

Welcome to Empowering
Homeschool Conversations,
your authority in
navigating the world of
homeschooling diverse learners.

Featuring Peggy Ployer from
Sped Homeschool,
Annie Yorty from AnnieYorty.com,
Leilani Melendez from Living With Eve,
Stephanie Buckwalter from
ELARP Learning and Don
Jackson from Don Jackson
Educational Consulting and Tutoring.

With over seventy-five years
of combined homeschooling expertise,
experiences and perspectives,
This group is eager to share
their wealth of wisdom to
empower your homeschooling journey.

So grab your favorite mug, settle in,
and get ready for insightful discussions,
valuable insights, and practical tips.

Give your homeschool the

power boost it needs to
successfully educate the
unique learners in your home.

Hi, everybody,
and welcome to Empowering
Homeschool Conversations.

Today,
we are going to talk about
celebrating the Savior,
how to throw a birthday party for Jesus.

We're going to have a lot of fun today.

And my guest is one of my co-hosts,
Annie Orte.

Annie writes and speaks to
encourage others to perceive God's person,
presence, and provision.

and purpose in the
unexpected twists and turns of life.

She's married to her high
school sweetheart and
living in Pennsylvania.

She's a mother, a teen, two adult children,
one with intellectual disabilities,

and a furry beast, Labradoodle.

She's written From Ignorance to Bliss,

God's Heart Revealed

Through Down Syndrome, and a devotional,

Twenty-Five Symbols of Christmas,

Finding Jesus, which just came out.

And I'm super excited to

have her share about that

and all the resources that

you've created with that as

well as we're going to be talking today.

So so you will not leave empty handed.

You will come away with lots of ideas.

And Annie has just a super

heart for Christmas.

You were decorated for Christmas in July,

I think, at your house.

I did actually put some things up in July.

I did take them down again,

but I don't normally do that.

I usually wait till after Thanksgiving,

but yeah.

Yeah,

that's my husband's hard and fast rule.

And then we had Thanksgiving away.

And so I'm going,

when are we getting this stuff up?

Because we came home late on

Saturday this week.

And I'm thinking,

I don't even know when

that's going to happen.

I think maybe they'll just

stay up later this year and

come up later.

That's all right.

Whatever works.

Yeah.

Well, that's great.

So, yeah, we are going to talk about...

throwing a birthday party for Jesus,

I would just love for you

to talk a little bit about, you know,

your family and Christmas

and why it's a special time for you.

What have maybe even been

some Christmas memories

that you go back to all the time?

And it could be, you know,

just from your family and

growing up or even with

your own children.

Yeah,

I have always loved the season of

Christmas,

just the warmth that I feel and

the savior whose birth we're celebrating.

There's,

I know some people find it

stressful and I have two at times,

but I just enjoy all that's

wrapped up in this holiday

because it's the time when

God sent his son to earth to be with us.

I mean, that's the most, you know,

just so special knowing

that he loves us so much.

And I think that Christmas for me has,

as an adult at least,

has always been a really
excellent time to connect
with other people,
not just in my own family
in a special way,
but with neighbors or friends.

And that's really some of the,
that's probably what I
enjoy doing the most is to
have those special times
with my own kids.

We would always do some kind
of special unit study
throughout the month of December,
just setting aside all the
other stuff that we
normally do and making this
a special time.

And it was always like a focus on Jesus,
something about his character,
his nature that we could
learn and celebrate him together.

But then also the idea of

reaching out to other people,

just like God reached out

to us through his son,

we have this great

opportunity at Christmas to

reach out to other people.

You may feel shy about say,

approaching a neighbor

you've never met before at some, you know,

July ninth or whatever, some random day,

but Christmas is like a ready-made excuse,

if you will, to just kind of reach out,

to give a little gift,

to get to know them.

You know, there,

there's all kinds of things you can do.

And, um,

I really enjoy making

service a part of our Christmas as well.

So reaching out to other people,

letting people know about Jesus.

So yeah, that's, it's just,

I'm still all over it.

My kids are grown, but I still love it.

Yeah, we,

I was thinking just the other day,

just how receptive

or more receptive people are

just this time of year.

Um, because even if they don't know,

or they aren't a Christian, there's this,

it's in the air, you know, and if,

if you have this like open

invitation to talk about

what it means to you and, um,

and to share some of your traditions,

because it, um, it all,

it all originated around Jesus.

So

So it opens the door already for us,

which is so awesome.

And we need that door to be open, right?

Because while we pray for

opportunities to share,

but we should understand,

this hit me a couple of years back now,

as I was doing a Bible club with kids,

that our culture has

radically shifted away from

any biblical knowledge.

Right, right.

I would have thought,

I know not everyone's a Christian,

of course, but I would have thought, well,

everyone knows that

Christmas has to do with Jesus, you know,

even if you're not really

celebrating that.

I was doing a Bible club

Christmas party and a little girl,

we were watching a movie

which depicted the birth of

Jesus and connected it with

Christmas in the movie.

And the little girl sitting

next to me goes,

I never knew that's what

Christmas was about.

And I was just a little bit flabbergasted,

you know,
that she didn't have that basic
knowledge with this holiday who's,
The name of Jesus is in the holiday name.

And so you have to consider
nowadays that people around
you quite possibly probably
don't know that Christmas is about Jesus.

So it's more important than
ever to take the
opportunity that we have at
this holiday to tell
someone about what's really going on.

Why do we celebrate it?

Absolutely.

So that kind of brings us to
our topic for the day.

You know, why would we,
should we consider throwing
a birthday party for Jesus?

And then who do we invite?

Great.

Well, yeah, we did lead right into that,

didn't we?

Well, I mean,

a birthday party for Jesus is, why?

Because Jesus deserves a big celebration.

Yeah.

He deserves the attention.

And as much as we might feel

special when we're

celebrated on our own birthdays,

we want to give him that

and so much more.

So that would be the number

one reason why we would do

a birthday party for Jesus.

He's worthy of all that attention.

And it does.

Help us to transfer focus

from all the peripheral

things that we might be

doing around the holiday

and put it onto Jesus to remind.

We need to remind ourselves.

We need to remind our families.

And then we have an
opportunity to remind others because we,
you know,
this is a prime opportunity to
invite somebody to your
home to join this celebration party.
Um, that doesn't know Jesus, you know,
they can come, it's a,
it's a Christmas activity and, um,
they might learn something.
God might use that occasion
to open their eyes, uh,
to the gift of Jesus that he's giving.
So that is the why, as far as the who,
well, you can pick anybody you want,
but I'll give some suggestions.
First of all, we have our family, you know,
our immediate family, our children.
It may just be an all in the family thing,
but you do have the
opportunity to invite extended family,
like grandparents, aunts or uncles,
cousins,

other children in the family to
bring them into your home
and let them participate.

Make it a big deal.

Make it all about Jesus and make it fun.

And you can, you know,

share the message of Christmas,

the real message of

Christmas with those family

members that may not be up

into it at other times.

I also suggest if you are in

a neighborhood where there are other kids,

you can invite the kids around you.

You know,

maybe maybe your neighborhood's

big and you can't invite

the whole neighborhood,

but but you can invite

whatever you can

accommodate into your home.

Right.

And and and really, that's that's

again,

if you start establishing those

relationships,

that at where your house

becomes a place where other

kids in the neighborhood feel safe,

where they're where they're

receiving a message of

Jesus just on a regular basis,

this could be the start of that.

And then you could make it a

part of your co op your homeschool co op,

you can as a bigger group

celebrate a Christmas party

for a birthday party for Jesus.

So

Your church family,

you probably know other kids there.

You could take this show on

the road and do it at a

nursing home where your

kids and you are serving

the residents of a nursing home.

And, you know,
there are all other all
kinds of places your
imagination can take over from here.

But all of those would be a
good place to start.

Yeah, those are great ideas.

And it again, like we were talking about,

you know,

just that that openness to to do

something a little

different because it may

seem a little awkward.

But, you know,

it's just the way you're

celebrating the season and

you're focusing on your own beliefs and,

you know,

the true reason for Christmas

and helping other people.

I love that we can look at

it as we're helping other

people to connect with the

real meaning of Christmas

by doing something a little

different and focusing.

I love when you said that,

focusing on allowing

everything else to kind of

just go to the periphery.

Just letting this be the

main focus because a lot of

that just crowds in and it

crowds and crowds and

crowds and and then we

don't even realize it's crowding.

It's just gets on our to do

list and we just, you know,

automatically this is what

we got to do next or we're

doing this field trip and, you know,

all these other things and

we're not being purposeful anymore.

about what's on our schedule

and why we're doing it.

It's just, well,

this is what we've done all the time.

So it is here to change it up.

This can stack up and really

overwhelm you.

And I've been there, done that for sure.

I try to be a lot more

intentional now and plan

something at the beginning,

like around Thanksgiving,

get into some kind of

Cause I could list a hundred

things to do in the month of December.

There aren't even a hundred days.

I got to narrow that down to

what's most important.

Yeah.

Yeah, absolutely.

And,

and we did the same thing as you did with,

you talked about unit

studies with homeschooling and focusing.

Um, and I think we sometimes feel like,

well, you know,

where are the academics

going to go if we do things like this?

And, um,

I never thought I was at a loss for that.

I really felt like it

enriched our learning,

but I'd love for you to

share a little bit about that too.

And for those parents that are going, well,

yeah, but we just don't have enough time.

We got to get all this stuff done.

I don't see how we can add, you know,

all these,

these other activities in or

Christmas activities,

because we've got this timeline.

Yeah.

Well, I feel that pressure.

I'm,

I'm definitely a goal oriented person.

So I watch my curriculum plans,

and if I've fallen behind,

I do feel pressure about that.

I guess that just takes me
to an overall mindset of
what is most important in
your homeschooling.

Academics are very important.

We want our children to grow
intellectually.

And I'm not suggesting that we shirk that.

But we do have to put it in
its rightful place.

And the first step in our,
the first goal that I have as a parent,
and I hope it's yours too,
is that we want our
children to know and love God,
to have a desire to serve him,
to know him through his word,
and to make that the
highest priority in life.

What is it?

Matthew six, thirty three.

Seek first the kingdom of God.

And then all the other

things fall into place after that,

behind that, around it.

So when we do that in our homeschool,

I understand our human

thinking is all wrapped up,

especially when we homeschool.

It can be wrapped up in that, well,

we got to stay on task,

get these academics done.

That's our human reasoning.

And God's ways and thoughts

are higher than our ways and thoughts.

And so he's saying that's

not the most important thing here.

So whether it's at Christmas

or some other time,

we do need to be willing to

step back from our plans, our agenda,

our curriculum, whatever it is,

and make sure we're hitting

the higher priority of

knowing Jesus and teaching,

passing that on to our

children that they would not.

It's not just words that we say.

But we we prioritize in our

actions and that we make

this time at Christmas when

we take the time out to

celebrate Jesus in this way,

whether you do a birthday

party or some other Jesus

centered activity.

you are demonstrating in

actions to your children

that this is most important.

Right.

Absolutely.

Yeah, we can say it,

but if we don't live it in

conjunction with saying it, it,

Our kids aren't going to believe us.

They're too smart for that.

They'll pick up what you do.

Exactly.

So, yeah.

But it is a forced response from us that,
you know, we feel this panic.

We feel all this overwhelm

when we feel like...

things are not getting done, but it's good,

like you said,

focus on what is the main priority.

How are we actually

accomplishing what our real

goal is in home educating our kids?

It isn't that they, you know,

can read at a certain level,

at least it shouldn't be.

Um, because when they become adults,

that's the last thing

you're going to be thinking about.

You should have prioritized, um,

the things that you prioritized are do,

you know, do they, they know the Lord?

Do, do they have, they heard, um,

truth and spoken and lived out?

And do they know how to walk that way?

They may not do it,

but at least they know it.

That's right.

I mean, we don't control the outcome.

I mean, we all, you know,

if you've got a few years

under your belt with some kids,

you're going to know that

you don't get to control everything.

But we want to be faithful to God.

And then the outcome is up to him.

absolutely it is and um but

yes we we have each day to

make decisions on what

we're going to do and um

prioritizing during this

time and taking a little

step back it's just that

room you know this is a

season of peace it's a

season of hope it's a

season of rest because god

calls us into all of those

things and yet if we're living counter

that culture that we're
supposed to be creating,
we're really not making it
the season it's supposed to be.

Right.

Yeah.

So we don't want to be
frantically racing through the month.

Right.

Because I think, you know,
as I think about back to, you know,
traditions and things with my family,
it is those

It isn't the exact like things that we did,
but it was the feeling that
I got from those things
that I reflect mostly on.

And it either has a good
feeling in my heart or a
very bad feeling in my
heart that would either
make me want to do that in
the future with my kids or avoid it.

just because of how it
affected me as I was growing up.

And I know, you know,
that's the way my kids are
going to take those things away too.

And we want to create that
culture in our homes where
those are things that they
reflect on and go, yes, that was good.

Instead of no, that was not good.

That's so true.

Yeah.

When I look back on my own childhood,
for instance,

and I enjoyed writing this book because

Parts of it did allow me,

I share some stories from

my growing up years and

then also from homeschooling.

And really, when you read it,

you get a sense of some

different family traditions

you might enjoy.

Yeah.

You know,

everyone has their own thing and
might have changed over the years.

But you're right about that feeling.

There's just something there.

about um that's that's what

sticks with me yeah even

like I in the book I talk

about like I think probably

one of my earliest memories

ever is just a feeling

memory basically I was

probably I couldn't have

been more than three and I

don't have a bunch of

memories from that time but

you know I just remember um

during the month of

december we had one of

those little bouncy horses

and just riding that little horse um

with the squeaky, you know,

and just basking in the
glow of the lights on the Christmas tree.
It was a feeling that I mainly remember.
I don't know who was where, you know,
where there was no particular activity,
but the feeling sticks with me.

Absolutely.

And Andy's talking about her
Twenty-Five Symbols of Christmas,
Finding Jesus book.

So I have been slowly
getting through this.

But as my family celebrated
Christmas over Thanksgiving,
I I brought it with and I
was like okay I'm going to
get in the mood my morning
devotionals I'm going to
add this to that and we
were doing gingerbread
houses and I was like oh my
chance does she have
anything in there about

gingerbread houses and you
do yes so that was joyful
to find that's one of those
like memories that's like
sometimes joyful, sometimes not.

That is true.

We,

we used to build them a lot in
Minnesota and then we moved
to Texas where it was humid
and we're like,

why are the houses falling apart?

Um, yeah, it's humidity.

Well, my, uh, uh, yeah, I actually,

now that you mentioned it,

maybe some of my issue was

being in the South when I did it.

But no, I mean,

This is just like so par for
the course for my family.

You know,

I have Alyssa who has Down syndrome.

Patience is not or things

not going right can like spark a response,

let's say, to be nice.

And, you know, so.

Most of the time when we're

making our gingerbread houses,

the things don't always go right.

So there's always some angst

involved in the building of

the gingerbread houses.

But it's like one of those

things that I'm like,

we're making a gingerbread house this year,

you know,

no matter what we will enjoy it.

Right.

Right.

Exactly.

Yes.

I, ours, ours has morphed over the years.

So I have cookie cutters

that make the whole house

and I was very adamant on,

this is what we're doing.

You know,

I'm going to make it from scratch

and we we've been in our RV

sometimes when we've,

and I just can't bake

cookies in that small oven.

And so I started buying kits and,

And I was like, okay,

I'll buy the tiny little ones.

And so when we were in the RV,

we were near where our son was living.

So he and his fiance would

come over and we would all work on them.

And then I had nowhere to

store them in the RV either.

So we left them out.

And then it was,

which one would the

raccoons take each night?

So that became our tradition.

That's so funny.

Well,

I will just report just the other day

I was in,

I was visiting with my nieces

and nephews and they have kids now.

So I, I, um,

have a book about

gingerbread houses by Julie Lavender.

And I took the book and I

took my kit and we had a

really good time.

Everybody was happy on this

occasion of building with

the little kids.

They enjoyed it.

That is a lot of fun.

Yeah.

It, it usually turns out to be a mess,

but as long as we have fun

and you eat a lot of good, but yeah.

Yep.

So let's talk about things

that we can do when we have

a birthday party for Jesus.

I'm sure you could do

gingerbread houses too,
but there's probably a lot
of other things and ideas
that you have to share with
us that I would love to
hear about on how we can
personalize this.

And I know you're going to
offer us a lot of things,
probably more than we could
ever do in one party.

But but oftentimes,
like it's just like when I
used to do unit studies,
I would always go, OK,
what would work for our family?

Let's take those things and do them.

So whenever whenever you hear me on,

I'll be given ideas.

I'm like.

this doesn't work for
everyone you must pick and
choose this is not like a

to-do list for you must
check all these things off
please never ever take it
that way but um you know
think about if you're if if
you were going to have a
birthday party for your own
child your somebody you
know you know in your
family what kinds of things
do you do you can simply
recreate that with a
christmas theme so for
instance you might think
about decorations and um I
I mean it can be very
simple you know a paper
tablecloth you know
streamers or whatever I do
like to make it birthday
decorations instead of
christmas ones just to
distinguish that that this

is a birthday party so you
know I mean you can go all
out I'm a simple girl when
it comes to decorations and um

You know,

I'm not opposed to just going
getting like some stuff
from the dollar store,
a couple of things and and
setting that up.

So, you know, you can give a festive.

It doesn't need to cost a lot of money.

You can make things on your

own or you can your kids

can help make things, whatever.

But it's it doesn't have to be elaborate,

but.

something to just give it

that festive air that says

this is a birthday party.

So whatever you might do.

So that's kind of the easiest,

the simplest part of it.

And, um, the rest can be, you know,
as simple or elaborate as
you really want it to be.

But, um,
you know,
a lot of birthday parties have games,
so you can have games.

And one of my, like,
usually when I do a birthday party,
I kind of do the same thing
year after year, pretty much not always,
but I always like a Christmas tree theme.

So, you know, it's a tradition, so,
you know, you can write the same stuff,
but I would,

I would use a Christmas tree theme.

And, um, so for instance,

I would do like a version
of pin the tail on the donkey.
with pin the star on the tree.

So, you know,
and that's really pretty
simple just to make a

little poster board of a
tree and put it on the wall
and then give each person a
star and blindfold them and
let them see where it winds up.

So something like that is fun.

Let's see,

what are some other games that I've done?

Like you could do a scavenger hunt.

Yes,

those are popular for birthdays at our

house.

Right.

You give them a list of

symbols or something that

you would already perhaps

have in your decoration somewhere.

But I would suggest,

especially if you have

other people in your house,

kind of give them a room or

two to narrow it down or do

it outside or whatever.

But you don't want them like
right running through your bedroom.

But anyways, you know,
you could have a scavenger
hunt with some of the
symbols of Christmas.

And they can work as teams, you know,
that that's fun.

If you have, you know, more people,
you could do something really simple,
like for younger kids, find baby Jesus,
or hide the baby Jesus,
whichever way you think.

But
you know,
you have somebody who you have a
little doll or,
or a nativity piece or whatever,
and then you give one child
or person the opportunity
to hide it while the others
cover their eyes and then
they go look and you know,

you can just do that repeatedly.

That's a really simple game.

Um, so you could do, um,

like make this is a little

crafty but it's also like

an activity where where

this has a little bit more

of a spiritual like um

impact where you could have

them um find the names of

jesus in the bible so you

give them like some bible

references and names of

jesus that they look up and

um and then write out the uh

the Bible verses.

So that would be for

children that are maybe a

little older or they're working together,

um, you know,

to make it more fun so that

you can have them illustrate those later,

you know, it, so there's,

there's fun things like that games.

I always like to make a book out of that.

Yep.

Yep.

Absolutely.

Um, you would have, you can have crafts.

So, you know, uh,

some, some people like them,

some people hate them.

I would always have crafts at a party,

but you don't have to.

We had a craft night for our ladies in our,

our community group the

other night and we learned how to quill.

I had never done that before.

We were doing quilling with, um,

we made angels and yeah, it was,

it was really fun.

I'm not a crafter either, but you know,

open it up.

You just never know.

It was a lot of fun.

With other people.

Yeah.

Right.

Um, but, but really, um,
you could do something as
simple as go to the dollar store and get,
um, some wooden ornaments that are just,
and give them markers.

You don't even have to get glitter or,
or paint,
but you could go there if you want to,
but even markers work.

Yes.

You could let them make a
birthday card for Jesus.

You know, that's, that's easy.

Just give them some markers
and doodads to glue on.

If you want to go that far, um,
let's see, you could, let's see,

I have a list here.

I'm going to make sure.

Oh, you could make a present for Jesus.

So this is because Jesus is

the present to us, right?

But when we know how much he loves us,

we want to give something back to him.

And this just,

this comes from something my

son did at Sunday school one year.

They basically took a little white box and

And in the box, um, they put a heart and,

and it was like two Jesus from,

in this case, it was from my son,

but you opened the box.

And it was a present for Jesus.

You're giving him your heart, your, your,

and it's just,

it's a way to teach

children that we do have something, uh,

to offer that Jesus can use

that he wants that he loves.

And, um, and that's our, our,

the right response.

when we consider all that

he's done for us.

So those are some ideas for, and of course,

while there's coloring pages,
like you may have young
children or older adults like to color,
everybody likes to color, I think,
not everybody, but you know,
but they're like an easy,
easy crafty thing to do.

So there's that.

What else?

Oh, well,

we don't want to leave out like
one of the most important
components of this
birthday party,
which I would call the gospel activities,
you know,
things where we share the reason
for this party.

So people can get to know Jesus.

And, um, when I would, I have a,
the movie called the three
trees and I think that's, yeah,
that's the legend of the three trees.

Um,

it's available on Amazon or probably

some used

you know, places, but it's also a book.

So you could watch the movie, you go,

you just serve some popcorn

or whatever while they watch the movie.

It is a great tool where

they'll just learn it

through that medium.

And you could read the book aloud to them.

You could also,

there's another book or

movie that I really like.

It's called The Promise and

The Promise Birth of Messiah.

which, but, but there are others you can,

you know,

or pick another book that you

really enjoy that shares

the message of Jesus birth, you know,

why he came, what he came to do, you know,

what, what is Christmas all about?

So it's kind of, again,
that's a really easy activity, you know,
to just show a movie or, um,
read a book is very simple.
Um, but there's, uh,
there's a lot of good stuff there.
Um,
you could do something like
an interactive Bible reading.
So, you know, in your, um, in your, um,
like an easy to understand
translation of the Bible,
something that children could understand.
Um,
you could read the Christmas story from
Luke chapter two, um,
and Matthew chapter two
also has part of it.
So you could read through that.
And, um,
you know,
if you want to keep the kids from
getting antsy,

you could give them like for younger kids,

you could give them like

hand motions to do for

different characters in the story.

Or if they're older kids, you know,

and so they're not picking at each other,

you give them like an index

card that says one of the

characters like Mary, Joseph, the angel,

the shepherds, whatever.

And then whenever

that person is referenced in

the story as you read it

they can you know stand up

or you know wave their card

in the air or something

like that you know that

just keeps them more

engaged in in the story um

so so there's you know I

definitely that that to me

would be the most important

part you know making sure

right here the bible reading
or they're looking at the
names of Jesus in the Bible,
or they're watching the
movie or reading the book about it.

Um,

so those are all ways to share the
gospel with your guests,
whoever they may be.

And some of them are adults that maybe,
you know, need to hear it too.

It's not just for kids.

So snacks.

We can't forget food, right?

Every good birthday party has some food.

Every gathering.

Whenever Jesus was moving around,

he was either going to a

meal or coming away from a meal.

So there was food.

There's, you know,

the sky's the limit on what you might do,

but of course you would

think there should be a
cake at a birthday party, you know,
according to the way we
celebrate birthdays.
You could, you know, what I would do,
cause I'm not like a,
fancy cake decorator or whatever,
but I could manage with a
nine by thirteen pan to
just make a cake and and I
would put a tree on it,
basically outline it with a toothpick,
just, you know,
and then spread green icing.
So I make a white background,
spread green icing on the
tree part and just use some
sprinkles to decorate it.
you know, decorate the tree.
And it doesn't have to be
like a store-bought cake or
anything like that.
It can be pretty basic.

But then have a birthday
candle for Jesus and sing to him.

You know, that's, you know,
make it special.

And what else?

Other things you could do
for snack items would be
making Christmas cookies,
sugar cookies that they can
ice and decorate with sprinkles,
that kind of thing.

Um, I do, um, a, uh,
like an edible nativity
scene sometimes where you
use Graham crackers and you know,
that icing out of a can, it's probably,
you can make your own icing anyways,
but it's very convenient to use that to,
to, uh, glue the, the,
the Graham crackers
together into a little stable.
you can buy those little
Teddy Graham things for the

people in the nativity.

You can, so you can, there are animal,
animal crackers or cookies, you know,
that can be the animals.

Yeah.

So, so anyways,
those are all just fun
things you can incorporate
into that birthday party for Jesus.

It's like I said,
it's not like they all have to be done,
but, but yeah,
you know,
you pick and choose what works for you.
Maybe, you know, one of a couple of each,
you know,
one from each element of the thing,
you know,
if they're just kids with lots of energy,
just let them go play or
whatever outside and around, you know,
and then have a birthday
cake and be done with it, you know,

but tell, make it about Jesus,

tell them the story of Jesus.

That's really the main, the main goal.

Right.

And yes, I love that you say,

think about your audience,

because it will be, I mean,

any type of party that has

the theme that focuses on the gospel.

And the story of Jesus'

birth is going to be a

fitting birthday party.

But at different age levels,

which you talked a lot about,

and just attention spans

and things like that.

And then your own personality,

bringing that in and the

personality of your family.

as you,

you throw a party and your own

traditions for birthday parties,

it would make it feel much

more natural than just saying, okay,

we got to do this.

And this is the way we have to, you know,

do this.

Yeah.

There's no real right or wrong.

I agree.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Bringing your,

I love the idea of bringing

your own traditions.

Like what would you do for

someone else in your family?

Yes.

Do the same,

the same kind of thing for Jesus.

Okay.

So true.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And you had talked about that earlier.

So that brought that up in

my mind was just, you know,

it's not going to be different.

So if you have a cake, do a cake.

And, you know,

and the birthday decorations,

I love that in addition to

Christmas decorations.

And how can you incorporate all that?

Yeah.

make it feel like a birthday

party because that's truly what it is.

So awesome ideas.

You were talking about, you know,

sharing the gospel story and,

and reading it and for different kids.

Have you ever liked done a

like where you,

you read the story and then

you just have them get up

and like be mime what

you're reading and act it out.

Cause I think some active kids,

my kids were this way and

they couldn't sit still, say their lives.

So I'd be like, okay, you are this person.

Whenever I read something

about that person,

now you're going to act out

what I'm doing and what I'm reading.

So then they were always

like on pins and needles

about what they had to do.

And there was no, you know,

going around and bugging

anybody else because they

were just waiting to see

what they're supposed to do next.

Right.

And if somebody misses their cue,

the other ones are paying,

they're on top of it.

They'll let them know.

So you have the helpers there.

I think I love that.

I mean,

that's another idea is just to

incorporate

an acting out of the story

if you whether you do it

even during it or you could

just give them some props

or right somewhere like

your kids what their

knowledge is maybe maybe

your kids already know the

story so they could

actually just retell it

Um, you know,

and you just kind of give

them a couple of bathrooms

or towels or whatever to

dress and a few props or

let them figure out the props.

I mean,

that's a lot of fun and you never

know what you're going to get out of it.

Oh, no, you don't.

You should be filming it too.

Well, yes, absolutely.

I said, that's a keeper.

Kids love to act out.

Um,

they do the Bible stories when I do a
good news camp in the summer,

I almost always have a

the girl, I always have a girls group.

I always have them act out

the stories as I go.

It can get sometimes it's a

little like chaotic, but that's okay.

Just roll with it and have

fun while we learn.

Yeah.

Yeah, absolutely.

So as far as like, you know,

you talked about inviting

over like the neighbor kids.

What have you ever invited?

You know,

have the parents stay and what

what have their roles been?

Or have you just kind of let

them just hang out or have
you assigned them things to do?

Or how does that work?

Yes, I think.

you know I guess I guess it

would depend on what I

perceive their need to be I

like when the parents stay

because they're going to

learn um you know maybe

this is a first exposure

for them too um right but

but if they're if maybe

it's a mom who's a single

mom or something and she

just needs to rest for a

minute yeah and that's okay

I mean I I would like to

offer her that opportunity

to just sit and and kind of

be a spectator

But sometimes if they seem

inclined to help,

and I do like to bring them

into it if we can.

I mean,

adults can play those party games

and you could do, I mean,

there's all kinds of games,

things like charades and

stuff like that if you have

some older people with, anyways,

there's lots of fun things

to do at a birthday party.

So it's nice when they come,

but how do you reach out

into the home like if you

just bring the kids into

your house for an hour or

so um how do you reach back

into their home with the

gospel message well you

could do some little goodie

bags you know just put some

little candies or whatever

little party favors you

know how you do that at the
end of the kids party and
you can pick up a tract um and um
Put it in the gift bag.

Well,

then the parents are probably going
to see that too.

They're going to take a look
at what the kid is bringing home.

Like at my website,

we'll talk about this in a little bit.

I have a birthday party
invitation you can download and hand out.

Also,

there's what I call the candy cane gospel,

which is something you can download,

print out,

and then tape a candy cane to it and

I use the colors and design

of the candy cane to

connect to some Bible

verses that tell the gospel message.

So you could use that or you

could use like Amazon or
like if you have a child
evangelism fellowship office in your town,
they have tracks that are great for kids.
especially for all different
seasons of the year and holidays.
And they're not expensive at all.
well worth the investment.

Yeah.

Yeah.

That's great.

Great ideas.

And I, yeah, I love the,
the favor bag because you
can fill that with a lot of
things that can then continue to, um,
to pique the interest of the,
the child going home and to
share it with their parents,
to share it with other
relatives on what they, um,
they were able to do and, um,
just continue that seed to grow, um,

instead of just, well, yeah,
we went to a fun party and, and,
But just those reminders bring that back.
So, okay.
So we've touched on a little
bit about your book,
but I want you to talk about your book,
but I also want you to talk
about the resources because
you have developed tons and
tons of resources to go with this book.
Videos and you have articles coming out,
lots of stuff.
Yeah, well,
so the book is called
Twenty-Five Symbols of Christmas,
Finding Jesus.
And it's a twenty five day
devotional to take you
through the month of
December as you lead up to Christmas.
And I'll just tell you kind
of where I where the

motivation for writing this came from.

First of all, I told you before,

I love Christmas.

I've made myself very busy

at Christmas at times.

And I found myself, you know,

getting to Christmas Day

the day after and feeling like, oh,

I feel like I missed something.

You know, I did a lot of stuff,

but something just wasn't

satisfying about that.

And the reason is because

there were times when I

didn't put Jesus right in

the center of all of Christmas.

So with some people, you know, think, well,

maybe just do don't do as

much or do nothing for Christmas.

You know, some people even go that far.

And you you make those decisions.

I'm not advocating that.

one way or the other,

but I do advocate thinking
through what you're going
to do ahead of time.

And,

and also being very intentional to use
whatever traditions or
symbols that you do have
throughout the season to
remind you of Jesus himself,
to connect with
those things to the character of Jesus.

So you'll know him better.

You'll find him by Christmas, you know,

and you know,

the Bible says that in

Jeremiah and other places also,

but that if you seek him

with all your heart, soul, mind,

you will find him.

He's not hiding from you.

And in fact,

you will never seek more than

you can find.

Like you're seeking is a
lifelong adventure, whether you have not,
yet become a believer in Jesus,
whether you're a new Christian,
whether you've been at it for forty years,
you will continue to find more of Jesus.

So each of those people can
read this devotional every
day and they will find
something new about Jesus
because God's word,
it's based on God's word
and God's word is living
and active and applicable.

And every season of our lives, every year,
we'll have some new bit of
wisdom that we can apply.

So that's when I when I like
I think about how Jesus
taught quite often with physical objects.

Right.

He used, you know, the bread, the wine,
the, you know, the wheat fields,

the fig tree, whatever it was.

He used the symbols.

those things as symbols for

a spiritual truth and

that's what this book does

it takes these symbols and

connects them to a

spiritual truth so that

when you're doing something

you know whatever it might

be um like this one isn't

in the book like it's on my

website but you're making

sugar cookies it can remind

us about um the fragrance

of christ in our life

because you know how they just

The smell of baking cookies

permeates the entire house.

Yes.

So this is the same idea.

We can think about that.

We can talk about that with our children,

with other people.

So each thing that we're

doing in the month can

connect us to Jesus, to his heart,

to know him better.

And that's the whole point of this book.

So it's a tool for you to do

that throughout the month of December.

Of course,

I want you to be able to do it

every day of your year.

I want you to keep on that

track afterwards.

But that's what the book is all about.

And it's great for families.

If you sit with your

children and read it aloud,

it's short enough that they

can listen and they can get

something out of it too.

So I do suggest

If you have the book that

you make it a family adventure each day,

just pick a time that seems
to be convenient where you
guys can all sit down for, you know,
fifteen minutes and do it
as a devotion together as a family.

And you're going to find
Jesus together as a family.

And to that end,

I have provided some
downloads at my website.

So you can go there for your children.

There's a coloring page for
each day of the month of
the devotional book,
and you can download those.

There's also a journal page.

If you're inclined to take
notes or reflect on each
day and you like to write things down,
you can print out journal
pages for yourself to write on.

I have, like I said,
the candy cane gospel

that's there and the
birthday party invitation.

are at the website.

I'm trying to think if
there's anything else at the website.

Then I have on my YouTube channel,
which is just search Anna Yorty,
and you'll come up with my
YouTube channel.

And there you will find a
video that goes with each
day of the month of December,
each day of that divisional.

if you didn't get enough in
the pages of the book, there's more.

You can learn more about these,
the tradition or the symbol.

I give more information that
I couldn't include in the book.

And also there's a little
section for each video that says,
let's go deeper.

So if you want to apply that

to your life in a deeper way,
there are more ideas that
you can choose to do.

And then some of those, I hope,
like I said,

You'll come to the end of
December and think, well,
what have I done this month
that I really want to carry
forward into twenty twenty five?

You know,
you may not keep every habit or
whatever that you know, I suggested,
but pick and choose the
ones that really connected
and resonated with you and
carry them on for the new year.

OK,
and I'm trying to think if there's
anything else that there's
the YouTube video.

Oh, I will say.

I write for crosswalk.com,

which is a great place for
getting podcasts and blogs
and all kinds of articles
for Christian living.

And if you just search me, yeah,
just search Crosswalk Annie Yorty.

A lot of the information
that we've talked about today,
I'm going to have in print
there at Crosswalk.

So if you were like, wait a minute,

I didn't.

I kind of remember something.

It was a great idea,

but I didn't write it down.

It'll be there.

It's not there yet.

It'll probably get posted in
the next couple of days, though.

So you can go there and get
that information.

But otherwise,

I just invite you to come

connect with me at my website.

Subscribe there.

The book is available at

Amazon or wherever books are sold.

You can get it.

But yeah,

I do encourage you just whether

you use the book or not,

just make Jesus the center

of your Christmas.

He,

he deserves that place in your life and,

and your life is going to

be more peaceful and restful and, and

purposeful really right and

you walk away from the

scene unlike you talked

about earlier with there

was some yes this this was

a season that it was there

was something different

yeah instead of what just

happened and yes yeah you

want to say you know you
know him better you know
whatever little step you take
You know, it might be a stride.
It might be a baby step.
It doesn't matter.
Each step is important along the way.
This is a journey we're all
on together and we want to.
We wanna just grow to know
him better day by day.
Yeah,
and what a good way to launch into
the new year too.
Knowing that you have made those,
you strive to move forward versus, oh,
we're just gonna get
through this and then maybe
the next year will hold
something different.
Change doesn't start till we
say that change has to start.
And I love that you say, you know,

just a baby step even,
because that's how change begins.
We start that rock rolling.
It takes a lot of effort to get it moving.
But once it starts moving,
it's so much easier to make
more changes in a positive
direction instead of just, you know,
lamenting over, oh, my goodness,
I got to start.
Just start.
That's so true.
You know,
it's like that with Bible reading,
the verse,
where it comes from is escaping me.
But Jesus,
the Bible says God rewards
people who seek him through the word.
And, and, you know,
there was a time in my life
where I would think of
maybe studying the Bible or reading it,

you know, every day was like, oh,

you know, I have to do that.

You know, I gotta get, I gotta get that.

That's all my, I know, you know,

intellectually,

I know it's what I should do.

And,

but it seemed like kind of a chore,

I'll be honest.

But what happened is I

transformed as I did it,

because I do want to make it my habit.

Even some habits are harder than others,

but the more you do it,

the more you start digging

into the word and you see how it all

connects it is it's

stimulating and rewarding

when you're like aha you

know and now over time I've

gone from well I have to do

that to oh I can't wait to

do that I cannot wait to

see what is in the word for
me today and um if this my
goal is that this book with
the symbols of christmas
would help people to just go like
Because we're not really in
this book are not the traditional.

Yeah, they are.

You know,

it's basically pointing to the
bigger picture of Jesus, not just,
you know, what happened at his birth.

It's connecting it to his whole life.

And so you're going to
really start to see how all
these things in the Bible
start connecting.

And it's very rewarding to
us when we start
making those connections,
the Holy Spirit in us is doing it.

He's illuminating our minds.

And we're like, oh,

that it's a good feeling.

And it's well, I mean,

sometimes we get convicted

of things through that process, too.

But but that's good for us, too.

That's a sign of God's love

for us when he's revealing

things about himself, things about us.

And that's his love.

When you feel those things,

he's loving on you.

Absolutely.

That's a good reminder.

And yes,

we all need a little more love in

our life anyways.

And God's love is perfect

and it's never condemning.

And he is always a safe

person to come to with whatever we have.

He's always drawing us with it.

If you ever feel like you need to run,

that's not...

You're not hearing the right message.

You got another message.

His love will draw us to him.

You know,

even if we're doing the wrong thing,

we know we can get to him.

Yes.

Yeah.

The Annie's resources are at

AnnieYorty.com.

And I will share some of

those other links as well

to the book and to your

crosswalk page and some other things.

So you can just look at the

show notes and be able to

get all of those resources there.

as quick as possible because

I know rewriting a URL is not fun.

So we'll make sure that you

can just click on it and

you'll have all that information.

Well,

thank you so much for sharing with us
today, Annie.

It's always such a joy to
talk to you and I love you
being part of my co-host team,
but I'm so excited that we
had an hour to just talk
about this topic and all
that you had to share on it.

It's my pleasure to be here.

And I do want to wish,

if I don't get on here again,

I may one more time this month.

But Merry Christmas to everyone.

And I do hope you find more
of Jesus this Christmas.

Yes, yes, absolutely.

And so so, yeah,

maybe seem like we we

touched on Christmas a little early.

We wanted this broadcast and

the the podcast to come up

before Christmas actually hit.

So you had some resources
and then we're going back
to more school oriented topics.

But that's okay.

You may want to listen to
the next broadcast anyways,
because we're going to talk
next time about beyond words,
how learning a second
language actually can
transform your struggling learner.

I have a guest on who has a
curriculum that is a second language,
but she has seen some
amazing transformations
with people who have used
her products with kids with
autism and other
just learning challenges.

And she said it has amazed
her and it's transformed
how she has seen how second
languages can really help a

lot of children that we usually dismiss that kids should learn a second language if they're already struggling in areas with their first language.

So that may be something you want to tune into for next time and just hear what she has to say.

So that's coming up on our show next time.

That sounds awesome.

That's really exciting to be able to think about that.

I put that in.

My daughter with Down syndrome, we definitely did a second language.

And it was good.

I mean, we're talking.

We did that.

So anyways, it's doable.

Don't discount them.

Yeah, absolutely.

So, so that'll be next show.

And then, yes, we'll,

we have a lot more coming up.

So check out our website at

spedhomeschool.com.

We actually have a now an

interactive calendar.

So you can click on the

calendar and the dates and you'll see,

you can get reminders for the shows.

You can see what's coming up.

We also have a huge party

coming up next Thursday.

It's December twelfth.

It's going to be a holiday

learn event and,

So from eight thirty to

eleven thirty central in the morning,

we are going to have people

on teaching school for you.

So you can just sit down with your kids,

turn the turn us on.

We'll be on a webinar.

It's not going to be on YouTube,

but we'll have the recorded

version later.

But we have lots of giveaways,

discount codes that will be coming later.

But there'll be people doing reading,

playing games,

and you can just sit down

with your kids and enjoy

that time of learning and

not plan school for the day.

So we're going to take that on for you.

So check out our website at

spedhomeschool.com slash calendar.

And you'll see a link for

that on December twelfth

where you can learn more

about that and register for free.

That's a free event.

So so join us for that.

We'd love for you to.

to do that.

And a lot of our partners

giving away free things.

And if you aren't subscribed
to our email list this coming Thursday,
um, we, we send out once a month,
all the deals that our
partners are giving and
they have some really good ones this year,
this month.

So, um,
you'll want to subscribe to our
email list if you aren't on there yet.

Um, and, and to get that.

So that's not what we have
coming up right now, but, um,
thanks again, Annie.

Um, yes, we will.

Yeah.

Yes, absolutely.

And thank you all for joining us.

And we will see you next
time here on Empowering
Homeschool Conversations.

Take care and God bless everybody.

This has been Empowering

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Thank you.