

a.  
simpler  
season  
by Jessica Fisher

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# A Simpler Season:

inspiration and planning pages for  
thanksgiving, christmas and new year's

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Jessica Fisher  
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and Good Cheap Eats*

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## It's the most wonderful time of the year!

The holiday season is called the most wonderful time of the year.

Well, it can be. Those weeks between Thanksgiving and the start of a new year are filled with much activity. There's a sense of anticipation as the months of November and December roll by filled with Thanksgiving feasting, the Christmas holiday, gifts, year-end celebrations, delicious tastes and smells, and reunions with family and friends.

The time can, indeed, be delightful.

Or it can be a total nightmare if you are overworked, overdrawn, and overdone. It's hard not to get swept away by all the excitement. Eagerness can turn into frenzy if we're not careful.

Avoid those contradictory feelings at a time of year when you should be rejoicing. While you can't make the "perfect" holiday, you can prepare and try to stem the tide of "too much."

**Now is the time to be proactive and make the coming holiday season restful, memorable, and meaningful.**

## Thinking It All Through and Developing a Plan

Advance planning and forethought can make the holidays so much more enjoyable. Adequate planning can help save you money and time instead of leave you wandering through the mall at the last minute, panicking for a gift for grandma or paying too much for something she'd never use anyway.

This book is designed to help you think through all those aspects of the holidays, from meal planning to gift giving to card writing to family fun. We've covered it all so that you can plan a fun and festive celebration with the people who matter the most.

But, it's good to be spontaneous, too.

If you're hesitant to make plans or worried about being too structured, please don't fret.

There's beauty in picking up a tree on Christmas Eve, if that's what you really want to do -- and *not* what you're doing as a last resort because you never had a plan to start with.

This planning book is not to rob you of spontaneity. It's to free you up, help you get a glimpse of the big picture, and give you moments of fresh air to go do something with your family spontaneously because you don't have other tasks nagging at you.



Whether you browse the following ideas, recipes, and planning pages in July or on December 15th, having a plan is always a good thing, no matter how early or late in the game you strategize.

Through careful planning, you can create custom-made Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's plans for your family that will help you breathe deeply and enjoy the season more.

Ready to get started? Let's get a plan in action.

This book is designed to help you think through a myriad of possible scenarios. In no way is it a prescription for a mile-long to do list. Quite the opposite, in fact.

By laying out all the possibilities, I hope this book helps you pick and choose what YOU want for your family's celebrations this year.

In many cases, much of the work has been done for you. There are lists of books to read, recipes to try, and gift ideas galore. There are printables to send to your computer printer that will take the work out of your hands. Collect them all in a notebook so that you have all the details and lists in one place for easy reference.

I can't do all your Christmas planning for you or carry out those plans, but this book will hopefully provide you with the tools you need to do so -- on

time and while still smiling.

Simplify your holiday experiences so that the things that matter most are the ones that you spend your time and effort on. Pick and choose what works best for you this season.

And spend precious time with the folks you love the most.

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## 4 Ways to Savor the Moments of Family Life

*The days go by all too quickly when you're a parent and your kids start to pick up speed. Savor the moments of family life. You know you want this, but how do you do this during the busier holiday season?*

**Here are some ways to savor the holiday moments:**

### 1. Take more video.

Videotaping our children captures not only a moment, but a voice and a personality that regular snapshots cannot record. Last year I saw this to be true as I compared the different videos and photos of our past Christmases. As we watched these old videos of babies and little kid voices, I realize how apt I am to forget these precious moments that are so quickly fleeing.

In preparation for Christmas and the days after, be ready with the video camera to capture special moments. And take more regular pictures, too.

### 2. Slow down and rest more.

I find that when I'm trying to "get everything done," I'm less likely to enjoy the moments. Couple that with lack of sleep and you've got a recipe for a crabby mom. No one wants that.

If you're like me, plan an earlier bedtime or regular power naps this season. More sleep and rest can never hurt as long as it's not out of laziness.

### **3. Focus on fresh starts.**

I can easily get discouraged over the ways that I've failed in the past year as a wife, mother, teacher, friend. I have let things slip in many ways. And the passing of time can make me anxious over my mistakes. I know that doesn't really help me change.

A fresh start does. Cleaning out cupboards and drawers, trading old stuff for new gifts, snuggling with my peeps, and setting goals for the future are ways to take my mind off the many ways I've blown it over the last 12 months.

Remember that tomorrow is a new day.

### **4. Remember Who is in control.**

It must be a sign that I am getting older because getting sick two weeks before Christmas doesn't freak me out in the same way it would have fifteen — or even five — years ago when I was spinning my wheels to "get it all done." We can only give thanks and celebrate thanks to God's good work in our lives. Freaking out isn't really part of His plan. Trust is.

We surely can't stop the clock from ticking. But, I think we can do little things to enjoy the time we do have.

## Activities to Consider during the Holiday Season

As you work through the questions on the following pages, think about these traditional holiday activities. Are these priorities? Are they important to the fabric of your home? Are they doable in real life?

*Feel free to say NO and cross out those things that just aren't happening this year:*

Sending Christmas cards

Giving extra charitable donations

Giving gifts to neighbors, service people, co-workers

Donating food, clothing or gifts to charitable organizations

Planning and attending get-togethers with family and friends

Doing family fun activities (gingerbread houses, caroling, etc)

Attending work parties and church social functions

Decorating the house

Attending special concerts and church events

Spending quiet nights at home

Observing Advent (ie Jesse Tree or Advent wreath)

Making gifts

Shopping for holiday clothes

Baking extra goodies

Spending Christmas Day at home

Visiting family on Christmas Day

Planning or attending New Year's parties

Traveling away from home

October 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

## December 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	January 1	2	3	4	5

What's most important today:

To do

To bake/cook/thaw

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To buy

Special Events

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# **HOME Management**



## Getting Your House Ready

It seems that the holiday season can be the one when our families are the busiest and therefore, a time when our houses can be the messiest. With all the rushing around comes the tendency for clutter to accumulate.

If you have time to do a room-by-room deep clean in the early fall, that is ideal. Ridding your home of clutter and excess stuff is also a plus.

At the very least, set yourself a regular cleaning schedule. It doesn't have to be complicated. Assign a household task to each day of the week and follow through. If you've got that ball rolling and habitual, your holidays will be a lot more fun.

You can also download the Motivated Mom app off iTunes. It provides cleaning tasks for every day of the year. If followed, it can help you get your home shipshape in no time flat.

After you've got the regular dust and dirt situation planned for, think about the infrastructure of your home. Is it ready for the holidays?

**Some things to consider in advance:**

- Do my kids have enough room for more toys? What have they outgrown? What can we give away?
- Do we have a place for folks to hang coats and purses? Would a coat rack or pegs be a good addition to our hallway? Or does the coat closet just need a good cleaning?
- Where will we put the Christmas tree? Do we need to rearrange the furniture?
- Do the carpets need cleaning? How about the windows?
- Are there basic repairs that need to get done?
- Are the outside walkways well lit for evening guests?
- Do we have enough serving dishes, place settings? Napkins? Silverware?

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# Make a Big TO DO of Christmas

Things to Do

Places to Go



Movies to Watch

Books to Read

People to See



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## Christmas Planning - To Do List

	<i>Action item</i>	<i>due date</i>

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## Children's Holiday Storybooks and Activities

Storybooks play a huge role in Christmas celebrations. Over the years, I've built our family's collections of books that we bring out only at the holiday time. My kids, big and small, light up when they see these favorite stories.

We store them in a big basket in the living room for reading together. The bigger kids will often grab one or two and flip through them on their own.

As kids, my siblings and I were blessed to have a mom who loved stories and extension activities to make the stories a part of our world. She's compiled a list of 10 great holiday storybooks to enjoy with your kids this season as well as a load of activities to do together.

The following book list is compiled by [Veronica Getskow, PhD.](#)



## **Merry Christmas , Merry Crow**

Kathi Appelt, Illustrated by Jon Goodell

Harcourt, 2005

*One snowy December evening, a black crow flies all over town collecting an assortment of discarded items. What's his hurry? What's his mission? What's his secret expedition?*

**Tree Art Activity:** Gather an assortment of items - construction paper, yarn, tinsel, gold or silver paper, bows, etc. Sit with your child and brainstorm how to create a tree decorated with miscellaneous bling. Make sure to add small birds made of paper.

**Nature Walk:** Enjoy a quiet walk with your child to see any birds that live in your neighborhood. Binoculars and a bird guide book are convenient to take along. If you live in snow country, do a little research to see which birds are still hanging around at this time of year.

**Crows:** Look up information on crows and read how they love to retrieve (borrow, steal) sparkling items to take back to their nests.

**Puppet:** Create a black crow puppet out of construction paper and attach it to a wooden spoon or popsicle stick. Have your child fly with the puppet around the room finding different shiny objects.

**Find this book** at [Amazon](#) or at [your local library](#).