

Praises for...
*12 Steps to Having a More Organized
Christmas and Holiday Season*

“I love Christmas, I love family, and I love Lane Jordan’s very practical book on how to plan for Christmas. Lane’s book will help many of us celebrate this most wonderful time of year in a Christ-honoring and family-strengthening way. I highly recommend this book!”

—**Nancie Carmichael**

Former Editor/Publisher of *Virtue Magazine*
Author of several books including: *Selah; Time to Stop,
Think and Step into Your Future; Surviving One Bad Year; and
Spiritual Strategies to Lead You to a New Beginning*

“Like Lane Jordan I started to hate Christmas. The busyness and stress stole the meaning right from under me. But in *12 Steps to Having a More Organized Christmas and Holiday Season*, I learned how to let go of the urgent in favor of the important. I was reminded, yet again, about what really matters. Lane helps readers take control of those things we can control and forget the rest. It’s never too late to learn how to find joy—the holiday season is a great place to start!”

—**Vicki Caruana, Ph.D.**

Author of the best-selling *The Organized Homeschooler* and
Apples & Chalkdust

“Lane’s book is so much more than the 12 steps she shares with us. Inside these pages she gives us so many gifts: peace of mind, joy, happiness, fun, and freedom. She has handed all of this to us, beautifully wrapped up in her 12 steps and made real with heart-warming stories and real-life examples. All we have to do is “unwrap” them by putting these simple ideas into action.”

—**Sandy Fowler**

Creator of the Heart Filled Holidays project
www.HeartFilledHolidays.com

This book, filled with practical and creative ideas, removes stress from the Christmas season. It gives busy women the permission to keep plans and purchases simple, and to focus on what matters most. I wish I'd had this resource years ago!

—Grace Fox

International speaker and author of
10-Minute Time Outs for Busy Women

“In Lane Jordan’s new book, *12 Steps to Having a More Organized Christmas and Holiday Season*, she will truly help you get organized and de-stressed for the Christmas holidays. With a been-there-done-that expertness, it’s obvious her purpose is not just to help you survive a busy season. With practical and biblical guidelines, she’ll help you rediscover and enjoy a more meaningful Christmas, with Christ as the true focus.”

—Rebecca Barlow Jordan

Author of Day-votions® for Women, Day-votions®
for Mothers, and Day-votions® for Grandmothers

“Practical and perfectly delightful! Lane Jordan’s new book helps us make it through the holidays with joy and ease. Take it from someone who is not naturally organized, *12 Steps to Having a More Organized Christmas* is sensible and doable. You will truly enjoy your holidays with less stress and more calm with the help of this book.”

—Karol Ladd

Positive Life Principles, Speaker and Author of
The Power of a Positive Woman

“Lane’s new book is a must-have if you want to take the stress and craziness out of your Christmas season. Her 12-step program will not only help you have a more organized Christmas, but help you put the “holy” back into the holiday.”

—Mary Englund Murphy

Author of *Joseph: Beyond the Coat of Many Colors* and *Winning the Battle of the Bulge: It’s Not Just About the Weight*
www.lookingglassministries.com

“With stories and examples, Lane Jordan gives specific, practical applications of her 12 steps to maximize joy and memories while minimizing stress. Any time of the year readers will find *12 Steps to Having a More Organized Christmas and Holiday Season* useful, scriptural, and a fun, easy read.”

—**Brenda Nixon**

Host of *The Parent’s Plate* radio show,
author of the award-winning *The Birth to Five Book: Confident
Childrearing Right from the Start*, and conference speaker

“12 Steps is a practical resource for those who desire to replace Christmas chaos with organization, clarity, and fun. Lane Jordan shares how to shop with wisdom, prepare a meal that’s sure to please, and decorate like a pro. This book will wrap a bow of joy around your Christmas.”

—**Laura Petherbridge**

Speaker and author of: *When ‘I Do’ Becomes ‘I Don’t’ - Practical Steps for
Healing During Separation and Divorce* and *The Smart Stepmom*

“*12 Steps to a More Organized Christmas* is just what you need to find the shortcuts that will help you smoothly navigate the busy holiday season. Lane Jordan has thought it through and packs in easy to follow tips and inspiration that will leave you eager and ready ahead of time. Don’t give up on the holidays! Lane’s book will save the day for a stress-free Christmas this year!”

—**Marcia Ramsland**

Speaker and author of *Simplify Your Life, Simplify Your Time,
Simplify Your Space*, and *Simplify Your Holidays:
A Classic Christmas Planner to Use Year after Year*
www.organizingpro.com

“Every Christmas I promise myself I’ll do better next year . . . and the next year I’m standing in the midst of the Christmas chaos, wondering how I failed again. But with *12 Steps to Having a More Organized Christmas and Holiday Season*, I know this year can be

different—even for a domestically disadvantaged woman like me! It’s sometimes hard for the Organized to teach the Unorganized of the world. What seems so easy to them can be overwhelming for us, making us feel like failures. But in “12 Steps . . .” Lane lovingly shares her practical suggestions on everything from shortcuts to gift buying and clean-up to outreach, without a wagging finger or a judgmental tone. No guilt trips inside this book!”

—**Vonda Skelton**

Diva of the Domestically Disadvantaged
Speaker and author of *Seeing Through the Lies:
Unmasking the Myths Women Believe* and
The Bitsy Burroughs Mysteries for kids 8 to 13-year-olds

“Lane Jordan gives the word “plan” heightened meaning. Choosing to plan with Lane’s 12 holiday steps means choosing blessings for you and all you love. No matter where you turn, you will find an invitation to celebrations of the heart. Her chapter on de-stressing the holidays—with its focus on priorities—is a lifesaver; and her counsel throughout the book is wise, Word-focused, Christ-honoring, and transferable to other areas of life. You will breathe a sigh of relief with each practical tip, and think, ‘I can do this, and it will be fun!’”

—**Dawn Wilson**

Founder, Heart Choices Ministries
Co-author of *LOL with God: Messages of Hope and Humor for Women*

12 STEPS

TO HAVING A MORE
ORGANIZED

*Christmas and Holiday
Season*

Other Books by Lane P. Jordan

12 Steps to Becoming a More Organized Woman

12 Steps to Becoming a More Organized Mom

12 Steps to Becoming a More Organized Cook

And she contributed to:

The One Year Life Verse Devotional by Jay K. Payleitner

And

Craft a Life of Passion, Purpose, and Prosperity

12 STEPS
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*Christmas and Holiday
Season*

"This book is just what you need to find the shortcuts that will help you smoothly navigate the busy holiday season." —Marcia Ramslund, speaker and author of *Simplify Your Life*

LANE P. JORDAN

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The older I become the more I realize that our life and what we do with it is all about the Lord Jesus. So I dedicate this book to Him and to our Father, Who sent His Son to live and die for us. Thank you, Father, for giving us the best Christmas gift ever.

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INTRODUCTION

*H*OW MANY OF us have awakened one morning only to realize that we have one zillion things to do, by yesterday, because of an upcoming holiday that is *tomorrow*?

Perhaps that example is an exaggeration, but the feeling of being totally unprepared for an upcoming event or holiday is not. The main problem for many of us is that we already are so busy with our overflowing lists that to add just one more thing pushes us to overload.

I remember how easy the Christmas season used to be for me. That is, until I had my first baby and *I had to do what my mother did!* Suddenly, I couldn't figure out when to buy the presents, wrap them, buy the tree, decorate it, make this Christmas full of "special memories," plan the big dinner, cook the big dinner, etc. And it was then that the light bulb of reality was turned on, and I realized that next year, I had better start early!

This book is a compilation of some ideas and successes that have helped me during what is the busiest time of the year for the majority of women—Christmas. Since this is generally the peak time of emotional roller coasters, unending to-do lists, flu epidemics, nativity plays, and children crying, I hope these tips

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and suggestions will help you, not only during this holiday but also during the other holidays celebrated throughout the year. If you can manage Christmas, other holidays will be tame in comparison!

But remember: all of the activities, trimmings, presents, and meals are really just outward expressions that are surrounding the real focus for the holiday—the earthly birth of God’s Son. While the saying may have become trite, *Jesus is the reason for the season*. If we forget about Him on our way to our own “perfection holiday glory,” then everything we have done has been done in vain. Yes, the Christ child can be celebrated in a “Martha Stewart Show House,” but He also can be celebrated just as well in a hospital room, an airport, a college dorm, a one-room apartment, or even . . . a very small, out-of-the-way stable.

THE TWELVE STEPS

THE FIRST REAL step towards any successful endeavor is deciding what you want. I firmly believe that if you *want* to be more organized, you *can* be, as long as you take the next steps of working hard and seeking out help. I hope that the following twelve steps and ten chapters will be the help you need.

- Step 1 Plan Everything Early
- Step 2 Plan Traditions and Memories
- Step 3 Plan Your Workload
- Step 4 Plan Your Buying—Set up a Budget
- Step 5 Plan Your Decorating and Wrapping
- Step 6 Plan Your Meals
- Step 7 Plan for Family—Yours and His!
- Step 8 Plan for Friends
- Step 9 Plan for Your Neighbors and the Needy
- Step 10 Plan Down Time for Yourself
- Step 11 Plan Time for the Guest of Honor
- Step 12 Plan Time to Reflect and Prepare for the New Year

Chapter 1

PLAN EVERYTHING EARLY

MANY TIMES I am asked what the *number one best tip* is to being more organized. And the answer, though very simple, can be very hard to do. The best tip to being more organized is to *plan*. Plan everything you can, and plan early. This is hard to do because most of us don't even have the *time* to sit down and plan in the first place! And I am with you on that. Most of us don't like to plan. We want everything just to happen. But when we wait for that, nothing will get done. When we plan nothing, nothing happens!

☞ *Most of us don't even have the time to sit down and plan.* ☞

Some of you reading this book are “Christmasholics”—you love Christmas and wish it could be celebrated every day! Others, like myself, realize how much work, energy, and time it takes to celebrate, and we groan at the very thought of it. (Not the *meaning* of this blessed event, but what it has become.) To many of us, Christmas has become a holiday that makes us say upon its ending, “Next year, I am not going to do all of this again!”

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Of course, I'm not quite sure what that means—not cooking Christmas dinner, not buying gifts, not decorating? But deep inside, I know exactly what it means. I am rebelling against the feeling of complete exhaustion that the work requires, and that overtakes the beauty and the spirit of why and what we are celebrating. If I can't even sit down and behold the beauty of the newly lit tree or read the story of the Christ Child's birth in Luke 2, then why did I do so much?

For many of us, the holidays are like a faster version of our regular lives. Already busy, we now are adding a whole new list of “to dos” onto an already overloaded to-do list, and we are feeling that mountain of guilt if we don't do it all, not to mention do it all perfectly.

Therefore, this chapter is to help us plan better so that, I hope, we will be able to watch our little ones in their school plays, bake cookies, read Christmas stories, give to others, and above all, remember and celebrate the miracle of God coming to earth as the greatest gift ever given: Jesus, His only Son.

Here are some tips to help you *plan*:

1. As soon as the children go back to school in August, sit down and begin planning where the holidays will be spent. Yes, I know what you are thinking: *August! Why should I start thinking of Thanksgiving and Christmas so early?* Because, the first step to having a more organized holiday season is planning, and planning early. One of the most argued-about parts of the holidays is where you will be spending them, correct? Your mom wants you every holiday but so does your mother-in-law. Your children only want to go visit their *favorite* cousins and not the *other* cousins. If this is a recurrent fight in your family, perhaps you could be the one to set up a schedule. For example, on even years, you go visit one family and on odd years you go visit the odd, I mean, the other family!
2. Another reason to choose the location of the celebrations early is because of travel plans (such as booking airplane tickets), and you will need to make those plans

early. Additionally, it will let you know if you are spending Christmas at home or away, so you can adjust your plans for your decorating, etc. Contact the different family members and try to get an answer as soon as possible.

3. Set a deadline for when you want to be finished with all you want to accomplish for that holiday. This is very important. Setting a deadline gives you a concrete goal that will keep you going in the right direction. For me, my deadline for decorating, greeting cards, and gifts (buying and mailing) is December 1. That may seem early for some of you, but it is actually only twenty-five days before Christmas. If I am finished with my decorating, cards, and gift buying and mailing by December 1, then I am free to really enjoy the celebration! I have time to attend the school and local community events. I have time to bake with my children and give my time to the less fortunate. And I have time to really enjoy the reason for the season.
4. Begin making a master list for other goals you have for this holiday. Set a day for getting your Christmas tree or setting up your artificial tree. If this is the year you want to go out in the country to cut your own tree, begin researching tree farms in your area. However, I don't advise doing this with children under the age of five! Yes, it seems like it would make such a wonderful, "Walton family" memory, but children's attention spans are short, and they don't care where the tree came from. They just want a happy family that is together.
5. If you bake at Christmas for your family and/or for gifts, plan a time on your calendar. That way you can go ahead and purchase the ingredients as well as give yourself an open day so that you don't feel rushed.
6. With more mail coming into your home during the busy Christmas season, plan a "mail station." This could be your desk or a small area in your kitchen where you open the mail *daily* and where you have all the supplies you need right at hand: scissors, tape, pens, paper, address book, stamps,

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and a trash can. As cards begin coming in, you can check addresses, in case there are new ones, change them in your address book, and then place the cards in a basket for the family to see. If I am in a hurry, I keep the envelope that has the return address on it and save it in my address book until I have time to check on it, which is usually after Christmas.

7. Begin making a list of all of the gifts to buy. Since this is such a large chore, Chapter 4 will go into more detail on this topic.
8. Plan a place for gifts to be stored in your house. If you have little ones who want to find what Santa is bringing them, this is very important! One of the best places to hide gifts is in a guest shower that never is used, especially if the glass is fogged so that you can't see in. Also, if you purchase gifts throughout the year, make sure you label the bags or boxes with what they are and whose presents they are. Trust me on this one, because six months after buying a gift, a person (myself included) will totally forget for whom the gift is intended!
9. Plan memories. No matter what holiday you may be enjoying, the memories are what will last. I believe it takes time and planning to insure that there will be memories for us and our families. We will go into this in more detail in the next chapter.
10. Plan time for Jesus. This is covered more in Chapter 9.

I'd like to share a story with you. It reveals that anyone, even a princess, can have problems if he or she forgets to plan.

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful princess who lived far, far away in a majestic castle high upon a mountain. She was dearly loved by her subjects, for, besides being beautiful, she also was very kind. In fact, they thought she was perfect in every way.

There was a special holiday celebrated in the land once a year. As soon as the trees began to sprout their new leaves and the flowers began their ascent up from the dark, rich soil, the King's council would meet to decide the exact day for the celebration of their land being reborn. This time of year to us is just spring, but the tradition for these people to celebrate the earth "coming back

from the dark winter” went back hundreds of years. They called this holiday “The Sun’s Rebirth.”

After the council had studied the land and the position of the moon and the stars, the exact date for the holiday was announced, and the townspeople immediately began planning for the big event. There were many different foods to cook, luscious breads and pastries to bake, houses to clean, and candles to make. The candles were very important because they were the people’s favorite tradition. In each home, a candle was placed on every windowsill, and at the stroke of midnight, the candles would be lit. This would illuminate the whole town and be their way of saying “thank you” to the sun for shining strong once again.

Ever since the princess was a little girl, she had been responsible for the most important task for the celebration, and it was her favorite. She was allowed to place the candles throughout the castle windows and especially in the top window. When this, the top window’s candle was lit, the town knew that the holiday officially had begun. For, by tradition, the townspeople couldn’t begin to celebrate until the castle’s top window candle was lit. They believed that this last candle revealed to the sun that they were ready for a new year of planting and harvesting.

The princess was getting excited that the holiday was fast approaching. She always had participated by helping her parents with the other preparations, but this year, she was a new bride and wanted to make the candles, bake the pastries, and do all the other tasks that needed to be done by herself. And, of course, she would be the one to light the candle in the uppermost window of the castle.

One morning as she was getting dressed, her lady-in-waiting rushed into her bedchamber. The council had announced the actual date. In just twelve days, The Sun’s Rebirth holiday would begin at midnight! The princess was thrilled that she finally knew the exact date, but she also began to feel a huge burden of stress. Could she get everything done in time?

Sure enough, on the day that the candle lighting event would take place, the princess found herself in a mess! The candles still were hanging and dripping, not ready for the night’s event. The

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store was out of sugar, and without sugar, she couldn't finish her baking. She also had forgotten to purchase matches, so she only had a few. Not to mention, the rooms of the castle that she had wanted to decorate with flowers and tree boughs weren't ready. How was she going to get all of this done in time for the great lighting? She fell on the floor in a heap, sobbing.

Soon, however, she felt a gentle hand on her shoulder. As she looked up through teary eyes, she saw her dear neighbor and friend.

"I have been in charge of The Sun's Rebirth celebration at my house for the last three years, and I thought that since this was your first year, maybe you could use some help," her friend said.

"I need too much help; I don't think anyone can help me!" the princess exclaimed in despair.

As her friend reached out a hand and lifted the princess to her feet, her friend laughed, pulled out a pen and paper, and began writing down what needed to be done.

The princess was amazed as everything started to come together. Her friend knew in what order things should be done: First, get the candles that were dry and see how many more they could add from her own extra candles. Next, go door to door, asking for extra sugar and extra baked goods that some smart villagers already had baked. And then send the town children into the valley to collect the new flowers and flowering tree boughs.

As the flowers and tree boughs were brought in, the princess and her friend began arranging them; though not in all of the rooms the princess had wanted. She soon began to cry about how small the decorations would be, but her friend gently consoled her. She said, "Do what you can. The holiday is still wonderful whether one room is decorated or twenty are decorated."

Then, they started placing candles in each window, but only in those windows that could be seen from the town. That way they had just enough candles to place the last one in the high window.

Five minutes before midnight, the princess looked around and saw her table stacked high with wonderful food, windows full of beautiful candles, and the main room filled with the aroma and beautiful sights of flowers. She and her friend walked up the last

few stairs to the top of the castle with plenty of time to spare. And just as she was about to light the candle, she handed the light to her friend. “I give you the honor of lighting the candle, for you made all of this possible,” said the princess.

Her dear friend replied, “We did it together! So, let’s light the candle together.”

And they did. And so the town was all aglow with the warmth of thousands of lights, welcoming the rebirth of the land.

One of the morals of this story is that, even if we are princesses, without planning it is impossible to accomplish very much. My prayer is that you will be able to start planning your holidays so that you and your family will experience the joy that comes from these special times.

∞ *Without planning, it is impossible to accomplish very much.* ∞