer them steadfast love and faithfulness. We bear with them, forgive them, show them kindness, listen to them, and offer them words of encouragement and life by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ on a daily basis.

Drench your child in God's word. Shine light into his darkness. Sing him to sleep. Take your child by the hand and lead him to streams of water so that God can plant his roots down deep and allow him to bear good fruit in the coming seasons (Psalm 1:3).

Lay Down Your Life

Motherhood is exhausting. It requires all of our energy — both mental and physical — and at the end of the day, it's not uncommon to feel like we're doing it all in vain. At times, it feels like you're giving up your life for your child. If it does, be encouraged that you're probably doing it right.

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

(1 John 3:16)

As we lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Christ, we also lay down our lives for our children.

Today, take the time to kiss the boo-boos, wipe the tears, and sing lullabies of grace. Let your children rest in the comfort of your presence now so that they learn to rest in Jesus soon.



Chelsea Stanley is a wife to Daniel, mama to three little boys, and daughter redeemed by the blood of Christ.

She shares God's heart for women and enjoys encouraging them with the written word.

She blogs at [Daughter Redeemed](#) and her writing has been featured at [Desiring God](#) and [Risen Motherhood](#).

Connect with her on [Instagram](#).



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Why Homeschool?

by Dorothy Joyner

"Ask the Teacher" series, continuing Spring 2019

So why do we choose to Homeschool? For some we choose to pull our children out of an educational system that is test driven, leaving no time for social and skill based training. While others of us choose to keep our child home due to the stress of dealing with a system that seems unwilling to help our child, which leads to behavior problems that arise from the intense pressure placed upon them. As for me it was for both of the aforementioned reasons.

For my own sanity, I chose to homeschool my twin sons once they reached middle school for both of the reasons mentioned above. One son had struggled academically from second grade on. It was then I learned he was dyslexic and enrolled him in a succession of classes to help him learn. My other son declared school "was boring" and gave up to easily, which in itself caused failing grades and unruly behavior. What I saw was the fast paced momentum of content taught in the classroom left my son lost and left behind which caused frustration and "bad" behaviors that were consistently growing out of control.

Once it was time to enroll them into middle school I was losing my mind. losing

sleep and losing my patience with both the public school system and my children.

Outside of school both boys were great kids, extremely thoughtful and considerate of others and joy to be with. In school the bullying had begun, they were labelled as "bad kids" and teachers just didn't have the time or inclination to work with them.

Over a period of three years, 2 different homeschooling programs, and with a huge dose of help from family and friends, I "homeschooled" the twins. WOW! The difference was amazing! During that time my two boys became different people. They became true friends, and academically successful. The success radiated throughout their high school days and both graduated, one with a high school diploma and the other a GED. I am so proud of them!

You see, I was a single mom of three kiddos, attending college 6 days a week for 6 years before teaching full time and attending night classes toward my Masters degree. I had 3 wonderful children where my eldest, my daughter, flew through school and was

highly praised and well loved by all. (As you may know she is the Editor and Chief of this magazine!! ;) She is independent, fierce and fun loving and always searching for ways to lend a hand, give words of wisdom, or offer a prayer for anyone in need. So, for me it was very difficult once the boys began school and struggled early on. Yes I was studying to be a teacher but had not yet “learned” how to deal with the issues facing my sons. If only I knew then, what I know now!

And “what I know now” is what I’m offering to you. parents and guardians, of homeschool students. After all has been said and done, I am still teaching in the public system for the last 20 years. I wake up EVERY morning with a heart and mind filled with joy and excitement to go to school and spend my days with my students! Every year I learn more and more about what works and what doesn’t work to make my students successful. I’m a bit envious of all you who

are Homeschooling! Ahhh...the peace and joy of teaching what matters most to your child as an individual, to “unschool” them persay, ...shew I am e n v i o u s!

Mrs. Heidi Garcia has asked me to offer advice, encouragement and honest view of resources that I have either used in the classroom, learned through professional development and am prepared to research just for you!

Please send your questions or concerns to theminimalisthomeschool@gmail.com add my name **Mrs. Joyner** in the subject line and I will address your replies as soon as possible.

Looking forward to meeting y’all!

Mrs. Dorothy Joyner

Teaching in Tennessee



Hello!

I’m a mom of 3 beautiful grown kiddos, a wife to one sweet man, a blessed public school teacher who touches the lives of 60+ kiddos every year, and a Nan (grandmother) to 5 snugly beauties!!

I am looking forward to helping you along the tricky Homeschooling path.

Would You Like to Contribute?

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

IS THERE SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN OUR NEXT EDITION? SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT? WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR ABOUT IT!

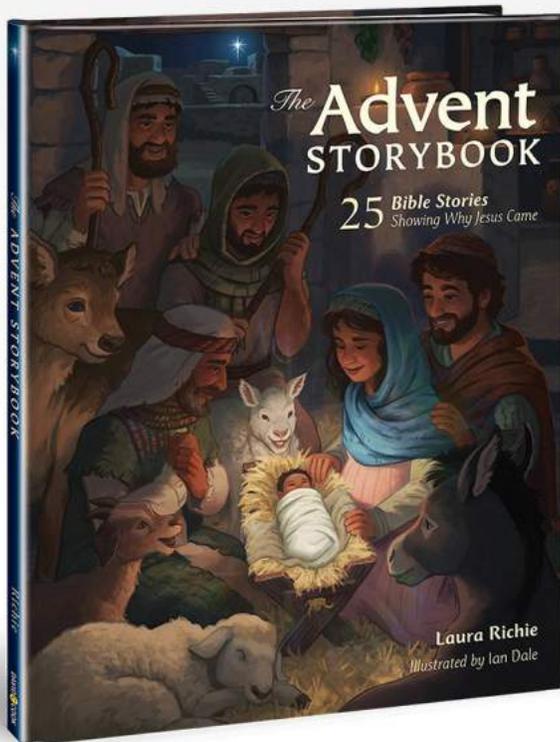
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God Gave Us Winter

by Heidi Garcia, [@minimalisthomeschool](https://www.instagram.com/minimalisthomeschool)

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven

Ecclesiastes 3:1

The seasons... something I didn't fully understand, I don't think, until my Southern California born + raised self made my way to North Carolina in my early 20's. Four different seasons?! I thought this only truly existed in the books and movies! But here I found myself, rolling around in fall leaves like a child and squealing with delight when the first snowflake fell. (I confess, 10+ years later and I still do the same.) Being able to see the distinctness between the seasons shows me the reflection of the seasons in life as we go through this journey.



As a wife, a mom to four, a business owner, a ministry maker- whatever roles you may hold- one thing is for sure, rest is needed at some time or another.

Our family came to that realization a few years back (we're slow to learn) while watching Alaska the Last Frontier. Have you seen it? This family lives on their homestead in Alaska and on one episode we saw they were talking about how winter time in Alaska was like a hibernation season for them as well. We had just finished up wedding season for our business and done 100 weddings. Literally- 100 events. Florals, coordinating, chaos. Weddings slow down/ cease to exist through most all of the winter season and we were exhausted. We would all curl up as a family on the couch in our 100 year old mill home and just binge on these cozy Alaskan shows. **But that thought hit us- winter is a season for hibernation. For rest. For stillness.**

Now, although North Carolina gets a little snow here and there, it's not even close with the Alaskan set up. But that part didn't matter- the season of long nights. Cold(er) days. Barren trees. Scarcer wildlife. All of God's natural world around us seems to be resting this season... **are we so different?**

While our family business being set up in this schedule certainly helped, we started using the winter season, as a family, to rest. To relax. To be still.

We let the cold come in and set our family into a whole routine of hibernation. We don't use much artificial lighting in our home anymore- a few low lights and candles. We start our days congregating by the fireplace, and end them in the same way.

We move with the natural rhythm of the day God crafted- finding ourselves going to bed earlier and earlier as night shows up sooner in these cold months.

The kettle is in near constant use heating up our coffees, teas and cocos. The oven is always heating the home as it bakes breads and treats. Learning takes place amidst warm quilts strewn about on the couch. And nearly all the windows have smears from finger drawings done in the steam from the kids warm breath.

God gave us winter. A season to rest, to be quiet, to renew. I think we've all heard of the super trendy idea "hygge" - described as "a Danish and Norwegian word for a mood of coziness and comfortable conviviality with feelings of wellness and contentment." But, as with all things, **our Lord was there first.** He's prepared this time for us from the beginning. A time for everything. Including rest.

I hope to encourage you this season to take note of what our Creator shows us throughout His creation- that this season of winter is a season of rest, stillness, quiet. **May this season bring your family that time to withdraw from the chaos of this world and find yourselves curled up in the sovereignty of our Creator.** In true reflection of His might. What a beautiful season indeed! Amen.



The Quiet, Faithful Life of Ruth Lee

by Andrea Burke, [@andragburke](#)



Ruth Lee.

I've heard that name since I can remember remembering. My sister was given her middle name because of Ruth Lee. Her name is echoed in our family stories and probably will be until the day I die.

She was the thin-framed woman who lived across the street from the wild Knefley family. My mother's wild family to be exact. My mom was one of 8 kids in a family of Irish Catholics. They have stories

of reckless adventures, Grandpa's songs and family sing-alongs around the old piano, bruises and scars from siblings who still claim they were in the right, and the laughter and grief of a home that was full of people who really needed the Gospel to change their lives. Mom tells how my grandfather would wake the house to his rendition of "The Burning of Rome" and there's probably no better choice of songs since he was the one sitting on the proverbial hillside watching the pain that he himself caused. They were a quintessential Irish family — loudly singing, full of life, keeping secrets, and hoping for a new day of freedom.

And then there was Ruth Lee. Mom tells me how Ruth would bake them cookies, welcome each of their ruddy faces into her home, and tell them again and again that she was praying. She was a safe haven from the stormy seas of home life and she went to her knees day after day, praying for that home.

Mom would tell us this as we grew up.

“Ruth Lee prayed for me to know Jesus,” she’d say and I’d nod my head, probably rolling my eyes and full of a 15-year-old’s rebellion and angst.

“Yes, mom,” I’d reply. “You always tell us about her.”

Ruth Lee wouldn’t live to see my mom come to faith in a small country church in upstate New York. She wouldn’t see my mother walk my older sister and two brothers, all under the age of 10, to that humble white building on the hill on the way out of town. She wouldn’t see my grandparents confess faith in Christ only years before their death. She wouldn’t see my sister lead worship and raise 8 kids to know the Lord. She wouldn’t see my one brother travel to Tanzania as a missionary, return to lead worship for thousands and then plant a church. She wouldn’t see my other brother pursue ministry in bible school, lead kids, students, worship, trips and ultimately become a pastor of a church in northern New York. She wouldn’t see me, stumbling my

way toward grace, serving in ministries and missions throughout the years and now working on staff at my church. She wouldn’t see each of us teaching our children, day after day, whispering their names in prayer as they sleep.

She wouldn’t know that every time she baked cookies, opened her kitchen door to the Knefley kids who probably made a ruckus in her quiet country home, and then whispered their names in her prayers, that she was doing
holy work.

But really, isn’t that what it is? I don’t know what dreams Ruth Lee had for her life. I don’t know what grief she suffered or what hopes she never saw come to pass. I don’t know how she decorated her kitchen or how clean her floors were. Yet she is not forgotten. And it’s not for her beauty, her wit, her food or her style, but the faithfulness of someone who kept their hand to the plow and when no one was watching, stayed faithful anyway.

She was doing Kingdom work when she’d pour another glass of milk. She was doing Kingdom work when she’d pat my mama’s curls. She was doing Kingdom work when she said those simple words, “I’m praying.” In her quiet, nearly invisible life, Ruth Lee was faithful.

You don't need a platform. You don't need everyone to know your name. You don't need the crowds to gather to hear you sing, or the pats on the back after you speak.

You don't need the attention of a million followers, the clicks of the crowds, or even the praise from the people who see you day in and day out.

The amazing and good news about this upside-down kingdom of our God is that you can be the most effective, the most faithful, and leave the greatest legacy simply by being faithful in your quiet life. The ones who impress the least, who live in small towns and are forgotten by 99.9% of the world are the ones who change generations.

I'm here because Ruth Lee prayed. A faithful woman sowed seed and someday when I get home, I'll find her in the middle of the crowd and through my tears say "Thank you." She'll probably be so taken with Jesus that she won't even hear me.

Be faithful in your field. Bake some cookies. Love those wild kids. Whisper their names at bedtime before the Lord.

Trust Him with the rest.



When she's not chasing around her six-year-old daughter or cooking vats of spaghetti sauce for her friends, Andrea Burke spends most of her time writing and working as a freelance designer and artist.

She's married to the quintessential mountain man, Jedediah, and they attend Grace Road Church in downtown Rochester, NY, where she also leads worship.



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By His Stripes We Are Healed

by Katie Riggs, [@humblemotherhood](#)

“This little baby was being fearfully and wonderfully knit in my womb when God decided to call him or her home.”

Our grief is deep but we know God our Father is ever good, wise and loving, therefore we can trust Him, truly and deeply in the most difficult of circumstances.

At the heart of the Bible is the gospel, and at the heart of the gospel is the unwavering, undeserving, and incomprehensible love of God for His people. Our good and loving God did not spare His Son, but gave Him up for us, and the same God sovereignly orchestrated the loss of our baby. Therefore we humbly trust that His providence is meant for and will produce something beautiful through the pain.

“We are so thankful for the ability to have known, loved, and prayed for this little one, even if it was only for 12 short weeks.”

Writing those words to announce the passing of our sweet little babe was harder than watching the ultrasound machine when I realized our baby no longer had a heartbeat. The midwife quietly whispered “I’m so sorry” while tears ran down all of our faces.

A few days later, at 4am, I found myself on my knees in our foyer praying for peace as my womb emptied and red and blue lights flashed outside our house.

The physical healing was minor in comparison to the deep wounds left on my heart that day.



“By His stripes we are healed”

God quietly breathed that truth to my heart over and over while I looked at the shirt I had been wearing that morning. Stripes of blood, from laying on the stretcher, had dried up the back. God saw me in my affliction, he knew and experienced this pain in the same way through the loss of His own Son, and now here He was whispering His steadfast love into my ear.

“By His stripes you are healed”

I grieve over never knowing their smile or never being able to watch them play with their brother and sister, my arms are empty but my heart is being beautifully mended by the one who spoke the world into being.

My miscarriage is something I never wanted to speak openly about, but valuing the life of the unborn has never been more important. It's a subject no one likes to talk about, including myself; pain and heartache is messy uncharted territory. I'm learning that pushing those hard feelings aside and refusing to acknowledge them can be detrimental to healing. Our baby, the size of my pinky toe, had brain activity and a heartbeat. Unborn life should be recognized and celebrated and the loss grieved.

Through it all, He is still good. The hurt and pain that exists in this world is from the world. “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12 CSB, emphasis added). The One who holds my baby in His arms is the creator of peace, love, goodness and grace, He doesn't cause hurt but He does allow it in order to draw us closer to Himself. Circumstances change and grief comes in waves, but we worship a God who is unchanging, steadfast, full of love and is sufficient for all our needs.

Hello there! I'm Katie Riggs, wife to my best friend,
mama of two littles here on earth + one
up in heaven, and a writer at
Humble Motherhood.

I'm passionate about homemaking, books, theology, fostering imagination in my babies and cultivating community wherever the Navy sends us!

God has called us as believers to love others well and to let iron sharpen iron (Proverbs 27:17) so that we may encourage and build each other up in Christ.

I'd love for you to join the Humble Motherhood village on my [blog](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)!





Make Minimalism About More

by Stephanie Rudas, [@minimalistmomlife](#)

The trendy view of minimalism right now has most thinking of stark white walls, a few plants, and maybe some bamboo furniture. Type in the word minimalism on any social media and you are sure to find lots of tips on how much easier cleaning your home is when you own less. But isn't minimalism about more than that?

If minimalism is a lifestyle as some claim, then shouldn't it be about more than just having a clean house or trendy decor? Of course it should!

I've composed a list of some ways the application of minimalism to your life can be about more!

1. Once you become ruthless about what is in your home, you naturally become more intentional about what comes in. You might notice you're pickier when you shop and less likely to make impulse purchases. Of course the less you buy of stuff, the more money you have in the budget to pay off debt, vacation, or give.
2. On that same note the less time you spend trying to keep up with the latest trends of your neighbors, the more time you'll find to actually love them. Once stop competing with your friends for the best looking family photos on Facebook with perfectly coordinated outfits, the more time you'll have to genuinely cheer them on.

3. When we stop focusing on stuff, its easier to stop the constant focus on ourselves. Our horizons are broadened to the needs of people across the ocean from us once we get our nose out of the Pottery Barn catalog.

4. As we simplify things in our home, we can appreciate the beauty of what is left. We can teach our children to see the magic in playing hide and seek inside, when they aren't knee deep in the latest toy unboxed by a kid they don't know on youtube.

5. Once we lose the visual clutter, we have more energy to be productive, to listen to what our spouse is actually saying, and to join the imaginative play of our children. When everything isn't screaming for our time and attention it's much easier to quiet ourselves in prayer and reading.

6. When our children, spouse, and extended family understand the "why" behind our desire for simplicity they are much more likely to be in support. Minimalism isn't the decision to live a life with nothing, but to make much of the life we've given. Freed from the rat race to have the most, the newest, and the best. Choosing to live simply so others may simply live.

Choosing to live with less should spur us on to gratitude, contentment, care of the needs of others, and of course give us more time for what actually matters.

Make minimalism about more!



Stephanie is saved by grace.

She is a Pastors wife, homeschool mama to four ages 5 and under, and a happy homemaker.

She is passionate about debt free, simple living. Stephanie enjoys traveling, running marathons, and cooking for her family.

You can find Stephanie on Instagram at [minimalistmomlife](https://www.instagram.com/minimalistmomlife) as well as on youtube at [minimalistmomlife](https://www.youtube.com/minimalistmomlife)







A Simple Guide to Morning Time

by Angie Price, [@freshwanderings](https://www.instagram.com/freshwanderings)

It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men's hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit.

– Robert Louis Stevenson

Since as far back as I can remember the evergreen tree has played a major role in my celebration of Christmas.

We have adorned our home with artificial ones, real ones, ceramic ones, and even dough shaped ones. The Christmas tree has been a symbol of Christmas long before any of us have celebrated it, and will continue to be so long after we are gone.

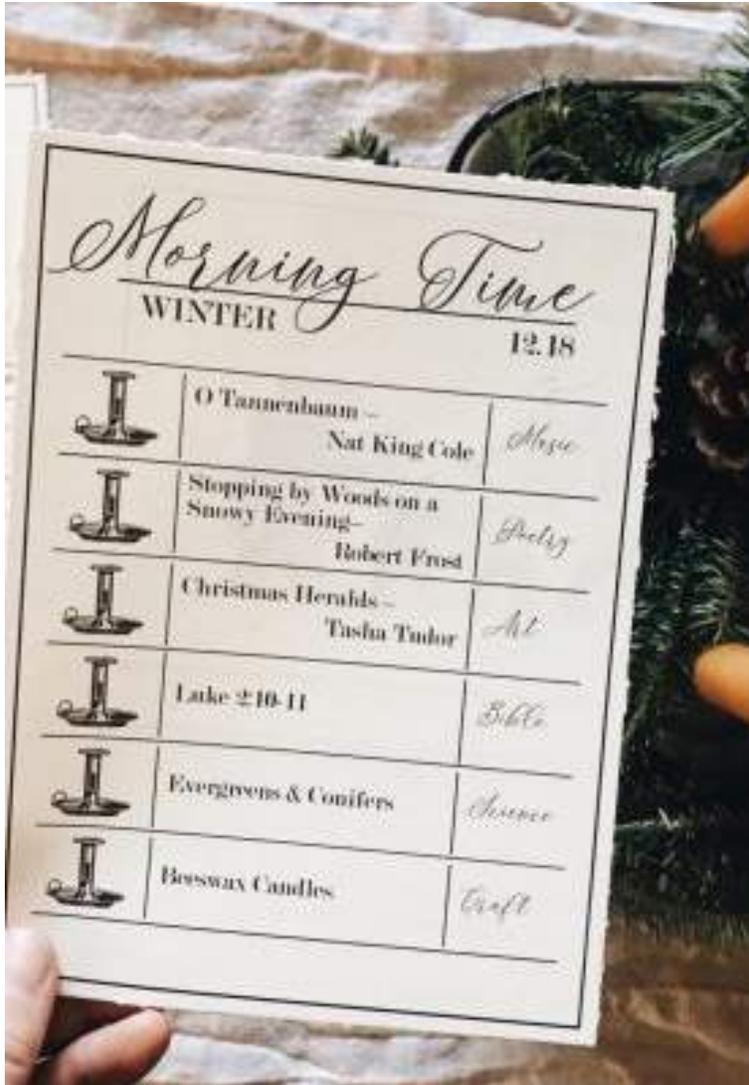
This month, as I began to pull together the morning time plan for December, I was torn with an array of options. The focus could have been on anything from stars, hibernation, changing of the seasons, gifts, or snow but in the end, I kept coming back to the evergreens. This is the perfect time of year to study these types of trees, and even more fun to gather pine cones,

evergreen branches, holly leaves and berries, and mistletoe for further study as well as adorn our homes.

So this month our music, poetry, art print and science all have little undertones of the evergreen. I hope you enjoy them.

You can find the morning time printable [here](#).





Music

The music choice for December was very difficult. Doing a search for Christmas music yields a million results and with that comes a huge range of ideas and preferences. Being a type 4 on the Enneagram scale, I am very prone to caring about what others think, which is not always a bad thing, but does cause me to second guess my decisions based on what I believe others will think. This is a personality trait and insecurity that I am continuously working through (Amanda wrote a great blog post about 4's recently, I found it to be very accurate. If you're interested, you can read it [here](#).) Ultimately, I chose Nat King Cole's version of [O Tannenbaum](#). His version is pure and simple and has always been one of my favorites.

The song O Christmas Tree, is actually based on an old German folk song that had nothing to do with Christmas but was about the stability and faithfulness of the fir tree. A really neat article about the translation and how it came to be a traditional Christmas song can be found on this [website](#).

Poetry

We have had [this beautifully illustrated](#) version of Robert Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" for a long time and have enjoyed it immensely. It is a fun interpretation of the poem, especially in December. Reading it over the years has brought a great appreciation of this poem and has become one we love.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep."

Art

Tasha Tudor was an incredible illustrator. Oh my, how I love all of her sweet depictions of childhood. The art we will be observing this month is said to be an illustration of her children and grandchildren, all drawn as Tasha chose to remember them: young and lively. Tasha Tudor was not only an illustrator but also wrote many books. I am working to slowly add some of them to our home library with *A Time to Keep* at the very top of the list. You can read much more about her life on *Tasha Tudor and Family*, she was an incredible gardener, illustrator, and had a fond love of Corgi's. If nothing else, just look at all of the beauty a Pinterest search of Tasha Tudor illustrations yields.



Bible

The best news ever given, heralded by a host of angels. I love to think of the joy that must have surrounded this news. Joy that was not intended only for the shepherds or Mary and Joseph, but one that is available for all people.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the LORD.

Luke 2:10-11



Science

I posted some ideas for nature study this month. Many of these I took from Anna Botsford Comstock's, [Handbook of Nature Study](#). You can find lessons for The Pine, The Norway Spruce, and The Hemlock on pages 670-680. If you don't have this book no need to worry just use the ideas listed on the printout and let the imaginations of your children take care of the rest!

Craft

A few years ago my children and I wrapped our own beeswax candles: keeping some and gifting others. Slowly we have used up our supply and at their request we will be making more this Christmas. If you have never done this with your children, you have missed out. This quiet crafts opens up plenty of opportunity for conversation and results in joy that is found by making something so beautiful, so simply. We used [this kit](#) when we did this craft previously, and will be using it again this year.

Thank you all, so very much, for your sweet comments on [previous morning time plans](#). I am always encouraged by your words.

It is very humbling to know that many of you are using this in your school plans day in and day out. I hope they continue to bless your family.

Merry Christmas, friends!

WINTER 12.18
O Tannenbaum –
Nat King Cole

Stopping by Woods on a



Art

Hello! I am Angie from Fresh Wanderings. I have many roles to fill in life, but the ones I treasure most are those of wife, mother, home educator, and friend. I have been educating my children at home since my oldest began kindergarten. That means we are on our 8th year of homeschooling.

Homeschooling and taking care of the needs of my family comes first, but over time I have learned that there are certain habits and interests that I need to cultivate in my own life in order to feed the longings of my heart. Baking, crafting, and creating a home that feels cozy and warm are some of my greatest interests.

My desire is to help others see beauty in the mundane. I blog at [Fresh Wanderings](#) in hopes that it gives other wives and mothers a place to come where they are inspired to create, dwell, learn, and renew.



The Power of the Tongue

by Brittany McCardle, [@spreadingmytent](#)

Imagine in your home a long, beautifully decorated dining table. The tablecloth is clean and crisp. The dishes are set. The silverware is polished and placed carefully beside each dish. A napkin rests, exquisitely folded on each plate, and your family sits, eagerly awaiting the meal. This is not the table you serve your morning toast and cereal on, nor your evening casserole. The nourishment served at this table is far more important than the most nutritious dish and cannot be bought with money. Even though you cannot see this table, the food is real.

"A man's stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth. From the produce of his lips he shall be filled. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat of its fruit."

Proverbs 18: 20-21

The Bible says what we eat each day doesn't come from our kitchen or the supermarket, it comes from our mouth. Every day we are filled with the words we choose to think and say. They sink down deep into the innermost parts of our body and either give us life or take it away. The words we pour into our children will also become the food their minds, souls and spirits grow on.

We live in a culture that loves words. Slogans, sayings and phrases are everywhere. Every day we are bombarded with a buffet of words that either build us up or tear us down, and every day we are given a chance to choose - life, or death.

One day, an ordinary shopping trip revealed this all too clearly for me.

I was browsing through a grocery supercenter, picking up food and a few household items when a rack of colorful onesies caught my eye. I paused to read the funny or sweet words usually printed on them, but on this day I found neither.

The first one read, "Beauty from Mommy and Attitude from My Aunt!"

Another touted, "I'm Sassy and I know it!"

And the last one declared, "I Brighten Mommy's Day, and Ruin Her Nights!"

I stopped, truly shocked at what I was seeing.

These were not sweet sentiments printed for a precious child, these were the rotting words served by a society speaking death.

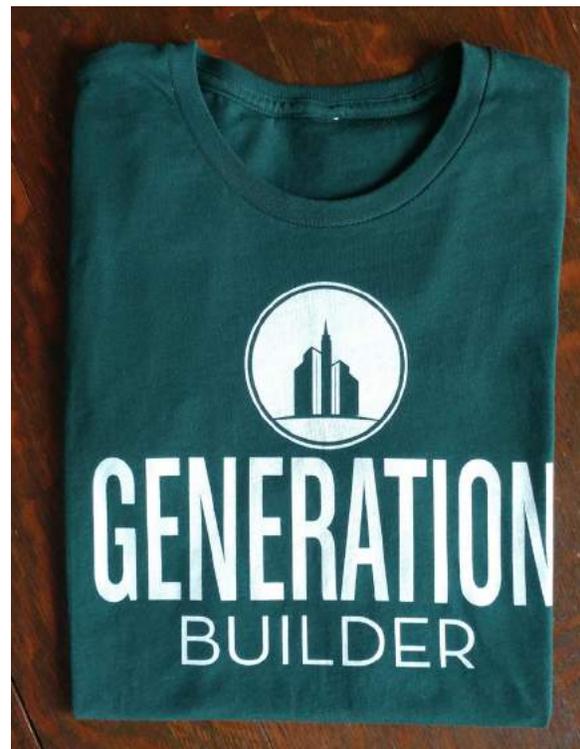
In that moment I realized that all around me I was being invited to sit and dine on words, and more so, I was being invited to take these choice words into my home and serve them, piping hot, to my children, my husband and myself. Most people partake, unaware that the morsels that make them chuckle or smile are actually spiritual food designed to deceive and steal life. The temporary laugh we might get from the message are seeds that take root, sprout and produce bitter, deadly fruit.

So shocked at the negative messages I read, I snapped a picture of them that day and told my husband the story. He was just as shocked as I was, and as we discussed

the importance and impact of the words we speak over our children, [Set Apart Clothing](#) was born. Families needed not just cute or sweet messages to speak over themselves and their families, they needed words that were powerful. Words that could actually transform. We knew of no other words than the very words of God found in the Bible.

It was exciting to realize how much power God had entrusted to us. Instead of speaking death, we can apply His life-giving words to our life and our clothing and offer a feast of rich nourishment for as many that are hungry. In time and with faith, these words will produce an abundant life giving harvest for generations to come.

We know that as we speak life from our home, our t-shirts, accessories and social media we are spreading handfuls of seeds. We have faith that they will go far and wide, finding their place in the fertile soil of hearts ready to receive.





Brittany is a wife of 14 years and mama to four.

She and her husband began Set Apart Clothing in 2018 with a mission to see families adopt God's vision for generational blessing.

Although she loves running a business alongside her husband, her first and most important career is that of wife and mother.

She has a passion for God's word, writing, home-schooling, and creating a rich and unhurried home life for her three daughters and baby boy.

You can find her sharing her life at home [@spreadingmytent](#) and the Set Apart Clothing shop [@setapart.co](#)

How are we training them up?

by Brandon Garcia, [@minimalisthomeschool](#)



Getting our children to understand scripture is sometimes as easy as being honest with them.

We need to be careful we're not feeding our children milk when they need solid food, our children need to understand, to their ability, we need to be clear with them that they are going out as sheep among wolves. It's unfair not to arm our children spiritually for the hostile world we're sending them into. We have to help them build the house on the rock, not on sand (Matthew 7:24-27)

You shall teach them diligently to

your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

[Deuteronomy 6:7]

By no means is this the case in every child, some children develop slower than others and need more time, but most children can understand the concept of sin at a very early age, by the time they understand right and wrong they understand sin.

Sin being just right and wrong isn't just enough, they should be taught the truth. There's a very real evil in this world that will always tempt them to do wrong, they need to know about the evil.

We tend not to be direct with our kids out of fear that we're going to terrify them, but that's exactly it, fear. God did not give us a spirit of fear, fear is a direct result of not trusting in God. Why are we scared to share the real parts of the Bible and faith with our children?

Teach them what putting on the armor of God really means, they can understand the concept of the Holy Spirit if we teach it to them through good and evil.

Teach them that they sin just like mommy and daddy but they have an advocate in Christ when they do wrong, if they confess their wrong, ask for forgiveness, and try not to repeat the same wrong.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And

by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

[1 John 2:1-6]

But teach them the truth, we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

[Romans 3:23]



The armor of God is not a Sunday school concept that involves making paper swords and shields, the armor of God is a necessary part of the rest of their lives. Our children are spiritually attacked just like adults, therefore we must teach them to put it on. Teaching our children diligently requires being honest with them and building a strong foundation on solid ground.

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all

the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit.

[Ephesians 6:13-18]

Teaching our children diligently requires being honest with them and building a strong foundation on solid ground. It is upon this solid ground, this Biblical foundation, that everything else will be built.

I encourage us to assess ourselves in this area, to be rooted in the scriptures ourselves so that we can take this task with all the seriousness it deserves, to truly train up our children in the way they should go; so that even when they are old, they will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)



Brandon is a father of four, married to his high school sweetheart, living in North Carolina.

He studied at Christian Leaders Institute and now spends his days devoted to his scripture studies and laying the foundation for his family ministry.

He enjoys hanging out with the family chickens, sermons by Dr. Andy Woods, a hot cup of tea and the quiet of country life.

Hear more from him on his podcast, [Let's Try Not To Mess This Up.](#)

LET'S TRY

NOT TO

mess

THIS UP

HUSBAND + WIFE PODCAST
DISCUSSING TOPICS OF LIFE
FROM A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION.

SOUNDCLOUD

YOUTUBE

Biblical Minimalism?

by Heidi Garcia, @minimalisthomeschool



"This minimalism has infected everything—the more and more I simplify the excess, the more and more it draws me to scripture. And the more and more I'm drawn into God's word, the more and more I let go and turn away from the things of this world."



The straight forwardness of this topic is this: we are told to not be focused on the things of this world. For if the love of the world is in us, then the love of the Father is not. We cannot serve two masters- our focus can not be on the things of this world and on Christ. Doesn't work. End of story.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:15

Now, this isn't to say that you can't own anything at all. The goal here is NOT to have a home, a life, void of all possessions. Gosh- if the minimalist police showed up at my home I'd be in major trouble! We put our lives on blast with a daily vlog-- there's oodles of "minimalist" fowls left and right. Because you see, the Biblical theme of minimalism is something quite different than what the world might teach it to be.

At the foundation of a 'Biblical minimalism' I think, would be the simple truth that we are called to be not of this world. For this world, where I currently find myself, is not my home. This country, this state, this town, this building- I am a foreigner to it

all. My home is yet to come, for I will be reunited with my Lord and that will be my home. So if my focus is not directed in this way, what am I doing at all?

Until that time comes, I am here to maintain. That means I most likely will have some type of house, job, car, clothes... some stuff. But the heart of the matter is what this all comes down to- WHY do I have what I have? HOW am I shining the light of Christ with what I have? We need to seriously consider these questions.

My husband and I asked ourselves these questions (in a round-about way) and the answers made us rethink our life path. We left the rat race, the American 9-5, we traded the suburbs for the country, the culdesac model home for a seen-better-days house. Our focus shifts further and further, this "minimalism" thing takes over all aspects of our lives and not just the physical number of items in my direct vicinity. As my spirit grows, the stuff diminishes. The longing for the things of this world seems to shrink day by day.

So how do we apply this?

The most obvious of ways, is to lessen the count of items you own.



The process I started using and sharing with friends and family is in my free eBook, *Minimalist Home*. Simple, direct steps to help you realize what you truly, absolutely NEED- and then get rid of the rest. Let the excess go- let it bless someone in need. Keep what you truly need (not just think you need), take it seriously when asking yourself

"How am I serving my Lord with this?"

THE MINIMALIST HOME



DOWNLOAD THE FREE
EBOOK **HERE!** 

Start however big or small you need to, once you get going I find it harder to stop. Once you feel the difference in your home once the excess weight of STUFF is freed... man! That's the feeling! You think of the rich man speaking to Jesus that went away sad after he was instructed to give all his stuff away- no way! I went into these steps of minimalism willingly and the process of giving it all away felt wonderful! Your heart makes all the difference here.

*Looking at the man,
Jesus felt genuine love
for him. "There is still
one thing you haven't
done," he told him.
"Go and sell all your
possessions and give the
money to the poor, and
you will have treasure
in heaven. Then come,
follow me."
At this the man's face
fell, and he went away
sad, for he had many
possessions.*

Mark 10:21-22

For our family, we also apply this practice of what's absolutely needed to maintain



and 'how am I serving Christ Jesus with this' to other areas. In the way we homeschool, the way I grocery shop once a month and meal plan, the bills we have, where our focus is directed in regards to future things... it all rests on these principles.

I'm no longer the gal you want to go to when it comes to chatting about things like Black Friday shopping, new lines of products at Target, making your home Joanna Gaines worthy, the latest tv shows, or much of anything else really. This minimalism has infected everything- the more and more I simplify the excess, the more and more it draws me to scripture. And the more and more I'm drawn into God's word, the more and more I let go and turn away from the things of this world. For us- this "minimalism" thing is very spiritual. Yes, we accumulate less stuff and are quick to go through and scale

down what we do physically possess, but it's not for some nifty hipster "I ❤️ Minimalism" badge- it's because my focus is on Christ. On being reunited with Him. On living as He told us to, as unworthy servants, until that time of reunion comes.

Your journey, your home, your life- none of it needs to look like anyone else. It doesn't have to fit a specific item count or checklist. God knows your heart, He knows your focus. If you feel overwhelmed with the stuff, the chaos, the noise, the stress- I'd love to share with you the steps that work for me to get rid of all that. Grab a copy of my simple eBook, come hang out with us and see how we apply some of these things to our family- we're in no way "perfect" but my motives are pure, my heart is focused on Christ. I pray that in this there is something that can be of help to even one person, and that help will bring glory to God.

Heidi Garcia is married to her BFF, raising 4 kiddos in Western North Carolina on their little wanna-be farm of poultry.

She does things like vlog her family's homeschool days, create magazines for fellow Biblical minded folk, ramble about this and that, and ponder why the house is always somehow a mess.

Come hang out on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), her [website](#) and [Podcast](#)!



10 Ways to have a Gospel Centered Home

by Alana Taylor, [@myfeatheredarrows](#)

The gospel changes everything; or so we claim. Unfortunately, this good news that Jesus has saved us by His grace is often something we believe with our head, yet struggle to practically apply with our hands. We know fully trusting in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross changes our eternity, but because we're stuck somewhere between "the already and the not yet", we sometimes can't wrap our minds around how this good news tangibly affects our day-to-day living.

The thing is, if the gospel changes everything {and we believe that it truly does}, then the days we spend at home educating our children ought to be marked by the same grace that saved us in the first place. Because the mother is the primary person to set the tone of the home environment, it is up to her {to us} to establish and maintain this grace-tempered atmosphere. With that in mind, I'd like to offer all of us a few ways to keep the gospel at the forefront of our minds and hearts as we go about our school lessons and household chores...

ONE // We cannot give what we do not possess. - A gospel-centered home is impossible without a mama

who is committed to pursuing a biblical understanding of who God is and what He has done. A home saturated in the grace of the gospel will not happen if we, as mamas, think we can simply put on our big girl pants and do all of the things in our own strength, rather than living in a place of humility, desperately aware of our need for Jesus to change our own heart before we can impact the hearts of our children.

TWO // Point to their need for a Savior. - So often, we focus on the outward behavior rather than the heart-issue that caused it. A gospel-centered home, though, is one with a mama who knows that when her children, who have yet to trust in Jesus' sacrifice on his/her behalf, act out in disobedience or anger or selfishness, they're simply doing the only thing their sinful nature knows to do. She, then, with compassion and love, communicates to her children that they have a great need and that there is a great Savior.

THREE // Repentance as a lifestyle. - Likewise, a gospel-centered home is one with a mother who is painfully aware of her own sin struggles and seeks to model biblical repentance to her children.

The Gospel According John

The Deity of Jesus Christ

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. **4** In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. **5** The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not ^acomprehend it.

The Witness John

6 There ^bcame a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. **8** He was not the Light, but came to testify about the Light. **9** There was the true Light ^cwhich, into the world, enlightens every man who was in the world, and the world did not receive Him. **10** He came to His ^down, and those who received Him, to them gave the right to become children of God, those who believe in His name, not of blood nor of the will of man, but of the Father who sent Him.

11 Made Flesh

When the offense is against them, she is quick to ask for their forgiveness. Even when it doesn't directly impact them, though, she can still communicate that He who began a good work in her {namely, the work of salvation} has promised to bring it to completion {Philippians 1:6}.

FOUR // Sanctification, not perfection.

- In the gospel-centered home, there is no place for a standard of perfection. The only outcome that can come from such impossible expectations is children who are well-versed in the ways of legalism and who do not know how to accept the grace of God for themselves or generously lavish it upon others. Instead, we have patience with ourselves and with them, knowing that sanctification doesn't happen overnight. It has to happen in God's timing, not our own.

FIVE // They're your closest neighbors.

- One thing that marks a gospel-centered home is how its occupants treat one another. In this kind of home, each member of the family understands that the person in the next room {or in the same bed}, is our closest neighbor. This reality means that we must first practice obeying those "one another" commands in the context of our family before we can, with integrity, practice them with extended family, friends, and strangers.

SIX // Relationship trumps scholarship.

- A gospel-centered home places higher

value on relationships than academic or extracurricular achievement. We're told in 1 Corinthians 13 that spiritual gifts mean nothing if they're done without love. Likewise, as homeschooling mamas, we can raise children who know how to ace a college entrance exam and get a full-ride scholarship to the university of their choice, but if we lose our connection with their hearts, is it worth it? If they don't seek to love others more than they strive to gain worldly accolades, have we really taught them anything of lasting value? Latin and logic have their place, but though they may impress, they mean nothing without a Christ-like love for other people. Remember, though, that they'll never learn this by way of mere lip-service from us. We must model a genuine love for others in front of them and then let them hear our confessions of repentance when we don't do it perfectly {because we will fail sometimes}.

SEVEN // His kingdom, not ours. - The gospel-centered home has no interest in making a name for itself. This is why the comparison trap is so dangerous. We compare someone else's highlight reel to our less-shiny reality, only to wish we had our act together the way that other moms do {or seem to}. We want others to see our domestic abilities or our smooth-sailing homeschool days and be impressed with us. But the mama who desires a gospel-centered home will place no stock in trying to make people see how great she is; rather, she will seek to show people how great Christ is.

EIGHT // Count it ALL joy. - A home centered on the gospel seeks to radiate joy no matter the circumstances. When James 1:2 tells us to count it all joy, it truly means all. Not some. Not most. ALL. Everything. The Bible tells us to count everything - the good, the bad, and the ugly - as joy. This means on the good homeschool days there's joy because God has given us a sweet day with our kids. And on the hard days? Those days we can still have joy because all of the tantrums and spills and tears {theirs and ours} are things God uses to make us more like Him. We can also find joy in the struggles because He promises to walk with us through whatever hardships we may face {from small things, like toddler-induced carpet stains, to bigger things, like seasons of sickness or financial crisis}.

NINE // All subjects echo something of God. - A home{school} that seeks to be saturated in the gospel will approach its studies with the knowledge that everything points back to God. Math displays His order. History tells of His sovereignty. Science shows us His creativity. Everything that we encounter with our children {whether through formal lessons or casual conversations} can, and does, point back to God one way or another. When we teach this way, we break down the barrier between the sacred and the secular. We show our kids that it's all sacred because it's all His. When we see the world through this lens, it leads to a deeper worship of God because we are able to truly see His hand everywhere we look.

TEN // The pressure is off. - Most of all, a gospel-centered home is backed by the truth that it all depends on God {who is ever steadfast and faithful} rather than us {who are ever unsteady and fickle}. God alone gives the increase. God alone imparts knowledge. God alone saves. We're simply called to be obedient and trust God with the results. This means we are free from finding our identity solely in our motherhood because it is only found in Christ. We are free from measuring our worth according to how well our children perform because our worth is no longer tied to our works but is tied to the work of Christ for us on the cross. We are free from cultural standards because we hold ourselves to a different standard. The gospel speaks freedom over us as mamas, which is a truth we can find comfort in when the end of the day comes and leaves us feeling like we're somehow failing our kids. We put hand to plow, but God brings about the yield.



Really, I should have started this article with a big, ol' disclaimer letting you know that I do none of this perfectly in my own home. I desire a gospel-centered home, but I don't always have a deep, meaningful time in the Word each morning, followed by an evenly-spaced sprinkling of mini gospel-sermonettes directed towards my kids throughout the day. I want the glorious grace of God to be the focus of our days, but there are times when I just want them to stop arguing with each other already and I forget to call their attention to their need for a Savior. I want to love them like Christ has loved me, but in my flesh, I forget to treat them like my closest neighbors and I allow "keeping up with the Jones'" to matter more to me than heart-connections.

No mom is perfect and I am painfully aware of how imperfect I am. Thankfully, I have a perfect Savior and when I intentionally seek to abide in Him {John 15:4}, He gives me all that I need {in energy, in wisdom, in patience} to raise my children in a way that honors Him. And, friend, if you are in Christ, He promises these same things to you as well. So, together let's stand hand-in-hand at the foot of the cross, marvel at His sacrifice, and side-by-side run the race set before us. Soli Deo Gloria {For the glory of God alone}. He is worthy!



Hi, my name is Alana Taylor and it's an honor to share a little piece of my heart with you. I am a sinner saved by grace, a wife for over 11 years now, a homeschooling mama in the middle of our 6th year educating at home (Christian Classical method), a homemaker who seeks to create place of refuge, and a domestic theologian who desires to grow in holiness each and every day. My biggest hope for my family is that we seek to live simply, love generously, and learn constantly... all to the glory of God. Some of my hobbies include reading, thrifting, and decorating my house on a budget. You can find me on Instagram at [@myfeatheredarrows](https://www.instagram.com/myfeatheredarrows). If you're on Instagram, too, please stop by my feed say "hello"... I'd love to meet you.



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Christ in Christmas?

by Heidi Garcia, [@minimalisthomeschool](#)



The topic of Christmas and whether or not we as believers in Christ should celebrate it was by far the most requested topic for discussion for this magazine issue. And while I may have strong opinions on this, it is by far the hardest article to write. I've been thinking on it, praying on it, discussed it with my husband and we stumbled through a conversation on our podcast and then talked again over it all with a friend... I want to start this by saying that there is a simple truth at the heart of this that each one of us must pause and assess.

Bear with me...

Christmas. Something that truthfully, I never put much deep thought to. I was raised in a Christian home, in a non-denominational church, my whole life. We never missed a candlelight service, always had our nativity set up, and our Christmas tree was always topped with an angel. Christmas was for celebrating Christ's birth, it was "Merry Christmas" NOT "Happy Holidays" and that was that.

Starting with our son we held the tradition where we baked a cake every Christmas and sang happy birthday, we never did Santa Clause, and we continued on not thinking much about it. I would eagerly look forward to December 1st every year, deck our house with Christmas everything, put up multiple live Christmas trees (clearly artificial trees were for those not-hardcore folks), and I owned more Christmas music than any other genre. My husband even states that ever since the movie Elf came out (which we saw in theaters, bought the collector's edition dvd, the book and various other memorabilia), my life was essentially shaped by it. I was Miss Christmas.

We had gone through various stages- some years where we got consumed with "outdoing" it and would spend our last penny to make sure our tree was packed with presents, and other years where we went much more minimalist with it. I feel like we really did move through the entire spectrum here.

Then last year, we didn't celebrate it.

At all. No tree, no music, no gifts, no special dinner. NADA. I'm fairly certain our extended family still thinks we're nuts. Let me explain...

The Roots of Christmas

I started questioning Christmas. Apparently it's roots go much deeper than just 'Murica and Jesus. My point of this article is not to break all of that down, but I think it's important to be informed. Across the board in all that we do- be informed. Why do we have a Christmas tree? Why do we celebrate on December 25th? Is the traditional nativity scene Biblically accurate? What's the significance of the "holiday spirit", the yule log, mistletoe, why are all these things "Christmas"? [Here's](#) a good starting point of information you can learn and research further.

The roots of Christmas are pagan worship. Pure and simple, that's the history of it. There's scriptural reference to Christmas trees (spoiler alert, it's not good), the date itself is most certainly not when Jesus would have been born but is based off the winter solstice and pagan worship, the nativity scene is most always Biblically inaccurate. Christmas was literally Christ Mass when the Catholic church essentially slapped the name of Jesus onto the preexisting pagan worship activities in an attempt to Christianize the people.

Be informed. We should not be ignorant of these things, I don't think we should take part in anything in life without being informed to the best of our ability. The foods we eat, the things we celebrate, the people we vote for (or the decision not to vote), the curriculum we use, the money we spend—it applies everywhere.

How Do We Respond?

There is not a one size fit's all, and I don't believe anyone should state dogmatically that there is. As with everything- we must weigh it with scripture and rely on the Holy Spirit within us to convict where conviction is needed and lead us to live as Christ lived. Period.

You can choose to cut out Christmas.

Maybe in learning the roots here, the 'why' here, maybe it is best that you let go of Christmas. The reason may be different- maybe it's because the pagan roots, maybe it's because at the heart of it Christmas has been an idol in your life. Maybe the perfect tree, the social media worthiness of it, the kids getting the perfect gifts, whatever- maybe that has really become an idol in your life. Ask yourself- can you let go of it and it be ok? Because this is something we must do with everything- test all in our lives to see where idols may lie. Would you, could you, cut it out? Or is it an idol in your life? Your pursuit of career? Your "perfect" home? How you portray your life on social media? Christmas? Could you let it all go and literally have just the private focus of Christ and be ok? I know the true answer- that that's all we actually need, but can your worldly flesh do it?

That's what I asked myself last year. The truth of the roots bothered me. A lot. The chaos, the busy, the stress, WHY I cared about all these things bothered me. Why I had been conditioned to care so much about this specific date, and why I had conditioned my children to follow suit, bothered me. So

I went to my husband and told him. I told him I didn't want to do Christmas, at all, and asked him if that was ok. While he didn't have the exact same feelings of conviction as I did, he said of course. If it was bothering me that way, of course we could let it go.

So we did. I'm sure our parents were a bit upset with our decision- not that they couldn't respect it, but let's be honest- telling the grandma's there will be no Christmas with the grandkids this year isn't something they wanted to hear. It was a little weird giving the answer over and over of "No, we're not celebrating that", but honestly? It was a VERY relaxing time. While I was watching the chaos of the holiday season, I was relaxed. I wasn't rushed, I wasn't fighting off greed, envy and stress at every corner. It was beautiful. We sank into the stillness of winter, and just relaxed. We are incredibly honest with teaching our children, as my husband shares in his article "How Are We Leading Them". We explained the finding of the roots, the reasoning for the date, the inaccuracies of the nativity story and the scriptural truth, etc... and they understood to their own abilities. Quite honestly, they were just fine. They still ended up with a couple gifts that family had already purchased, if anything they enjoyed that they didn't have to wait to the end of the month to open them. It wasn't as big of a deal to skip it as I thought it might have been.

You can choose to still celebrate Christmas.

Being informed is important, looking at everything under the lens of scripture is important, keeping our lives from idols is important. BUT- I do believe that followers of Christ can celebrate Christmas. But there's



a big IF. If you are informed, and don't feel a conviction to the pagan root of these things- maybe you feel a conviction over the pagan root parts so you stay away from certain traditional things that you hadn't thought of or known of before. But all in all, you may still choose to celebrate Christmas.

Why are you celebrating? Is your focus the perfect tree, the showcase house, your kid's bragging rights, pressure from society—are your why's sinful? This is something that you for yourself must take seriously, take to scripture, take to prayer. Maybe some adjustments are needed, handle accordingly.

The new standard American Christmas is full of much sin- and the sin I'm referring to has nothing to do with the pagan roots. The standard Christmas we know today is all about greed, envy, boasting, gluttony,

drunkenness, debt, stress, chaos—these things are NOT from God, and are in every way sinful and wrong. And that's without even getting into the lie of Santa- the "joyful" deceit of parents to tell their children that a strange man is watching their every move, deciding who's "naughty" or "nice" and doling out rewards accordingly. We're even bringing his "special" elf into our home to be big brother and double check their every move- I feel this area is a topic all on its own, but you may see my feelings here that I don't think any of this stands under the lens of scripture and is most definitely an area we need to test ourselves on as followers of Christ.

If you look at all of this in truthfulness, you examine your heart and motives, you possibly reassess some areas, even though "CHRISTmas" was just the Catholic church's response to slappin' the name of Christ onto

existing pagan worship in the attempt to get them to conform to Christianity; maybe this is still a time when out of routine your whole family will come together to catch up, to give joyously, to celebrate family, to remember not only the birth of Christ—but the fact that he lives and is coming back soon. Jesus isn't the reason for this season. We're not keeping "Christ" in "Christmas"... because He wasn't there to start with. BUT, Jesus IS the reason for EVERY season. Jesus should be the sole focus in every single aspect of our every move, our every decision, our every celebration. Everything. And each day should be an eager anticipation for His return and our reunion to Him.

Alternative Celebration

Growing up in a typical American Christian home I never knew much about the Holy Feasts, God's appointed celebrations. Sure I'd heard the words, but those were 'Jew' things and had nothing to do with me as a Christian. I believe in many ways we've completely disconnected Christianity from any Hebrew source, which seems odd considering the total context. But- that's another topic for another day. In learning about these seven ordained feasts, our family honestly realized how AWESOME they are! All of these feasts point directly to Christ! Yeshua, our Messiah. THE Messiah! They were all created for HIM, are being fulfilled through HIM! Not that we are forced to have to celebrate these feasts, but our family truly enjoys them! It's not just Easter and Christmas to look forward to as a way to have a holiday about Jesus (so we claim) but there's the three Spring feasts that Christ fulfilled with his death, burial and resurrection, there's the Summer

feast where the Holy Spirit was poured out, the Fall feasts in which we look forward to the things to come in the catching up of His true believers and raising the dead, Christ's second coming and the final judgement and millennial reign. All of these celebrations are incredibly exciting and our family so very much enjoys these times.

Well, that gets us to Hanukkah. While re-reading through the gospels as a family this fall we all paused a moment when we read through Christ's words as he spoke to those in the synagogue during the Festival of Lights. To be honest, we were completely ignorant to most everything about Hanukkah. But as we read, we learned- we got very excited!

Hanukkah is in no way the "Jewish Christmas" but is completely full of Jesus! The Hanukkah story is that of when the temple was overtaken and desecrated but then the Israelites that rose up to take it back (The Maccabees) and worked to rededicate the temple to the Lord God they did not have enough oil to keep the menorah in the temple lit every night as they needed to. BUT GOD. The oil lasted for 7 additional nights past what they physically had. They rededicated the temple. And this is a festivity that Christ acknowledged, he spoke about, he celebrated as a Jewish man. Because Jesus is THE light. The third temple is coming- and it will be desecrated. Only this time, when the time comes to rededicate it- it will be with Jesus, for Jesus, through Jesus. That's amazing! Do we see how HUGE this is?

Hanukkah is about the coming of Christ.

Hanukkah is about shining the light



of Christ, even when the world says it's impossible. Hanukkah is about our blessed hope, that each and every day we eagerly look forward to being reunited with Christ. We spend every moment we have in this world sharing this with all we can because the time is short. Hanukkah is such a great time for all of this!

Our family has gotten a few decorations, we're adding twinkle lights and candles all over- letting the light shine all over our home to proclaim our excitement in sharing the light of Christ. Traditionally Hanukkah is celebrated with the eating of fried foods- donuts are a big deal. We're excited to learn, to share the gospel, to play the Driedel game and to share a few small gifts and special activities as a family to commemorate this truly joyous time.

I hope this might truly have been of some help- some insight and encouragement. In EVERY. SINGLE. THING... do it to the glory of God! How that looks in your home is between you and God. The only thing I have to go off of is the spiritual fruit that you produce- and others will see the fruit that comes from me. I pray that each one of us can truly assess ourselves here- be honest. Be real. And let's be mindful of what REALLY matters. Whether it's December, February or July.

From Hawai'i to RV Life

by Tiffany Anderson, [@tiffanyreneanderson](https://www.instagram.com/tiffanyreneanderson)



The day arrived.

We'd been prepping for 3 months. Selling most of our things in Hawai'i. And giving a lot away. Moving across the ocean. Searching for our rig. Waiting. Loading up and prepping to live in 133 square feet for a year, traveling the country, and there we were.



And as we drove away, just beginning our journey, we were still not ready. It's like starting a family. When are you ever ready to have kids? It's any new adventure. When are you entirely ready? I envisioned this beautiful exit. And Luca pooped his pants twice that day. Well maybe he tooted and something came with it. And all these other things happened with tears, and short-snappy words, and leaving late. It's comical, isn't it? Listen, I don't always respond (i.e. react) in the healthiest and most appropriate ways. But I'm really trying to press into the hard things. And be flexible. And grateful. And to laugh. And to ask for forgiveness. It's a beautiful mess, isn't it?

*It keeps me needing
Jesus.*

And that's really my heart's desire. And trailer living has kept me needing Jesus.



Our first night was like a sitcom. Got a flat tire on the trailer. I was maybe just a little psycho with all the new "rules" for our little home. Luca opened the sun roof on the landcruiser and it rained (the roof top tent kept it dry). I spilled maple syrup on the bed and floor. I woke Cory up in the early morning to switch the propane tanks because our heat turned off. Luca fell in the cold-and-muddy-creek water. One thing after another. We laughed some. Cussed some (sorry, grace please). Waking up in a quiet forest by the creek, snuggling the boys in bed while Cory made breakfast, and hiking to a waterfall in our back yard was a reminder why we're doing this.





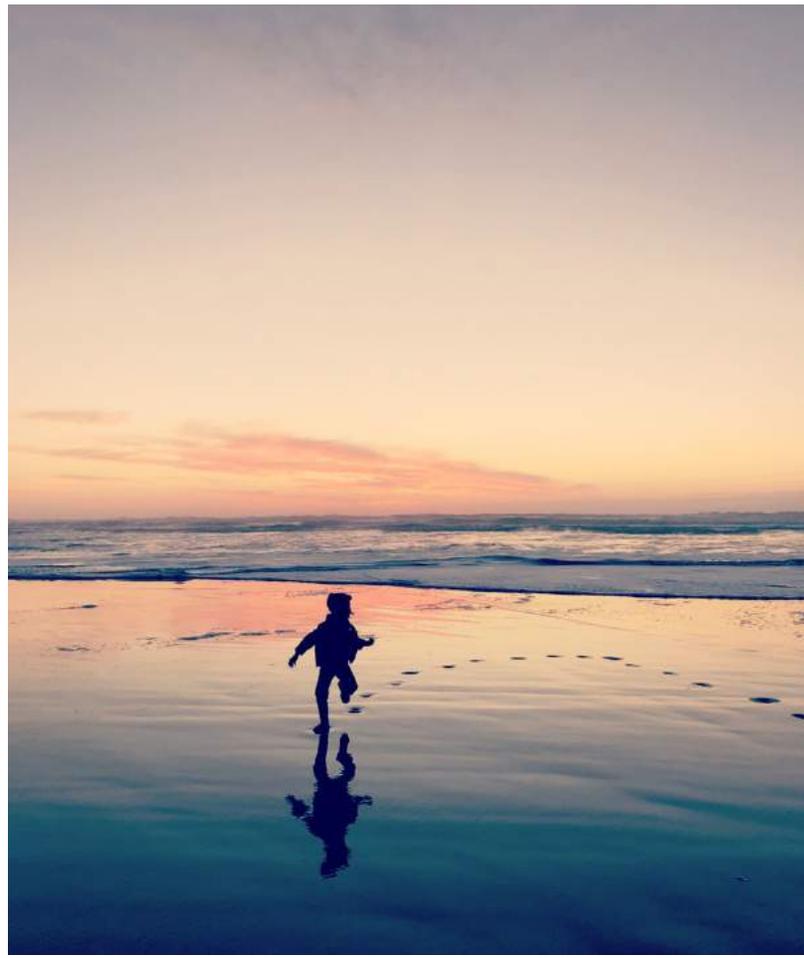
Naturally, finding a rhythm is our greatest challenge right now. With all the new and with homeschool. We're several weeks in to travel trailer living, and I'm eager to find a rhythm that parallels with this lifestyle. And our family needs it. With any family rhythm, it takes trial and error, reassessing, intention and grace. L

As we go into December with advent, new adventures ahead, and so many unknowns, I want to simplify (even more? Yes. Even more.), and find our rhythm. With map time. And poetry reading. And math. And nature walks. And our work schedules. And all the things.

It has been wild and weird and challenging and fun and beautiful and invigorating. There have been highs and lows.

One day, the toilet shot pee at me after Luca did his business. Straight up like a geyser. I was so mad, and then I laughed. Oh yes, the good (and humorous) Lord is stretching and growing us.

Moving from place to place has a list of chores, like hitching and unhitching. Securing things so they don't shake around the trailer while we're on the move. Laundry is done at the laundromat. We have to drain our toilet tank. And fill up our water reserves.





Tiffany Rene,
from Hawai'i life to RV livin'

Jesus lovin'

Homeschoolin'

Dancin'

Adventurin'

Mom of 2 boys

Married to a kind-hearted hunk

Kinda hippie; kinda hood

Follow the family as they've left is-
land life and are now starting off on
the wide open road on the adventure
of a life time!

{[Instagram](#)}

Please Hear My Plea.

Please, let's stop the division. Stop the side choosing and clique forming. Look at how we, Christ's own body, split ourselves up trying to dislocate our Messiah's arms and legs. We're choosing to draw lines in the sand over what Bible we choose to read from, what importance we put to the laws of Moses, what days we set apart, what is or isn't on our head, this list is never ending. And when it comes to holding things of this world up in priority to our thoughts and actions- importance of what imaginary lines we live within, what political flag we wave, or denomination we pick- please let that take a back seat.

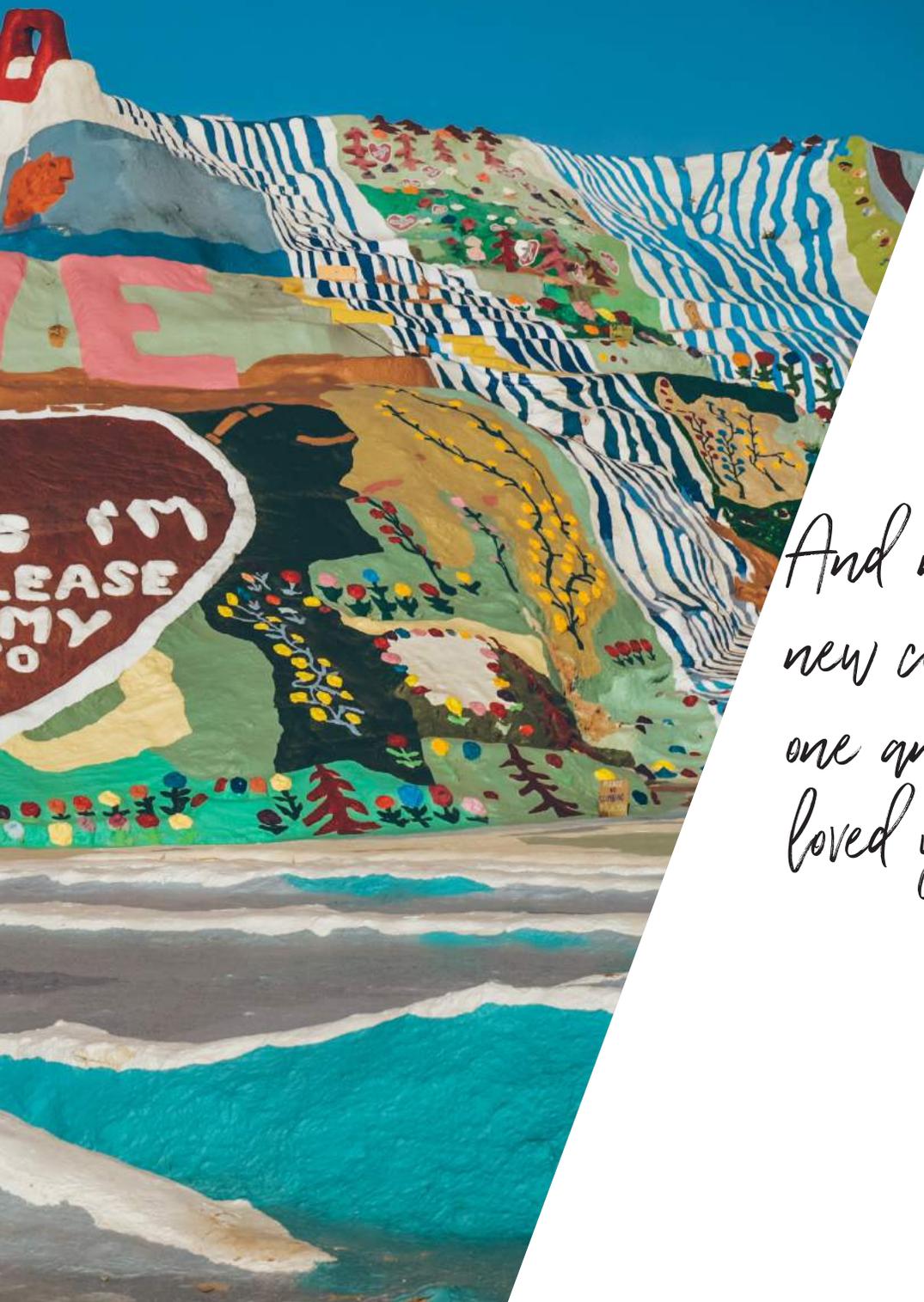
For Christ gave His commandment- **to love**. And through Him, by faith alone, we will do all through love. How can we possibly share the light of Jesus, Yeshua, the Messiah, to this dark and sinful world if we cannot even share this light with one another?

I ask you this, the next time something comes up between you and another believer- whatever difference it may be- a social media post, a conversation, a run in at some function, instead of doing what your flesh is telling you to respond with, respond in love. Let the differences be taken to prayer instead. Let the Holy Spirit issue conviction to whomever may need it, and let your fleshly desire to be in the right fade quietly.

I do not know it all, but neither do you. Neither of us are the wisest, because even the wisest to our Lord is but a fool. Let's join together as Christ's apostles did- join together in our eager anticipation of His return. Let us serve and love each other and all others so that all can come to know of His mighty love, power and grace.

Amen.





And now I give you a
new commandment: love
one another. As I have
loved you, so you must
love one another.

John 13:34

10 Ways to Survive Cabin Fever

by Heidi Garcia, [@minimalisthomeschool](#)

1. *Read! Read, read, read!* YouTube search audiobooks, Google search the book title with 'pdf' after it to look for digital copies, hit up the library or used books on Amazon. A good book, a good series-- that can be a big difference for the whole family!

2. *Bake, cook, keep the kitchen busy!* Not only will the warmth of the stove going heat up chilly little kiddos on a cold winter day- but there is much to be learned from a family that bakes together! Make a simple loaf of bread, muffins for breakfast, a long simmering stew for dinner, some cookies-- when my kiddos are restless this is always a crowd pleaser. (Yes- your kitchen will get messy, let them work Mama, counters can always be cleaned.)

3. *Snuggle up on the couch and watch something!* Our family will marathon watch Little House on the Prairie at least once a winter, Amazon Prime video has some great faith based movies, recent movies like Paul, Passion of the Christ, and the Bible series are some of our favorites. And a subscription to PureFlix gives even more options- the kids love Superbook, Owlegories and the Revelation Road series for our teen!

4. *Play!* Games like [The Action Bible Guess It Game](#) sharpen the kids' (and parents') Biblical knowledge. Some dice, regular playing cards, board games, and even some video games are all tools in the Cabin Fever Toolbox.

5. *Work together and move room by room to purge excess.* Teach your children why excess isn't needed, why we should be glad to give stuff that we don't truly need to others that are in need. What an act of service this is! Doing this can keep the kids busy- and get your house in order! Win win!

6. *Build something!* Maybe some DIY woodworking projects, learn to knit/crochet/sew, maybe even just pull out the Legos- putting our hands to work is an important task.

7. *Change it up!* Maybe you could use a little break, maybe you've had too much of a break and should get to work, maybe a change in what your school schedule looks like/what materials you're using-- don't be shy to change it up a bit!

8. *Get outside-* even when it's cold out, bundle up and go explore! God's miracles are all around us, where do we see Him at work in the winter season? What's different from the other seasons?

9. *Embrace the boredom.* Too often we're quick to swoop in and save the day at the first inkling of boredom. Don't. Let the kids get bored, let their imaginations and creativity solve the problem. Same for you- boredom isn't a bad word.

10. *Rearrange!* I remember as a kid, my mom turning up the music, moving all the furniture, and all us kids coming in to help her clean and set up the "new" space. Use what you have in your home already, but change it up! My girls get a kick out of it when I "re-do" their room- they love to go play in their new space.

Prayer Requests

*"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.
Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise."*

-- James 5:13

It's been on my heart, but I would really like to open up a prayer request forum. "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," 2 Timothy 3:12 -- as we keep Jesus Christ our Lord as our focus each and every single day and spend the time we have to draw closer to Him and to train up our children in the truth of the scriptures we will indeed be under attack. We will also be blessed by the Lord our God -- "Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!" 1 Chronicles 16:9.

I would love to know how to pray for you and your family- you can email us [HERE](#), message us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) us, or leave a comment on [YouTube](#)! Whatever way gets it to us.

I also would like to ask everyone here to take a moment each week to pray for one another. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 instructs us to "pray without ceasing" and how important that is!



Please join us in prayer...

Pray for our sweet sister in Christ, Joy, her husband, Dave, and their 6 kiddos.

Dave was in a horrible accident, it was one insane thing after the other, then precious Joy ended up with Malaria, all this while they are also living in Uganda as missionaries.

Reach her on [Instagram](#) + [YouTube](#)

More from Joy,

joyforney Thank you to each and every single one of you who have been in prayer for my husband. Last Wednesday I received a call that my husband was in a serious motorcycle accident on his way to work. I didn't know what I would find when I arrived in the hospital, but God allowed me the clarity to listen to "It is well with my soul" as my daughter and I rushed to the hospital.

It was a terrifying day (and the days after). Dave was hit from behind by a drunk driver and knocked into oncoming traffic where his body was run over by a large car. Only by grace is my husband still with us. It has been an extremely difficult 9 days, but praise the Lord he is out of ICU! He has a long hospital stay ahead of him, and an even longer recovery, but we praise the Almighty God from whom all blessing flow for preserving Dave's life.

Words cannot express the gratitude we feel for everyone who has prayed, loved us, been with us, and has texted or called. Know we appreciate you very much. I am by Dave's side nearly all the time, so forgive me if I am not able to answer you. It is my great pleasure to be serving my hero during this time. To God be the glory, great things He has done and will continue to do.



