Welcome to Empowering

Homeschool Conversations,

your authority in

navigating the world of

homeschooling diverse learners.

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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 really, that's that's

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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.
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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,

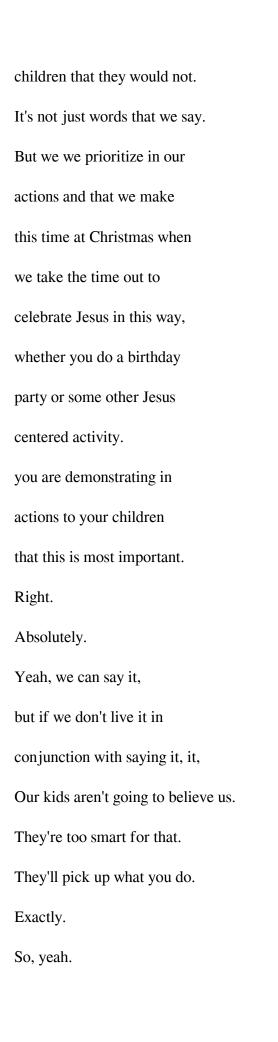
our curriculum, whatever it is,

and make sure we're hitting

the higher priority of

knowing Jesus and teaching,

passing that on to our



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

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

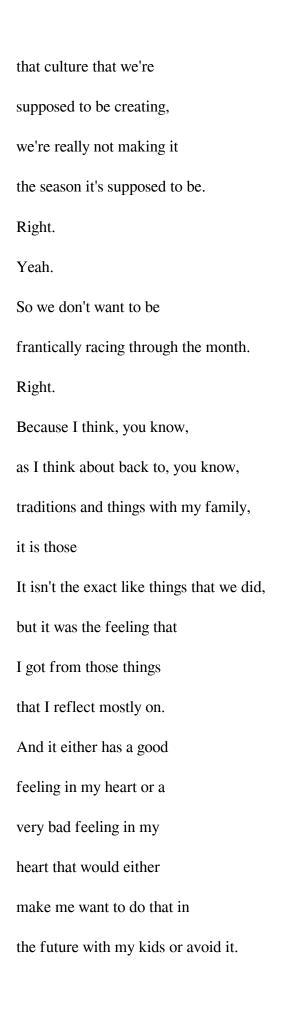
season of peace it's a

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



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

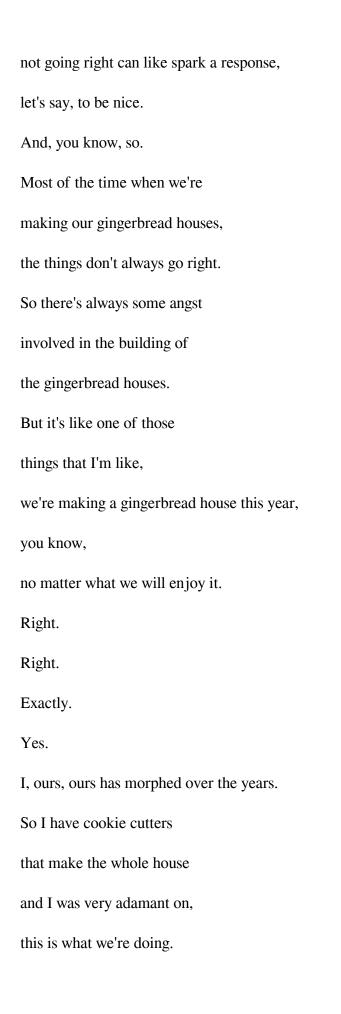
were doing gingerbread

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



| 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 |

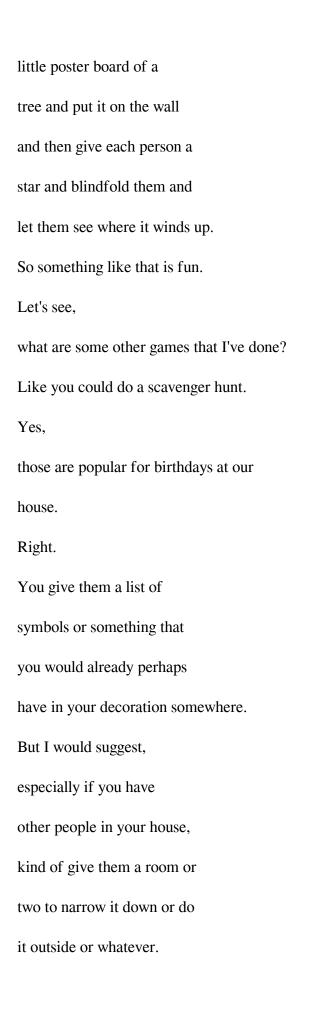
I was in, I was visiting with my nieces and nephews and they have kids now. So I, I, um, have a book about gingerbread houses by Julie Lavender. And I took the book and I took my kit and we had a really good time. Everybody was happy on this occasion of building with the little kids. They enjoyed it. 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



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

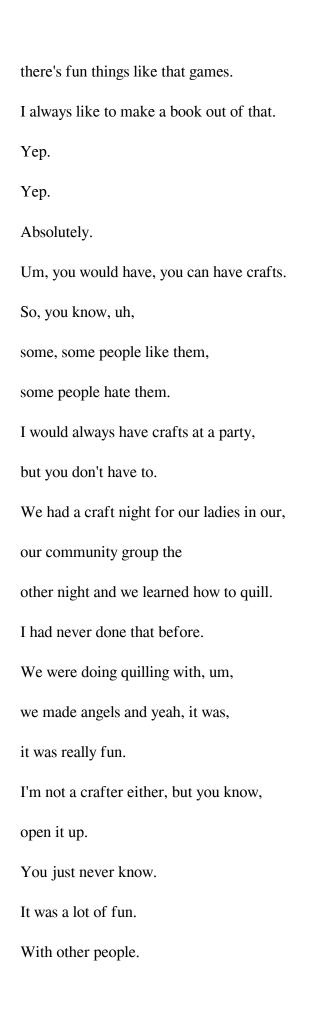
little older or they're working together,

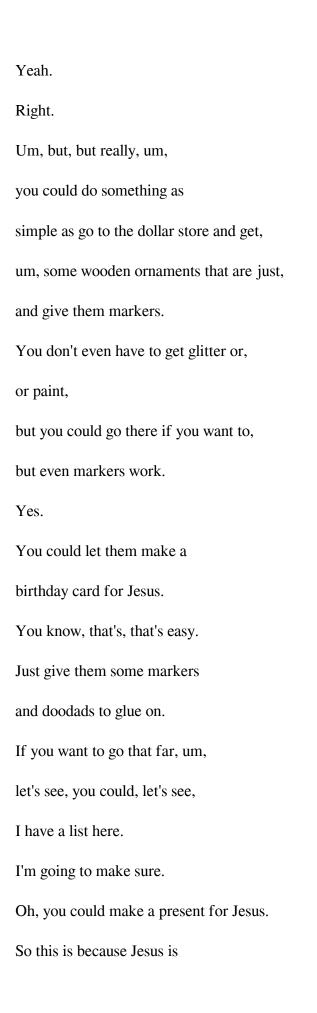
um, you know,

to make it more fun so that

you can have them illustrate those later,

you know, it, so there's,





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.

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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?
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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,
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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,

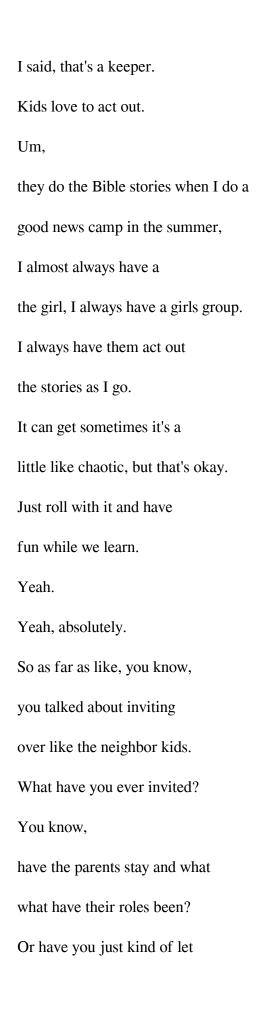
it would make it feel much

| 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.



them just hang out or have

you assigned them things to do?

Or how 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

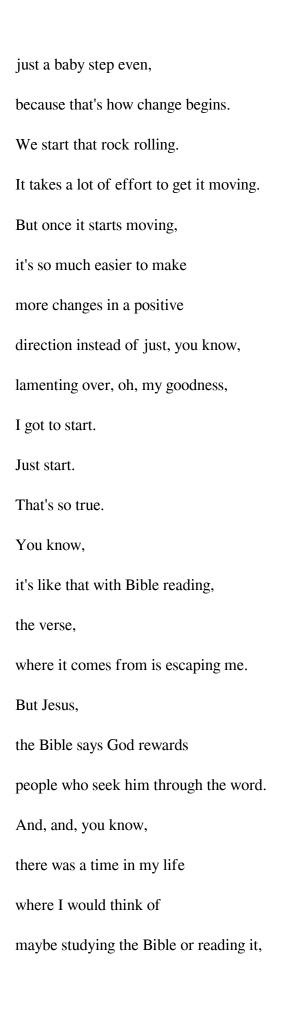
to your life in a deeper way, there are more ideas that you can choose to do. And then some of those, I hope, like I said, You'll come to the end of December and think, well, what have I done this month that I really want to carry forward into twenty twenty five? You know, you may not keep every habit 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,



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

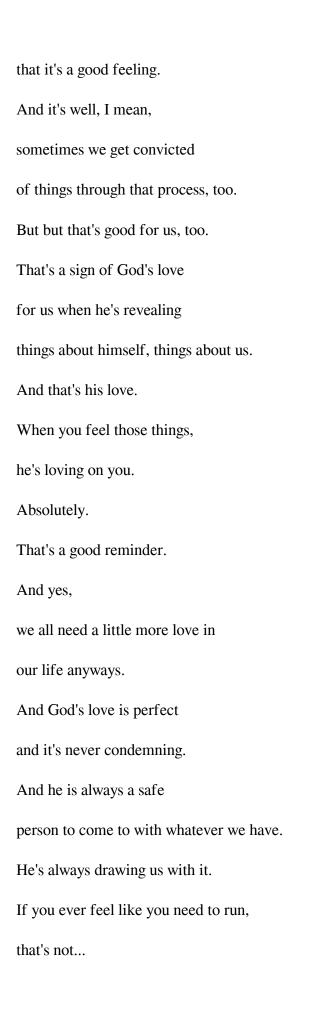
us when we start

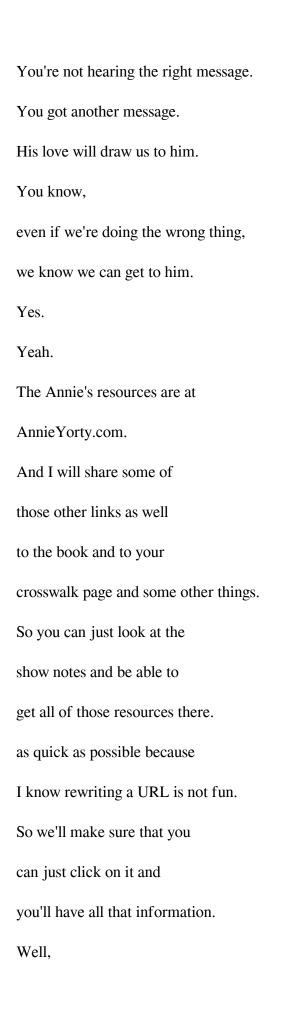
making those connections,

the Holy Spirit in us is doing it.

He's illuminating our minds.

And we're like, oh,





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

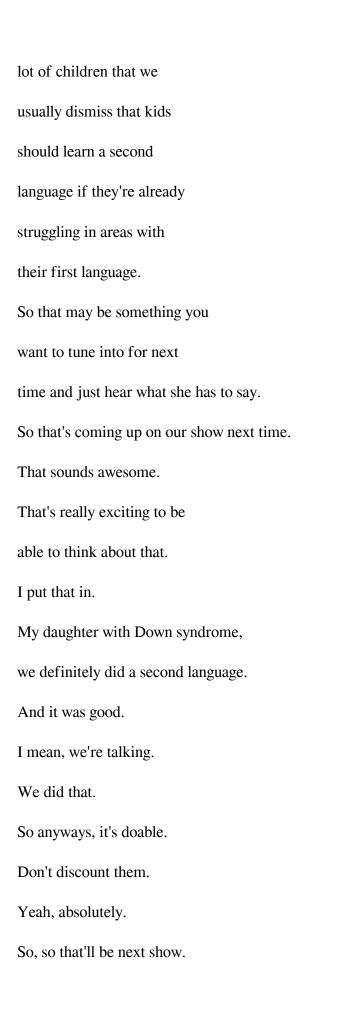
just learning challenges.

And she said it has amazed

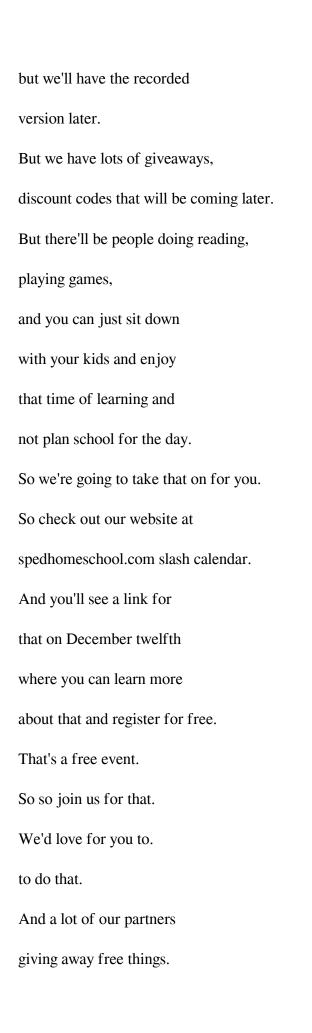
her and it's transformed

how she has seen how second

languages can really help a



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,



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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families to home educate

diverse learners.

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Thank you.