

Revival HOMESCHOOL Heartbeat

Dec
2024

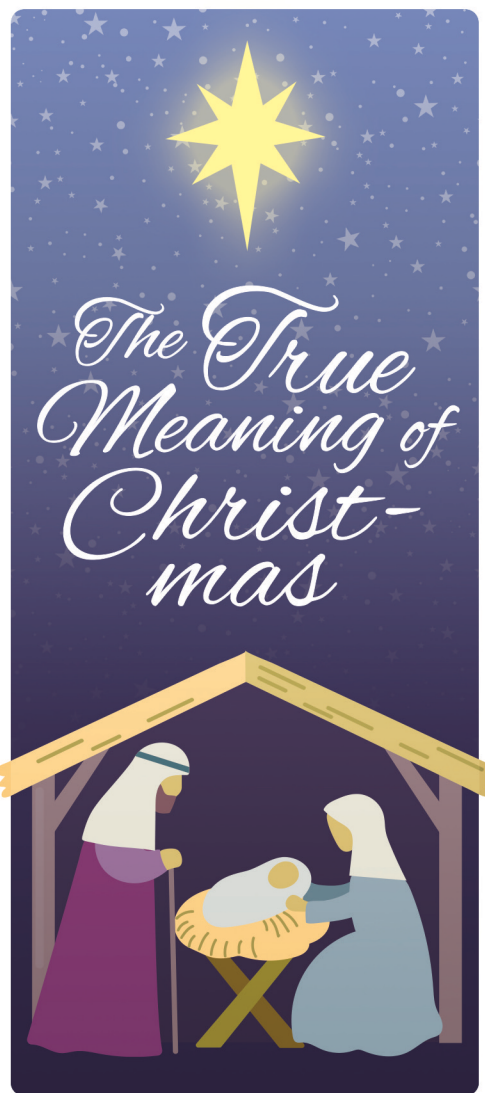


Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. – DEUTERONOMY 6:5-9

Christmas is a season filled with joy, love, and togetherness, but for Christians, it holds an even deeper meaning. Christmas commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Christmas isn't just about festive lights, gift-giving, and holiday cheer; it's a time to reflect on faith, hope, and the enduring love of God.

At the core of Christmas is the nativity story. Over 2000 years ago Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph in the humble town of Bethlehem, in a manger not fit for a King. Angels announced His birth to shepherds, and wise men journeyed from the east, bringing gifts to honor Him as a King. Jesus' arrival represented a message of hope and redemption. His birth marked the beginning of God's plan for the salvation of mankind.

This time of year brings a message of hope that extends beyond the Christmas season. Jesus' birth signifies God's promise of peace and salvation, bringing hope to all who put their faith in Him.



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This month, I encourage you to pause from all the hustle and bustle this time of year can bring and reflect on the importance of the true meaning of Christmas. The best gift isn't found under a Christmas tree; it was given by God when He gave His son to us, and that is the best gift we could have ever asked for.

"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7

– Trisha Kerwin

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." – Matt. 1:23



- How To - MANAGE TOYS

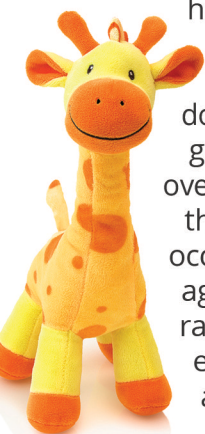
"3.1% of the world's children live in America, but they own 40% of the toys consumed globally." – UCTV's *"A Cluttered Life: Middle-Class Abundance"*).

Read that statement again. You're probably nodding your head because if you have children, you may feel like you're living in a ransacked Toys' R Us, and you can anecdotally relate to that statistic. Now listen, lest we be too hard on ourselves, we live in America—the land of abundant and affordable playthings. But at some point, I realized...this is too much. *It was time to be a gatekeeper for my children's well-being and my sanity and to combat the mindset of consumerism.*

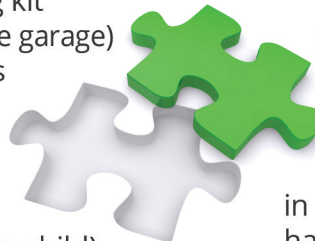
So, with that said, here is my list of time-tested toys, some ways we handle gifts and holidays, and some of the guidelines we instill to keep the toys under control.

KEEPING IT TO A MINIMUM

Here are a few of the toys that have stood the test of time in our home. I am not suggesting you go out and buy these items; instead, purge down the excess until you've got something like this left over. For most kids, these are the items that keep them occupied for longer, encourage imaginative play, and rarely get boring. They also entertain a wide variety of ages and thus can be used by multiple children over an extended range of time.



- Blocks and building materials (Lego, magna-tiles, Keva blocks, wooden blocks, Lincoln logs and K'nex, Brainflakes, Plus Plus blocks)
- Hot Wheels tracks and cars
- Trains and tracks
- A small amount of favorite stuffed animals (and a "one-in, one-out policy" for new additions)
- Books in good condition
- Toy kitchen (with a small basket of favorite items).
- A few puzzles for toddlers (we borrow bigger ones from Grandma)
- A minimal craft collection of paint, beads, playdough, Lite-Brite, and a wood carving kit
- Nerf guns (in the garage)
- Favorite games
- Costumes and dress-up
- Trading Card (contained in one box/bin per child)



We keep most of these in a central playroom or a kitchen cabinet. One of my children has his room, and as he possesses the ability to manage it well, he gets to keep his games and toys in there. My daughter has a small collection of girly toys in her room, but it's very minimal. My younger boys each have a box in their dresser that is called the "special things box" for the little things children collect. I let the boundary be the bad guy, so when it's complete, it's time to let some things go.

WHEN THE GIFTS STOP GIVING

We have four children, so birthday and Christmas gifts abound! I help

the kids curate a list of their wishes (they are kids, after all, and it's so fun for them), as well as some ideas for consumable gifts or craft items they might enjoy. If you've got generous gifters in your life but feel overwhelmed after a big event, remember that you can graciously receive a gift, and then you and your family get to decide what to do with it. Here are some ideas we employ to manage those times when gifts come in.

- Set aside a few gifts to pull out later in the year
- Declutter prior to the event (kids are motivated by the idea of some fun new toys!)
- Have the kids swap out an old toy for a new one
- Keep the central part of the toy and toss the 9,326 annoying pieces that will end up all over the house
- Take your child for a Birthday experience rather than hosting a big party

HOW CAN I GET ON TOP OF IT ALL

Besides the fact that it's probably a pain point in your home, studies show that children play in a more engaged way when they have fewer toys. I suggest that if your children are young, you study their habits and notice what they seem to enjoy the most. Then, while they sleep or are out with Dad, get in there and purge as much as possible. Use a black trash bag and set it aside for a month. If they ask for something, pull it out for them. After a reasonable amount of time, let things go. If they have a beloved collection of toys that are accessible and easy to tidy up, they probably won't even notice! If they do, it's not the end of the world. Be honest and move on.

For older children, appeal to a boundary of some kind; require



them to clean up after themselves so they can see how much work it is to manage an excessive amount of toys, or pay them a small amount of money for each large toy or box of toys they are willing to pass on.

Our children take a solitary quiet time each day for an hour or two.

At this stage (ages 4-9), they rarely sleep. But they are building, reading, imagining, and playing so well during that time with just a limited number of toys. They don't often get overwhelmed when cleaning it up, either. And if they do, I might put a couple of boxes on a high shelf so they don't pull too much out at one time. All this to say that if you're overwhelmed, it's okay to take the position of a loving parent authority to make your home a place where everyone can work and play without more stress than is to be expected.

Toys should be for our children's entertainment and education. But we are near playmates, so don't discount the value of playing games or throwing a ball with them. Engage them in your work around the home, read to them, and let them serve you tea, or teach you to build a faster hot wheel track.

THE SIMPLE JOYS OF CHILDHOOD

And then, when it's time for the children to entertain themselves, their unique playthings will give both child and mother a reprieve... the child to his ingenuity and imagination and the mother to her work or rest with the knowledge that her young one is reveling in the simple joys of childhood. It is a season that passes quickly. I praise God for children and the blessings of toys and games, but may they be just that: blessings to enjoy. Let's not allow them to be a source of strife and attachment to worldly things.



Slowing Down at Christmas — A Gift for Your Family —

Christmas can feel like a whirlwind. As Christian homeschool parents, the calendar fills quickly—decorating, baking, shopping, gatherings, and even special seasonal school projects. It's easy to let the true spirit of Christmas get lost in the hustle and bustle. Yet, it is during this time of year that the call to slow down becomes not just a choice but a necessity for nurturing our family's faith and connection.

When we slow down, we make room to remember why we celebrate. Christmas is about the wonder of God's love, wrapped in the gift of His Son, Jesus. This message can get overshadowed if our days are a blur of activities and to-dos. Slowing down allows us to weave Christ's story into the fabric of our daily lives, creating space for reflection, devotion, and family togetherness.

Consider simplifying your schedule and focusing on traditions that matter most to your family. Prioritize a few meaningful activities—perhaps reading Scripture by the Christmas tree, singing carols to-

gether, or serving others in a way that highlights the heart of Christ.

These moments are what your children will carry with them, far beyond the gifts and decorations. Slow down to savor each part of this season. Listen to your children's questions, soak in the wonder on their faces, and share stories of God's faithfulness. It's in the slowing that we truly find rest in Him, remembering that Christmas is not about doing more but about experiencing the greatest Gift ever given.

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This year, make the choice to slow down. Let's celebrate the season in a way that glorifies Christ, embraces simplicity, and fosters deeper relationships with our families and with God. Your home will be more peaceful, your heart more joyful, and the true spirit of Christmas more evident than ever.



Mini Clay Pot Nativity Set

Materials:

- 3 mini terracotta pots
- wooden beads or small round wooden balls (for heads)
- Acrylic paints (various colors for figures)
- Hot glue gun or craft glue
- Fabric scraps or felt (for clothing or head coverings)
- Raffia, hay, or shredded brown construction paper (for the manger)
- Markers or fine brushes (for painting faces)

Instructions:

Step 1 - Prepare the Pots for the Characters

- **Mary and Joseph:** Grab two mini terracotta pots, turn them upside down, and glue a wooden bead or ball on top of each pot for the head.
- **Baby Jesus:** use a smaller terracotta pot for the Manger. Place a small wooden bead in the Manger to represent the baby's head.

Step 2 - Paint the Pots for the Characters

- Paint the Terra cotta pots and heads in your chosen colors. For instance:
- **Mary:** light blue pot for her body and a natural wood bead head.
- **Joseph:** Brown or dark-colored pot with a tan head.
- **Baby Jesus:** paint the small bead for baby Jesus in a soft Peach or natural color.

Step 3 - Add Details

- **Faces:** using a fine marker or small paintbrush, draw simple eyes and mouths on each head. A minimalist look (just two dots for eyes) can keep the figures looking classic and simple.

- Wrap small pieces of fabric or felt around the figures as shawls or cloaks. Secure the fabric with glue.
- Add small pieces of raffia, hay, or shredded brown construction paper in the Manger under baby Jesus for a "straw" effect.

Step 4 - Assemble the Manger Scene


- **Stable (optional):** if you want to create a stable, you can use small twigs or craft sticks glued together in a triangle shape or arranged to resemble a rustic stable behind the figures.

Arrange the Characters:

Place Joseph and Mary on either side of baby Jesus in the Manger (optional). You can put your nativity scene on a plaque and add a star with some small wire or a stick. Now, your nativity scene is complete.



Revival Homeschool



Factory Tour

January 16th or 17th





Fountain Valley