



Practical, Fun and Affordable History, Geography and Science Resources!

Maggie Hogan's Bright Ideas Press E-Zine

Welcome to the November 2009 edition. I hope you find the following information useful, as you spend time teaching and enjoying your children!

Table of Contents

1. Simplify the Holidays
2. Pearl Harbor Day
3. Bright Ideas Press Two-Day Sale!
4. 3 Fabulous, Free E-Book Offers
5. What's New? Bright Ideas Press Affiliate Program !

From Maggie to You –

Simplify!

You've all seen those magazine covers with fabulous foods, color-coordinated families, homes decorated by professionals, and happy children baking perfect gourmet cookies while mom looks on—beaming. Well, not to spill any trade secrets but folks—that is not reality! (Or at least reality for most of us!) And truly, all those gorgeous lay-outs and cheery articles usually miss the point about celebrating anyway: what are you celebrating and why? I'll use Christmas as an example in this article to walk you through how I choose to simplify. Take what works for you and use it—substitute or ditch the rest. Simple enough?

Maggie's Top 10 Ways to Simplify Christmas

Note: you and your family need to discuss your traditions and decide which three are non-negotiable to everyone. The rest can be modified or ditched without the Christmas police taking you away. Here's what

we did:

1) I don't bake cookies with my kids! Shocked?! It took all my patience, mental energy, and self-control to bake with my boys. I finally figured out it wasn't worth it. They didn't care that much and I actually dreaded adding that to my "Things I must Do to Be a Good Mom at Christmas" list. Other options: Bake at night and let them decorate a small batch the next day with those cute little icing squirters you can buy. Make or buy one roll of slice-n-bake cookies and that way they can do one batch without all the hassles of completely made from scratch cookies. Or support your local bakery. :-)

2) Let's talk Christmas trees. Am I the only one who doesn't like to decorate? As soon as I could get away with it (when the boys became teenagers) I downsized our tree and only bring out about two boxes of ornaments. My husband doesn't like tinsel and I don't like garland so we don't have either. We do have a LOT of lights but since the guys are in charge of putting up lights I am fine with that. Tree up and decorated in two hours or less. We did do live trees until the year the prices went through the roof and we broke down and got a nice artificial one. Bonus - now I don't have to clean up dried needles. I will admit I miss the smell, but problem solved with our live advent wreath made of pine, or a nice candle.

3) Parties. I love parties! I love to host parties and I love to have lots of people over. However, I've found that parties in December are big time stress-makers for me. So, our annual Christmas Employee Appreciation party is now given on New Year's Day. And boy - do I get great deals shopping for gifts and special food by getting stuff after Christmas for our party!

4) I do not—under any circumstances—go to the mall or the big box stores in December. Instead, consider supporting this awesome ministry that helps the persecuted church:
<http://www.christianhandcrafts.com/home.php?cat=17>
I LOVE their 3-D tic-tac-toe game and their puzzles. Great prices, too. Or check out our Bright Ideas Press Two Day Sale,

below!

5) Focus on the giving-not getting- of the season and make this a special event. Plan one special shopping trip with the kids. Pick one—or at the most two— stores where they can buy their gifts for others. (I highly recommend the dollar store or a thrift shop!)

6) Wrapping gifts. One word: bags. (Dollar store bags.) I bought a huge case of white tissue about ten years ago and am still using it.

7) Stockings. This is non-negotiable in our family. We all love our stockings and still do them even with our grown "kids." I am going to have a new twist next year though—all the stocking stuffers will have to be either: used or under a dollar each or re-gifted from our closets. We all have too much stuff.

8) I do not cook a Christmas dinner. Never have. I make something the day before that can be reheated or put in the crock pot Christmas morning. Seriously. I don't cook on Christmas and as far as my guys know, this is normal.

9) I DO cook Christmas breakfast. (This is the only day of the year I cook breakfast!) Breakfast consists of a high quality orange juice (I used to actually juice it myself when I lived in FL and had oranges hanging in the back yard...), canned Pillsbury cinnamon rolls (heaven!), scrambled eggs with cheese and mushrooms, and bacon. (I would do grits but I'm the only one who eats them.) I have even been known to splurge and buy the bacon you only have to microwave but usually my cheap side kicks in and I buy the real thing.

10) Lastly, and most importantly, Jesus is the reason our family celebrates the season. Attending church services leading up to Christmas (especially on Christmas Eve) are the highlights of December for us. My boys have especially enjoyed Advent wreath making and our Advent devotions we do each year. (Although our church organizes this wreath making event, a family could easily do this on their own.) I LOVE Christmas—I

just prefer it simpler. For me, making it a quiet time to reflect on the Lord and to share our gifts with others is what makes Christmas such a beautiful holiday.

Pearl Harbor Day

There are many holidays coming up these next few months. Of course, we think of the obvious ones first but I'd like to mention another holiday with historic significance. Don't miss sharing this important piece of history with your children!

December 7th is **Pearl Harbor Day**

<http://pearlharbor-history.org/> (great list of links!)

<http://www.lovetolearnplace.com/SpecialDays/PearlHarbor/Activities.html> (puzzles/games/activities)

What's New? Bright Ideas Press 2-Day Only Sale!

Last year, realizing we'd never had a store-wide sale of any kind, we decided to offer our first ever Black Friday Sale. So, in thanksgiving to God who has blessed us, and in thanksgiving to you our friends and customers, we are doing it again!

For two days only - this (Black) Friday and Saturday - everything in our store is available for 20% off. But when it is over, it's over. Do you have kids who love cool reference materials? Friends or family who homeschool who would be blessed to receive resources for Christmas? Would you like to save on materials you will be using in 2010? Now's your chance!

Simply shop at www.BrightIdeasPress.com and at check-out (when prompted for a coupon code) enter: NOLINES4ME. (All caps, please.) Then choose your shipping method: Media Mail, Priority Mail or UPS.

Of course no great sale is complete without "freebies" and we have a great set just for you! Three good friends (and homeschooling gurus) have graciously allowed me to give away an e-book apiece.

Freebie #1

Donna Spann—who is also my fabulous daughter-in-law's mother—is the Queen of Organization (and whole grains but that's another story) and gave me permission to give away her "Paper Panic" booklet. If you, like me, struggle with "paper control," this booklet is just the ticket with realistic tips and tricks. What works for this busy mom of six will probably work for you, too. [Download Paper Panic here.](#)

Freebie #2

While we are talking organization, my friend Vicki Bentley—speaker, author, and mother of many will help you organize your food prep and cooking so that you can have quick, easy, and healthy meals. Both do-able and affordable, Vicki's techniques are easy enough for the beginning cook and yet valuable for us old-timers as well. Bon Appétit! Vicki Bentley and her husband Jim live on a farm in south-central Virginia. They've been a foster/adoptive family to almost 50 children since 1986; their ministry focus has been largely to pregnant teens/babies, or to newborns awaiting adoption. They also appreciate the opportunity to "love on" their 14 (so far) grandbabies! See more of Vicki's great materials here: <http://everydayhomemaking.com/>. [Download Getting Dinner on the Table here.](#)

Freebie #3

And yet another terrific freebie for you from Kim Kautzer of the fabulous WriteShop program! Kim, veteran homeschooler and author, loves to help parents feel more confident about teaching writing. [WriteShop](#), her unique and successful writing program, has been honored as one of Cathy Duffy's *100 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum*.

She is giving our readers her **Christmas Mini-Builder e-book** (a WriteShop® StoryBuilder)

What's this? This card deck helps jumpstart a creative writing project by providing students with the basic elements for a Christmas story—*character, character trait, setting, and plot*—laying a foundation for a joyful writing experience with some clever surprises thrown in along the way. 96 printable writing prompt cards inspire tear-free, enthusiastic creative writing. Even your most reluctant student will beg for award-winning StoryBuilders!

Download it here: <http://www.writeshop.com/downloads/0026->

christmas.zip

EARN MONEY BY SHARING WHAT YOU LOVE!

What Else is New? BIP Affiliates Program!

If you like Bright Ideas Press Products so much you'd recommend them to a friend, then the BIP Affiliate program is for you. Here's how it works: you sign up, you use the links and banners we provide you to advertise select products, people click on your links and purchase said products, we give you 30% of the sale. Sound simple? It is!

Here are the details:

1. We give a generous 30% commission on every eligible sale you send our way.
2. We offer commissions on sales of all of our **digital products** as well as **Illuminations**. So, if someone you refer to us buys a downloadable product or an Illuminations product, you'll receive a commission on that (but not on paper or other physical products).
3. We provide you with links, banners, buttons, advertisements, etc. you can put on your website, blog, email newsletter, PDF catalog, etc.
4. We will occasionally offer bonuses, promotions, contests, giveaways, or other incentives for select affiliates. But no matter what, you're guaranteed you 30%.

Visit affiliates.BrightIdeasPress.com for more information.

*Cathy Duffy Top 100 Picks

See the books that Cathy loves: *The Mystery of History Series* and *The Christian Kids*

Explore Series at www.BrightIdeasPress.com

Check out our Yahoo Groups!

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Illuminations1/> for our brand new curriculum!

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Whole_HOG/ (join us as we share geography ideas)

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AllAmericanHistory> (Our American History series)

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HSGifted> (Homeschooling gifted children)

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MysteryofHistory1>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MysteryofHistory2>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MysteryofHistory3>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MysteryofHistoryHS> (Using *The Mystery of History* with high schoolers)

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ChristianKidsExploreBiology> (Covers all of our *Christian Kids Explore* books)

We appreciate you, our customers.

Feel free to contact us:

Bright Ideas Press

877.492.8081

contact@BrightIdeasPress.com

www.BrightIdeasPress.com

Happy Trails,

Maggie Hogan*

(come friend me on Facebook!)
