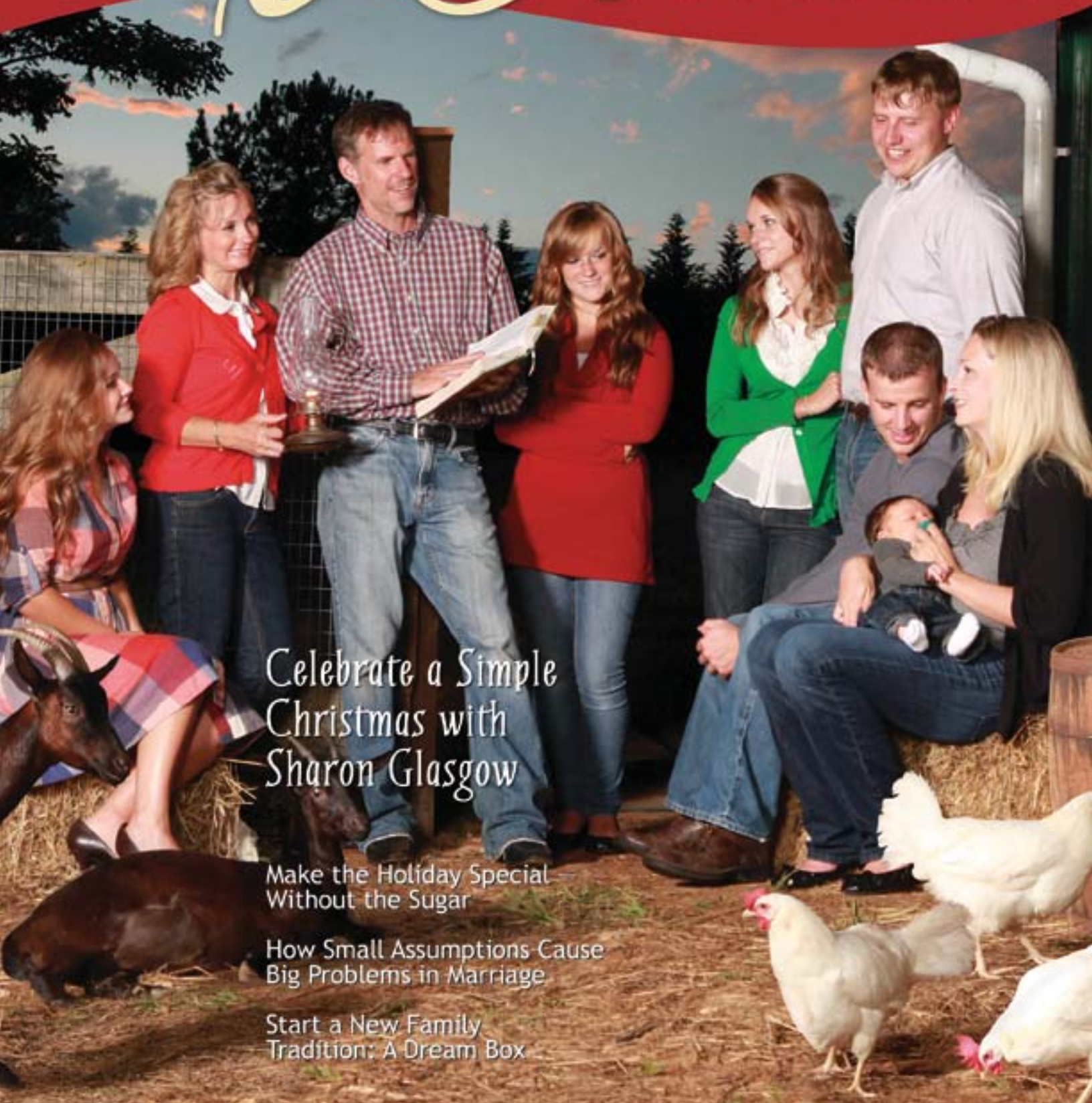


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DECEMBER 2010

Woman



Celebrate a Simple Christmas with Sharon Glasgow

Make the Holiday Special Without the Sugar

How Small Assumptions Cause Big Problems in Marriage

Start a New Family Tradition: A Dream Box

Bringing God's Peace, Perspective, and Purpose to Today's Busy Woman

This past year our family encountered more financial hardship than ever before. We desperately sought God for answers and provision, and He provided both. While we listened for His answers, we believed He was telling us to rent our cozy home to in-training missionaries we knew needed an affordable place to live. We moved out of our

house and into a one-room dwelling on our farm so they could move in.

This wasn't our first choice for how God would provide. This provision included sacrifice and living differently than ever before. When our kids heard we were moving, the first thing they asked about was our annual family Christmas celebration.

At first, I too was concerned we wouldn't have our home. But then I remembered Jesus left His home. He traded comfort for something that paled in comparison - all for a greater purpose.

Jesus left the portals of glory, the very throne of God, the kingdom of Heaven, and the presence of His Father, to be born to a poor family in a common

barn with animals. He wasn't born to just any poor family, but one of the weakest clans of Israel. There was no pomp or pageantry when He was born; He had nothing but strips of cloth to cover His body. Mary didn't get to order her favorite meal after the delivery or have the luxury of a comfortable bed to rest in that night.

When they returned home, there were no balloons or people waiting to celebrate His birth. In fact, many in their small town thought Jesus was illegitimate. As a young man, He never acquired wealth or reputation. He even considered himself homeless, with nowhere to lay His head. In His final days, He was rejected, mocked and tortured before being crucified. His entire life was one of sacrifice and obedience for His Father.

When I thought about everything Jesus sacrificed to come to earth, it made me embarrassed about my own

expectations for a traditional Christmas. For so many years, I packed December so full I barely had time to reflect on the simplicity of the real story of Jesus' birth. It's a story of sacrifice and simplicity from beginning to end. Remembering the reality of Jesus' birth and His God-centered life assured me our move was God's provision.

The past few years have been hard. God has reminded me of a winepress. Repeated crushing is crucial to producing fine wine. Sometimes God allows us to go through repeated crushing to press us into His greater purpose.

This Christmas is different. We will set aside many traditions, such as a big decorated tree and gingerbread houses sitting in a row. Instead, we will celebrate Christmas more joyfully and humbly than ever before. We are learning that the hardest circumstances are often the things that push us into His greater purpose for our lives.

To celebrate Jesus' birth, we will go to the barn, scatter clean hay on the ground, read the Nativity story, eat a simple supper and thank God for what He has taught us this year about provisions and sacrifice.

Next year, Lord willing, we will move back into our house. As a memorial to what the Lord has taught us, we will once again celebrate a simple Christmas, focused on Jesus' birth. Maybe we'll light a candle, read the prophecies of Jesus' birth and the Gospel account on the floor near a window. Maybe we will look out at the stars and sleep on the floor with few provisions or comfort. Maybe we will eat crackers and drink grape juice together in remembrance of everything Jesus lived and died for.

May you and your family press into God this Christmas. May you experience His provisions and answers. Though His provisions might come with sacrifice, when you follow God's leading, they always bring you into His greater purpose. ❁

Sharon Glasgow lives on a farm in Fredericksburg, Virginia, with her husband and best friend of 29 years. They have five daughters, two sons-in-law and one incredible grandson. She's a speaker with Proverbs 31 Ministries, and a contributing author to "God's Purpose for Every Woman" and "The Reason We Speak." Learn more about Sharon and how to invite her to speak at your church or organization at www.sharonglasgow.com.

EVERYDAY LIFE:

Discover creative ideas for using Christmas cards from the book "Everything Christmas." Visit us online at www.Proverbs31.org and click on "Everyday Life."

Read how giving up traditional comforts brought one family closer to home, and to the true meaning of Christmas.



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a simple
christmas

by Sharon Glasgow