



1509 N. Clinton Blvd. · Bloomington, IL 61701 · (309) 828-MOMS · hearts@hearts-at-home.org

December 2010

Find *daily* encouragement from Hearts at Home:

Facebook:
[Hearts at Home](#)
[Jill Fleener Savage](#)

Twitter:
[Hearts at Home](#)
[jillsavage](#)

Blog and Website:
[Hearts at Home](#)
[Jill Savage](#)

Links to other Hearts at Home

Resources:
[Events](#)
[Blog](#)
[Books](#)
[eCommunity](#)
[Heart Shoppe](#)
[HeartBeat Radio Program](#)
[Moms Group Leader Support](#)



So Christmas is just around the corner. Do you have your baking done? Is your shopping finished? Do you have the house cleaned? Are you packed for traveling?

There are so many things to get done to "do" Christmas. Isn't it time to let go of some of the expectations for a "perfect" Christmas and really enjoy this time with our families?

I'm issuing a challenge to myself today, and to you if you want to take it, to drink in my relationships and let go of my "to do" list for this week. No my gifts aren't all wrapped yet, but I've got a few gifts to give that can't be wrapped.

I want to give the gift of *listening* today. I want to make sure that when my children and my husband speak to me, I look into their eyes. I want them to feel that they are special. I don't want anyone to feel like they are in the way of what I need to do. They *are* what I need to do. *Lord, let me give the gift of listening today.*

I want to give the gift of *time* today. When my 14 year old asks me to play music with him, I'm going to stop what I am doing to play with him. I once heard the convicting response of a young girl when asked what kind of message she would give to parents from a child's point of view. She responded, "Parents have too many tomorrows. *Tomorrow* I'll play ball with you. *Tomorrow* we'll bake cookies together. *Tomorrow* I will play that game. Most of the time tomorrow never comes." *Lord, let me give the gift of time today.*

I want to give the gift of *touch* today. Have you ever gone through the day or the week and realized that you really haven't given out any hugs lately? People have the need to touch and be touched. Our children and teens need hugs from mom and dad daily. I'm going to make sure that my husband gets a bear hug today. When my daughter comes in to tell me a story, I will try to remember to touch her as we interact. *Lord, let me give the gift of touch today.*

I want to give the gift of *encouragement* today. I want to make sure I tell my 16-year-old son how much I appreciate the responsibility he has been taking on lately. I want my 14-year-old son to know that I think he has been doing well playing guitar on the worship team. I want my husband to know I greatly appreciate how hard he works to support our family. Sometimes the people we live with receive the least verbal encouragement from us. *Lord, let me give the gift of encouragement today.*

I want to give the gift of *grace* today. When my teenagers aren't as excited about decorating Christmas cookies as I want them to be, let me give them grace and respond with love instead of anger. When my husband doesn't clean up the kitchen in the way I was hoping he would, let me respond with grace--seeing what he did rather than what he didn't do. Life-giving grace is about allowing others to be human--to make mistakes without the fear of relationship-robbing anger as the response. *Lord, let me give the gift of grace today.*

I want to give the gift of *Jesus* today. Since we are celebrating His birthday, I want to make sure that we invite Him to the celebration. When I'm tempted to skip that Christmas Eve service because I still have too much to do, I will resist that temptation, gather the family, and make sure we take time to worship together. *Lord, let me give the gift of Jesus today.*

Yes, Christmas is days away. The gifts aren't all wrapped, the food isn't all prepared, and my family will arrive soon. Some things need to be accomplished today. But I want to do them with my family, not for them. I want to give them the kinds of gifts that can't be placed in a box and wrapped in red and green paper.

Come on, join me. Fix yourself a cup of hot chocolate, sit down, put your feet up, and gaze at the Christmas tree lights for a few minutes. Think about the incredible blessings God has given to you. Thank Him. Ponder the gifts that can be given today that don't need to be wrapped. *Lord, thank you for the gift of family you have given to me.*

Merry Christmas,

Jill Savage

Wife of Mark

Mom to Anne, Evan, Erica, Kolya, and Austin and Nana to Rilyn

15 Strategies for Making the Most of Christmas Break

In the next few weeks, most of us will experience some sort of change in routine. If you have school age children home for a couple of weeks of Christmas break, you'll find that being proactive about the break is far better than being reactive to their certain boredom somewhere along the way.

Need some ideas for making Christmas break the best it can be? Consider these tried and true suggestions from other moms in the trenches:

- *Go to the library.* Stay longer than normal to give everyone time to begin reading the book they're checking out.
- *Bake cookies together.* Make extra dough to form into cookie balls, place on a baking sheet, and freeze in the freezer. Once frozen, put the frozen balls in a freezer baggie to pull from when you want quick, homemade cookies, for an after school snack later in January.
- *Call an elderly friend or neighbor.* Ask them if you and your kids can assist them with any tasks they would like done but aren't physically able to do anymore.
- *Pre-determine one or two days a week to be "no screen" days.* Prepare the kids ahead of time that these days there won't be any TV, computer, or video game screens. Yes, they'll go into withdrawal, but be prepared to help them see the opportunity to read a book, draw, play with toys they haven't pulled out in

forever, play board games, do a puzzle, etc.

- *Have a "clean out your closet" and/or "clean out your drawers" day.* Once completed, make the trip together to Goodwill or the Mission Mart to drop the clothes off. Reward them with a special treat at their favorite ice cream shop.
- *Have a quiet hour each day when the kids go to their room to read or play quietly.* (If they share a room with a sibling, have them go to their own space). This helps break up all the togetherness that often leads to arguing.
- *Get out of the house.* Go to a local museum or brave a day at the zoo to see the animals in their winter environment.
- *Put a 1000 piece puzzle out on a card table that you work off and on throughout the day.* When the puzzle is complete, cover it with puzzle glue and frame it to display in your home.
- *Have an ongoing game of Yahtzee (or your family's favorite game) going throughout the entire break.* Play once a day after lunch or dinner and see who has the highest score at the end of break.
- *Go ice skating.* Indoors or outdoors, it's great exercise!
- *Encourage the kids to play outside at least 15 minutes each day.* They need the exercise and the change of scenery!
- *Give your kids spray bottles of colored water.* Then let them paint pictures in the snow!
- *Blow bubbles outside.* When it is cold, the bubbles freeze and they are fun to pop.
- *Choose one day as your "thank you note" day.* Make hot chocolate, put on some holiday music, and sit down at the table to write thank you notes to extended family the kids received gifts from.
- *Assign each child one day that they are in charge of preparing a meal.* Let them choose the menu, then guide them (and help as necessary) in preparing the meal for the family.



Our Christmas Present to YOU!

If you haven't been to the new [Hearts at Home website](#) yet, you'll want to check it out right away! There you'll find a complete makeover that will greatly benefit YOU! You'll find an updated logo, a new tagline, and a completely new look and navigation on our website that allows you to more easily find exactly what you need.

We're heading into 2011 with a fresh vision for encouraging moms in every season of motherhood!

Did You Know...

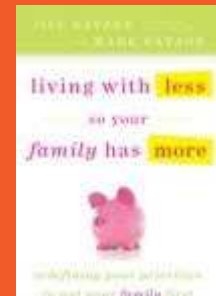
...that Hearts at Home is very active on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)? Come join the online conversations that will keep you in touch with other moms who understand what your life is like!

...that Hearts at Home now has [Jill Savage's daily blog posts](#) right on the front page of the [new website](#)? Just keep Hearts at Home bookmarked on your internet browser and check in for fresh encouragement every week day!

...that we recently gave away eight conference registrations and over a dozen Hearts at Home books to moms who stay connected to us on Facebook, Twitter, and the blog? Social media has its benefits!

...that the book *Living With Less So Your Family Has More* by Mark and Jill Savage is being offered at 30% off during the entire month of December? Simply go to the [Hearts Shoppe](#) and use the coupon code "LOVEMOMS" to get your 30% discount.

...that Hearts at Home is a 501c3 non-profit organization? When you partner with Hearts at Home financially, you get the benefit of a tax deduction. It's a win-win for both!



Register Now for the 2011 Hearts at Home Conference of Your Choice!

National Conference ~ Normal, IL ~ March 11-12, 2011

REGISTER NOW!

Western Conference ~ Colorado Springs, CO ~ October 7-8, 2011

REGISTER NOW!

North Central Conference, Rochester, MN ~ November 4-5, 2011

[REGISTER NOW!](#)

Click [here](#) to see the keynote speakers and the dozens of workshops offered at the event of your choice!

Can't attend a conference? Check out the [Conference To-Go](#) option to receive the conference of your choice via CD.

Hearts at Home
1509 N. Clinton Blvd.
Bloomington, IL 61701

Email: hearts@heartsathome.org

Phone: 309 828 MOMS

Web: <http://www.heartsathome.org>