



Simple, with Tsh Oxenreider

Episode 224

thesimpleshow.com

Segment One

Tsh: [00:04](#) This is simple. I'm Tsh Oxenreider.

[00:08](#) Hi friends, in this second to last episode, I am talking to my friend and co-host, Christine Bailey and we're sharing one of our favorite things, our good lists. As a reminder, this is when we share four things currently in our lives, big or small, that's making everything better and with Christmas rapidly approaching, we decided to make ours holiday specific, so buckle up and get ready to either add more to your seasonal to do list. But honestly, after listening to this, you'll probably cross off a bunch of stuff or if you're like me, you'll create your holiday to-don't list. I highly recommend it. We'll get right into it. But first a little reminder that there is a way you can support my work for just a few dollars per month. It's through my Substack newsletter and community. It used to be hosted on Patreon, but it turns out I love Substack so much more. It's called Books and Crannies, and if you've enjoyed the free work I've put out in the world over the years, consider joining it just under \$2 per week. It literally keeps the lights on so that I can keep doing these things that you love and as I move forward with my new podcast, The Good List, this is really more important than ever. I'd love to be fully listener supported, but that can't happen without your help. When you become a supporter, you get weekly chats with both me and with other like-minded friends, you get more long form essays I don't share anywhere else, updates on my book, writing projects, my private podcast called The World at Home and more. If you already get my free weekly letter, Five Quick Things, you're already in the system. All you have to do is upgrade to paying either monthly or annually and you're in. I would love to connect with you at Books and Crannies so I can say thank you. You can find the link to become an insider in the show notes of this episode and you can also find the link at tshoxenreider.com so look for it there and thank you in advance. It means more than you know.

[02:05](#) Alrighty, so let's get into this episode. Here's Christine starting us off with her holiday-centric good list.

[02:15](#) Christine, in the spirit of this being the holiday season, you and I have both come together with our good list as a reminder for people listening. That is when we talk about a thing, habit, and art and what we formerly called

philosophy, I'm now calling it just because it's easier to say, one little thing that's making our lives better. I'm really excited, Christine, to hear what you have to say in the spirit of these holidays that we're in the midst of. Start us off with your thing.

Christine: The thing I wanted to share today is perfect for Christmas and winter. It's actually perfect for all seasons. I'll get into that in a second. But they are my new favorite slippers and they're called, I have trouble kind pronouncing it, but I think it's Padraig cottage.

Tsh: It's a Celtic word, right? Or Irish?

Christine: I think so. I probably should have looked up the correct pronunciation. In all the other good lists I've done, I always seem to put a clothing item as my thing. I think there's a trend. I just love a well-made shoes and clothes. I know we've talked about this before, that we're just in this stage of life where I'm willing to spend more money on something that is really good quality and is handmade and it'll last a long time. I am such a slipper girl. I've always lived in places with hardwood floors and I hate walking around just in my socks and getting holes in them and I found myself just having to buy a new pair of slippers every fall even if they're pretty good quality ones, like \$40 or \$50 slippers. Then this summer, I've talked about our Sunday fun day waterfall adventures and we always end up at this little town called Bell Buckle in Tennessee. It's just super cute. It's got all these fun little shops and antique stores.

Tsh: The town is called Bell Buckle?

Christine: Yes, not and the town is called Bell Buckle. Not belt buckle.

Tsh: Okay, because that was my first thought was like a belt. Okay, got it.

Christine: Yeah. There's a whole story about the name. We love going to this little town and there's a fun shop that we go into every time and they had these slippers on display in the middle of summer too. I would always try them on and be like, oh, they just feel amazing. I vowed when it was fall, I would go and get a pair. I did. They are so wonderful. They're made from New Zealand wool and then there's a sheepskin lining on the inside and then the sole is real leather and it's a stitched sole into the wool part and they're just so comfy.

Tsh: It's like wearing the meadow on your feet, leather and wool and sheepskin. That sounds amazing.

Christine: I know. The best part is that they say that you can wear them year round and they're actually cooling in the summer. I'm so excited about that. I can just

imagine a summer farming in farm boots and coming inside and putting these on just sounds so good.

Tsh: That's actually a huge selling point for me because I love slippers and yet my feet get really gross and sweaty in them. Even in the winter, even when I'm so cold, they can feel really gross after a while. I love the sound of these.

Christine: Yeah, they're super comfy. I've worn them with socks and without and you do get them pretty tight because they do stretch. They also told me they're washable, which is fun, so you can wash them and then just form them back to your feet and the ladies at the shop all wear them and they say that they've had them for years. So I'm hoping this will be something I can have for a couple of years and that will actually be worth the investment because they are more expensive. Hopefully that will be a good investment. But I super love them. When I was looking on the website, it was funny because on the about page telling the history of the Padraig cottage slippers, the first line says, "Helen made her first pair of slippers for her young son in the winter of 1977." It sounds like the beginning of a novel or something. I just thought that was fun. It was the winter I was born so it was like it was meant to be.

Tsh: Do you remember, that reminds me of a little adjacent thing on Seinfeld, what's his name would write the catalog and he would tell these really long stories about each item in the catalog.

Christine: [06:46](#) Oh my gosh, that's hilarious.

Tsh: That's totally what reminds me of, and I just read, do you read McSweeney's Internet Tendency? It's a satire site, but highbrow.

Christine: No.

Tsh: Oh my gosh. Okay. I'm going to link in the show notes just because I am now talking about it and it would be dumb for me to talk about it and not link to it. It was if Cormac McCarthy wrote the Chili's menu and it was the same idea. Every item is, it was a beautiful day or it was in the desert and blah, blah, blah. That's fun. I love it when products do that. They're just like, this is who we are.

Christine: I know, I just want to read the whole thing. That's the whole page. It supports good handmade products and also a local shops. That's a bonus.

Tsh: Very cool. I love it. They're really cute, they remind me of in a good way, they remind me of what grandma's will crochet for newborns. Do you know what I mean?

Christine: Yeah. They actually have baby ones that are adorable. They're so tiny and so cute. I have the gray ones. I did want to go for rainbow because the rainbow ones are so fun. But I wanted it to be something I would like for several years.

Tsh: Right. You might hate the rainbow in a few years and then you're like, why did I do that? I'm always like that. I want to be something fun, but then if I'm spending \$100 on something, I'm going to pick gray or black. I know that's boring, but I get it.

Christine: [08:10](#) Yeah. Back to basics. That's my thing.

Tsh: Okay. You have shared your thing. I want to hear about your habit. This is a little just everyday practice that you are enjoying right now or want to enjoy in your life that's making it better. What do you have?

Christine: Okay, so this is, I guess you could call it a habit. I guess it's more like a routine that we've adopted on a yearly basis. This is actually what I wrote about on the blog this week. It's about our slow and sacred Christmas day. This is something that has become a part of our life every year on Christmas. It's just something I can't imagine not doing now. The more that I've engaged in Advent the last few years and thanks to your Advent guide, that was what really led me through it last year for the first time and then another Advent guide I love this year called Unearthing Wonder. It's from the Peaceful Press. It's really beautiful. I've been doing that with my girls as well. The more I'm engaged in Advent and have that intentional time of waiting and expectation leading up to Christmas, I find that even more, I want Christmas day itself to really be savored and taken really slowly and really protect that day from frenzy and chaos and hustle. Our families, my and Steven's families and all our grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins are all spread out across the country. Our time with them is more before and after Christmas. We love getting to visit them before or have them come visit us. The habit or routine we have is that Christmas day is reserved for our family, just our little family of four as the first half of the day and then the second half of the day we invite someone over to join us that doesn't have family. It's been really neat. It first started out of necessity, a couple of years and we didn't have family nearby on Christmas day and then we realized how much we loved it. Christmas became this different thing like this real sacred time that we're investing in our family and letting the day unravel slowly instead of being this crazy mayhem of ripping apart packages and all the chaos and it's just really become a beautiful thing. Now we do it out of choice and I can't imagine not doing Christmas this way and so we protect that now.

My post is the day in a life theme that we do on The Art of Simple but just as a Christmas day. I broke it down into morning, afternoon, and evening and what we do in each of those times of the day to make the most of it.

Tsh: I love that. That's so good. I love that. I'm gonna talk a little bit in my good list about the same idea. Maybe something slightly different we do, but I am a big, big fan of keeping it really simple on Christmas day and in a nice way doing what you want, meaning tossing a lot of expectations out the window. I love your thoughts there.

Christine: Thank you. There's a couple of things, I won't spoil the post or anything, but there's a couple of things that we do every single year that have become little routines, but we do the three gift thing for each of our girls. Something you want, something you need and a surprise and that is just greatly simplified the whole gift giving thing and created good expectations and made it just really sweet and special. Then we try to like have a lot of pauses during the day so that we're not doing everything all at once. We're taking it in small bites and opening our stockings and then taking a pause and doing something else. Then coming back and opening a gift.

Tsh: We do that too. One thing that we do, we started this long time ago, so I'm glad that our kids now know this is normal and we didn't have to backtrack a reverse, though, that's totally possible for anybody listening who wants to do that. When I grew up, our family, it was just mayhem with opening the gifts. It was just like another gift in front of me, another gift in front of me, and we all just opened them. It wasn't like we were maniacs or anything, but it just didn't feel slow, like you said. And then by, I don't know, 10:00 AM it's done and you get this weird low grade kind of malaise when you're a kid, oh, that was it? We do this now where we open gifts slowly. We watch one person at a time open a gift and then depending on what it is, they might want to play with it for a little bit. We embrace that too with them and let them do that and watch them and get out the whatever it is and play around and then move on. I really like that we do that.

Christine: [13:06](#) I totally agree. We do the same thing and it brings attention, it just helps you appreciate the gift too. There's nothing worse than you've bought your kids these things and you've really put time and effort into them and then they're just ripping it open and throwing it down, picking something else up. I love that.

Then the other thing we do every year, Steven and I write each other a letter. We've done that since our first married Christmas in 2005 and that's what we give each other in our stockings. It's not long, it can be just more like a note, but it recaps the year, what our reflections were on that year with each other. It's really special to look back on.

Tsh: [13:48](#) I love that. That is such a good idea. I'm assuming you keep them all?

- Christine: Yeah. We keep them and in the post I talk about where we put them and we have a little plan that we started way at the beginning. It's fun when you have those things that you do every year and they add up to your life together, you know? And it's really neat to have that documented and see how much we've changed and all that.
- Tsh: What a cool idea. I love that. You've done your thing and your habit. Tell us about your work of art that is making your life better right now, especially during the holidays.
- Christine: [14:35](#) The work of art is a book that I know there's a lot of buzz about right now, it's *Adorning the Dark* by Andrew Peterson and I know you love this book, you've been reading it. I actually put it as my personal recommendation in the gift guide on The Art of Simple.
- Tsh: I love that you did that too, when I saw that on there. I was like, yes. Such a good idea. Please everybody get it.
- Christine: Yeah. I actually got it for my birthday, from my best friend from college that we've known each other for over 20 years. It's part of our personal history, too. I wish I could adequately put into words what this book has meant to me right now and how much I've needed it at this precise time. It's breathed life where I've needed it the most and held out a light for me as I hold out my light for others right now just through my writing and as I'm growing my writing and working on some big projects for 2020 and just really pushing myself in that. It's just been so encouraging that God is writing a story through me. I love how Andrew Peterson talks about that in all of his work. It's just encouraging. I think that this book is wonderful for people that are clearly artists, but it's also for everyone. One of the things he talks about a lot is how we're all creatives and he doesn't like putting people in the box that, you're creative and you're not because we're all called to create in some way and some people, it looks like a visual piece of art, but in other people it, it's something else. It isn't as obvious, but we're all creating.
- Tsh: [16:18](#) Yeah, I love that too. I love that it's one of these books, he writes and he sings. He makes music and he writes, both his music but he also writes books. I like that as a non-musician I am just as interested in when he talks about music and the process of writing music because it feels familiar even if I don't literally hold the guitar and know what that's like. It feels familiar what he's talking about because you can copy and paste sentence so many areas of our lives. I think he also speaks well into that idea of which we've talked about here on the podcast before about the gap that Ira Glass talks about. I don't know if you've ever seen or read that interview of his, but it's been put to video and I can put a link in the show notes. It's so well done where he's talking about that tension between your

taste, meaning the work inside you that you love and you know and appreciate and what you can actually output when there's that gap there. That gap can feel so frustrating. I think this book encapsulates that idea pretty well.

Christine: [17:24](#) Yes, I agree. It really put words to a lot of things for me. I think what you're talking about with that gap is where you have something in your head that it's like you've created this art in your mind and to actually flesh it out into real life, there is a gap sometimes where you can't make it flesh out the way it is in your mind or how you've created. Is that what that is? Is that what you're referring to?

Tsh: [17:50](#) Yeah. There's the gap between your output and what you think in your head about it.

Christine: Yes. He really put that into words. That was something I've always been frustrated about and I don't know, maybe that's just part of it. I think if a lot, most artists experience that in some way, there's something there. Andrew Peterson, I've admired his work for over 20 years. It's fun in the book because he talks about his early tours of Cademon's Call and I'm like, I promoted those tours and those album releases. That's when I was in the music industry.

Tsh: You and I are the same age and so you and I probably have that very similar experience in college. I remember I made a giant pot of spaghetti for Andrew Peterson and Cademon's Call and got to be friends with Derek Webb. We went out a few times and it's so fun to just think of all these like, oh, we're all grownups now, doing our thing and being parents and I just love it. He is such, to me, a model of what it looks like to do good work, to do work that matters, but also to not be pretentious about it or loud about it. You know what I mean? He's just quietly doing his thing. And, this is the culmination of this book, I think he's bringing his community into it and seeing how they are just as much a part of it as he is, that it's not really about him and his talent. It's about doing good work together in community. I just love that. And what's fun for me reading the book is that we as a family are also reading *The Wing Feather* saga right now. We just finished book three last night actually. It's really fun that it's like, oh my gosh, Andrew Peterson is everywhere right now. Have you read those before?

Christine: I actually have started the first book. That's one of those I have to get in the mental place to be like, okay, I'm reading a fantasy book.

Tsh: That's right.

Christine: But I love, love everything about it. His art is so, it's so beautiful. You know what's cool? I listened to him in another interview on Annie Downs' podcast, That Sounds Fun. I love that also you can see the legacy of creativity and art in his

family among his children and how he talks about his children growing up in this home where art and creativity where it's really celebrated and encouraged and just to see what they're doing now is really cool, too. You're right, he has a very humble posture about everything.

Tsh: He's a really good model for all of this.

We are onto your last thing. You've done your thing and your habit, your work of art. The last one is your idea. This is just a bit of wisdom or some thing you're thinking about that's really changing how your mindset, whatever it is. What's your idea right now, especially during the holidays that's helping your life just be a little better?

Christine: [20:48](#) The idea is, I'm going to call it the ruthless elimination of hurry. That phrase, I think is from a Dallas Willard quote that I think I've talked about it before. I must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from my life. But where I heard it again recently is from a podcast episode from John Mark Comber from Bridgetown Church in Portland. I heard him on a podcast episode we can link to in the show notes. It's actually from the Bridgetown Church podcast and then on another one. I know he has a book out with that title. Steven and I both listened to it and we've just been talking about this for a while now. It just really hit home, especially now at Christmas. I don't know, but I've felt maybe it's because Christmas was, Advent started right after Thanksgiving and Thanksgiving was so late. We go on a trip every November with our family over Thanksgiving for ten days. We just got back a couple of days ago. I just feel really weird and behind this year. It was a week into Advent already when we returned, but I don't know, I just keep getting this feeling. I felt a little lost. The other day I was wandering around Target aimlessly and I just felt shell shocked and just like, what am I doing here? I don't know. I just felt lost in the Christmas season. I don't really want to be walking around Target with all this stuff and all these people. Yet I'm staring at my gift list and my Christmas list, not really knowing where to start and just feeling overwhelmed by all the parties and events and knowing I can't do them all.

This just really hit home. In the episode, he talks about how hurry is incompatible with love, that they're like oil and water and they don't mix. I was thinking about myself in Target and how I'm like hurrying my children along and just this really bad version of myself coming out in those moments and that I'm not really able to love the people in my life well when I am hurrying and when I'm getting swept up in the rush of the season. I don't know how to fix it or what that actually looks like but I've been reflecting on this and how do we eliminate actual hurry in our own lives? Especially in challenging seasons of parenting or we both own small businesses, a lot of that you have to hurry and hustle sometimes.

I've just been reflecting on that. Here are a couple of things I've been thinking about that have helped me. Just telling myself it's to miss out on things this season if it means having more peace at home and more peace with my children. I've definitely found myself trying to say yes to all these different events and then meanwhile, my kids are just like, can we just stay home and sit still and do crafts? Yet we sign up for all these things thinking it's good for our family. They're fun, but it's not necessarily the best.

Tsh: [24:13](#) I don't know if you read my blog post from this week yet. It's totally fine if you haven't, but that's actually what I wrote about, this idea of making both a holiday to-do list and a to-don't list, purposely saying no to things. By writing it down, making it a thing, it helps you feel like you're not just slacking off or dropping them all that you're actually saying, I am actually going to choose not to go to that party or to only bring paper plates and not sign up for some homemade cookies or something like that. To make it official makes it feel more like you're not just being a slacker, but you're in control here and you're doing this on purpose. I completely get it. And I will say, just based on what you said earlier, a lot of us are feeling this, this year in particular, I think because of how late Thanksgiving was this year. I keep hearing this everywhere. It's why people are like, oh, Christmas cards. That's a thing? I forgot. It's just because it's snuck up on us. It's so funny because it's like, well this is the same time of year every year. But it just really, it's a weird thing. You're totally not alone here. I feel similarly.

Christine: [25:28](#) Yeah. I am so glad you wrote that because I never thought to do an actual written list and that's pretty smart because I feel like that would solidify in a way that, okay, I've written it down, I'm actually going to do this. I just love everything he talked about in that episode and just the thought, just reflecting on how can I eliminate hurry from my life and what does it do? How does it improve my relationships when I'm not hurrying? In the podcast, he quotes a book called, it's from the 70s, it's called *Three Mile an Hour God* by a Japanese theologian. The quote says,

"Love has its speed. It's a spiritual speed. It's a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we're accustomed. It goes on in the depth of our life, whether we notice it or not at three miles an hour. It's the speed we walk and therefore the speed of love, the speed the love of God walks."

I thought it was cool because we hear the phrase walking with God and I think there's something about that, just that slower pace and that's how we can soak things up. Saying no and knowing it's okay to miss out. A couple other practical things I'm trying to do is I just realized how much putting down my phone so it's not sucking away precious time with the lives in front of me.

Tsh: I was just about to say that. That's why I was laughing.

Christine: [27:04](#) It's true. You can suck away 30 minutes scrolling other people's Christmas. Hello, this is right in front of me and I'm not doing it.

Tsh: And it can mess with your head, oh, they're doing gingerbread houses. Look over their house. Look how cute her tree is. Before you know it, you're feeling this weird, but I was happy 30 minutes ago with how we were doing things. This time of year really and truly in particular is a great time to take an Instagram break. I mean really and truly or do something where you're only posting or scrolling once a week and then ignoring just enough to catch up with people and to update friends that you want to update. But otherwise, not spending time scrolling it because it can mess with your head man.

Christine: [27:45](#) I totally agree. And being in the homeschooling community that I'm in, that's like prime Instagram accounts where everyone's doing the beautiful crafts and all that. It's good to just not spend time on it. A couple of other things. I'm asking myself like how many good face to face conversations can I have? Just good quality face to face time with people that I love in my actual real life. The other thing I was thinking about I actually had this thought come through my head when I was in Target the other day and I was having that little breakdown, but I said to myself, I just cannot adult right now. Then I was like, wait a minute. Maybe that's the point. Children don't hurry and my girls were not at all in a hurry. Maybe thinking of things like doing what makes you feel childlike, that are just more fun and playful, and trying to take off that burden of having to be an adult all the time is a good practice in learning how to not hurry. But basically if it's going to cause me to be at my worst stress self, then it's a no, it's a hard no.

Tsh: [28:59](#) I think even to piggyback on that, to follow our kids lead on what they're actually saying, it's easy for us as parents sometimes to think they want to make gingerbread houses from scratch and to have these crafting parties and to do all this stuff and, and, and when really what they might actually want for our craft is to make paper snowflakes or to go on a walk or watch the Grinch, something that actually is a lot simpler than what we think they're saying based on our own parental ideals so that it has that feel and look of like everything is all picture perfect when really kids sometimes don't want, they just want connection more than like the pretty put together season.

Christine: Yeah, I totally agree. It's like letting go of that agenda that's in front of us and just soaking up the real life instead.

Segment Two

Tsh: [33:36](#) My holiday good list is really reflective of our season right now, just like you, Christine, it has snuck up on me. Honestly, even Thanksgiving snuck up on me and it was late. I felt like we had just finished Halloween and suddenly it was Thanksgiving and then suddenly literally two days later it was Advent, so I am with you. The nice thing I find about it like it's easy to feel overwhelmed by that. It's also easy to let go of certain things because you literally don't have the time to do them. In some ways if you can embrace that, then it just feels almost easier. Kyle was telling me, Kyle has struggled, I want to say the past few years feeling Grinch-like during the holidays. He just hates the whole hubbub of all of it all whenever it overpowers the simplicity of it and he tends to just veer towards the grouchiness and he would tell anybody this, but he was actually remarking this past weekend, I'm actually enjoying Christmas, the Advent and Christmas season, so much more this year. We were talking about why and he thinks it's because it showed up so suddenly to where he just didn't even have an onramp. He's just on the road and it's like, well I guess this is what we're doing without having to overthink or over plan anything. In a way it's nice.

One thing that he did, that he brought back, he went to Trader Joe's because it's on his way to his work and we don't live anywhere near one. I will frequently give him a Trader Joe's list because I love it there. He brought home our annual purchase that I issue all my well intentioned food habits in the name of the glory of these Astounding Multi-flavor Jo-Jo's. Have you ever had these Christine?

Christine: Okay. I did not know there was multi-flavor Joe Joe's. I've seen the peppermint ones with like peppermint candy in them.

Tsh: These come in a hexagonal box, so it already feels special the way they've just displayed them. There are four different types in it. The peppermint ones are probably the best, but they've got four different flavors involving, I think one's peanut butter, one's dark chocolate, chocolate on chocolate. And another one is ginger. I love them all. They're super not gluten-free, which is what I normally eat. They're so far from Keto. I can't even tell you. But I will make an exception for these. I go slowly. I can't eat much gluten without it giving me brain fog. I'm talking one, maybe two a day and that's it. That's all I can handle, but they're so good and to me they just taste like the holidays and so I'm so glad I got them because sometimes with Trader Joe's holiday theme things they run out, there is a finite amount of some of these things that we love, so I'm so glad he grabbed them. I would not be surprised if they were already gone. I found some on Amazon so I will link to them in the show notes. I don't know if they're still going to be there, but if you are not near a Trader Joe's or your Trader Joe's is now out, you can still find them there. They're really, really, really good.

Christine: [36:49](#) That's crazy. I did not know you could get this online. I just went to Trader Joe's in Nashville because we live in an hour from Trader Joe's. I was there the other day and they were sold out of the gluten free peppermint Jo-Jo's.

Tsh: That is so sad. They're gluten free stuff goes really fast. They're seasonal, gluten free. We love their pancake mix, their pumpkin gluten free pancake mix. I want to say it was like, I want to say mid October and they were sold out and I could not, I was staring at the lady that told me and I didn't know what to say next. You're joking, right? Because I was planning on having these like 10 more times over the next two months. I will put a link in the show notes actually of a recent list that somebody made of the best Trader Joe's holiday stuff to not miss because there really is so much good stuff. But these multi flavored Jo-Jo's are one of mine.

I have a runner up. I'm sort of cheating this good list a little bit. I could not think of just, it was hard to narrow it down to one so that's my main thing. A runner up thing for me is a particular candle called Frazier Fur, it's put out by a brand called Time. We first got one of these many moons ago, I think it was our honeymoon, that long ago. I first saw it on Martha's Vineyard and it's expensive for a candle and so this is a big deal for us to have bought back then. We don't buy it every year, but we do every couple of years I would say, it smells amazing. It is the closest thing I have smelled to an actual tree or the Oregon woods that I found in candle form.

We especially have enjoyed it this year because we a fake tree now, which feels a little bit almost sacrilegious to us. We are real tree purists, but we decided to go for an artificial tree last year. A really good one. I had done my shopping and decided which one I wanted for a while. That's a whole other conversation. But the trade off is we miss the real tree smell. That was something that we just both loved. Even though this is kind of faking it, not kind of, it is faking it. This is our way to compensate for missing out on that real tree smell and this candle fits that bill. It's really good.

Christine: That's so fun. I love a good Christmas candle, but your tree is so cute. Your fake tree. It looks real.

Tsh: [39:13](#) It does. That's one of the reasons we got it. It's not overly full. We wanted a sparse tree for ornament reasons but also just because we liked that look and we needed something narrow because our house, the footprint of our house is really small. We didn't want a tree, really a regular size tree would probably take up half our living room. We needed something we could literally walk around. That narrowed it down considerably. We really like it. It's kinda nice.

Those are my two things. Next up is the habit. It just segues right into what I was just talking about and that is lighting candles around the house during the season, especially and honestly all throughout the winter. I have quite a few candles, I think just mostly from gifts. A lot of people like to give me candles, I guess. I have plenty and it's easy to get into this mindset of saving it for something special or some kind of event or when company comes over. I've pretty much thrown that out the window for a while now. But especially around this time of year when I love good smelling candles. I don't like the kind that give you a headache and I'm pretty sensitive to that. A lot of candles that don't use real oils or soy, the paraffin kind. I'm talking about the good stuff. Because it's good it's easy to think we need to save it for when the Queen is coming and instead just light the candle anyway. Right now it is two o'clock in the afternoon at home. My kids are home doing school and we have the candle lit to make the house smell pretty and that's just because we live here and we want to enjoy it. Embracing this idea for the holidays in particular and into the winter of just lighting candles because you like it, it's not to impress company coming over or anything else like that.

My runner up is morning and evening walks. I don't know if this really holiday specific, but it is because then it sort of ties into what you were saying, Christine, about slowing down. I feel like intentionally going on a morning walk with my dog usually, and that one's by myself, 9 times out of 10 and then in the evening we'll try and go on a just quick walk in the neighborhood as a family with the dog or maybe it's just me, I like it when it's all together, is a nice book end to the day and obviously walking is slow, you know? It's also purposeless on purpose. I'm usually not going somewhere. Every now and then I'll bring a library book to return or I'm getting a bag of coffee cause we've run out. But most of the time it's literally just to walk and there's something just meditative about that. It forces you to just be with your thoughts. Even if you're listening to a podcast, you're still with your thoughts and it's just been a really nice intentional way to slow down the holidays for me is these like morning and evening walks that feel hard to miss, especially when you have a dog and the dog starts expecting them. It forces me out the door more than I would like sometimes and then I'm always glad I did it.

Christine: I love that. That's one of the biggest things I miss about living in a neighborhood with sidewalks. I used to love those kind of walks and I mean you live in Texas so I know at this time of year, it feels so good outside, you can actually take walks, right? It's like the perfect time right here for that in Texas.

Tsh: It is and it's so funny, our weather is so up and down this time of year, it's literally 82 degrees outside right now, but tomorrow the highest 46. But both temps are great I think for walks. I like bundling up and it being all cold and get your blood

flowing and then I like it when it's just shorts weather in December and you're just going to go with it. It's like might as well instead of like wishing were cold, just enjoying it.

My work of art is probably something a lot of people know, but I'm just going with it. Tons of us already watched The Great British Baking Show. Do you Christine, do you like this show?

Christine: Yes, I have. I'm not currently watching it, but we've watched lots of it. My girls love it too.

Tsh: Yeah. My kids like it too. I just recently watched the last season. I loved it, but there are these holiday specials on Netflix. I don't know if you've seen any. Yes, they had a couple last year and they just added another season, I want to say a month ago or so. I watched them not too long ago and they're so fun and they're so lighthearted and almost cheesy because they wear tacky sweaters and they go over the top with the Christmas-ness of it all that that's obviously what makes it fun and a holiday special and it just gives you that little hit of the show without needing to invest in an entire season.

What they do is they take four contestants from the past, various seasons and they just do a one off bake off where they have the same categories? Technical, signature and showstopper. They have all those. Then they just pick a winner. They don't eliminate anybody, they don't do anything. They just pick who did the best job of the three. It's really fun and really just lighthearted and it's a great thing to watch on in the background when you're doing something else. You know, like if you're addressing Christmas cards or wrapping presents, or baking also. It's just nice to have back there because it's not like something was a complicated plot that you need to sit down and really pay attention. It's really fun.

Follow up to that is something that I have talked about for my insiders. If you have been listening to The World at Home, my show that's just for insiders. I talked about this last year and do you know who Rick Steves is, Christine?

Christine: Yes. Oh, my goodness. Oh, his little backpack.

Tsh: He's such a cheese ball. The epitome...gosh, he's such a dad. He's such a corn ball. I love him. He's been on PBS forever, but I love him and he's calming in the same way Great British Bake Off is to where it's like, oh, I feel not stressed anymore. Last year I talked about he has a special on Christmas in Europe and it's on YouTube, so anybody can watch it for free. All he's doing is talking about, I want to say like five or six countries and their traditions and footage from that obviously. Then he ends with, I think he's in Switzerland or Austria with his family

and they go snowshoeing and they're in a mountain cabin and it's just so ideal and idyllic and pretty. To me it's just a fun little short, I don't even know if you call it a documentary, but you kind of do. Just a little deep dive into these different countries traditions. It's great with kids and it's in that same vein of there's no plot so you could just have it on in the background. That's a fun thing that's great for the holidays.

Christine: Those are two great things I'm adding into my list because I feel like even on Netflix it's hard to find things that are family friendly that are truly good.

Tsh: [46:24](#) There's a lot of cheese out there. These definitely are not hard-hitting, deep thinking, never seen before works of art. That's what she needs sometimes in the holidays.

My last one is the idea, my philosophy and this is sort of related to my tree that we are talking about and that's this idea that it's okay to change. These traditions that you've had for a long time in your family. It's okay to change them or at least question why you have them and to make sure that you don't have them just because that's the way it's been done, not because you actually don't like them or need them. Have you ever heard that story? I don't even know where it came from, about this one woman who always cut her ham in half?

Christine: No.

Tsh: [47:17](#) It's a story that I've heard for a long time where this woman would cut her ham in half that she would make every holiday season before putting it in the oven. Her husband finally just said, why do you cut your ham in half? She said, I don't know. It's just the way my mom's always done it. Why does she do it? I don't really know. I should find out. She calls her mom and asks, why do you cut the ham in half before you put it in the oven? We did it that way because it wouldn't fit in the oven, otherwise I didn't have a big enough, I didn't have a dish that fit the whole thing, so I'd cut it in half, but that's the only reason why. She realized that it was just out of this tradition for no real sake. Just a question, if you have any of those things in your holiday routine, perhaps it's going to a lot of events or it's giving gifts in a certain way to certain people or it's just practicing some kind of habit in your family that actually does not give life to any of you, but you do it without question. Just ask yourself, is there something we can get rid of? And it turns out that just is like the linchpin that makes the holiday season so much more peaceful and enjoyable for all of us. I would say don't change it all at once. And that's actually key too because I'm somebody who thrives on change. It's easy for me to accidentally be insensitive to change that maybe not the whole family wants like when we got our tree, it took some convincing of our kids that it's okay that we have gotten an artificial tree and we're going to compensate in other ways. Now, one of the reasons we did this,

aside with just needing a tree that fit in our house, is we got spoiled up in Oregon. You go out into the woods and you chop down a tree and it's \$5. Here in Texas, you go to a tree lot and it's really expensive and it's a fun experience to go looking for your tree. I loved doing that and that was the thing that was sad, but it always felt like a little bit of a let down because you're paying so much more money than you wanted and then the tree is great. But you know, we would often go to the hardware store to get it and it just didn't have that Christmasy-ness that we were after that we decided we're going to do this, save money in the long run, but compensate for it in other ways. Go to the tree lots and ask for those loose branches that they cut off cause they're always getting rid of those and we can put those around the house and maybe go out and do something else as a family, but just a question, why are doing what you're doing instead of just doing it forever or because that's what you did growing up and that's what you did with your parents but maybe that's not something that's best for you. That's a big thing for me right now that's making the holidays better.

Christine: That's a good call to, oh, sorry, I was just going to say as our kids get older too, that's a really good thing to evaluate because something that we've always done at Christmas when they were little, it might not work as they're getting a little bit older. That's a good question to ask.

Tsh: That's right. That's very true for us right now as well. The runner up idea for me is to embrace the 12 full days of Christmas. That's to piggy back on your idea of slowing down by means of having a sacred Christmas day. For us, one of the ways we do that is by letting go of this ideal that Christmas day has to be magical and perfect because technically it's 12 full days.

[50:30](#) Now that doesn't mean it's not counter-cultural or our kids still don't have somewhat unreasonable expectations about Christmas day itself, or maybe not unreasonable but high, you know? But just to remind them frequently that we still have 11 more days after this day to be in in Christmas mode. For us, we were doing our friend cookie swap that we do every year, but we're not doing it until December 28th because that is still Christmas. We can enjoy that later and in a lot of ways this really helps slow down because we try to cram all this celebratory stuff before Christmas, during Advent technically. We have full leeway, whoever's in charge of this, it doesn't even really matter. But traditionally we have full leeway to enjoy Christmas all the way through January 5th, because that is technically Christmastide.

To embrace this idea, even if it means your Christmas day is still the important day, but you can maybe just do a little bit more afterwards, whatever that looks like for you, that really helps, I find for us. That means, there's movies we love watching but we don't have to get them all watched by December 24th. We can continue to watch Christmas movies or like I said the baking of the cookies, but

other things as well. I know some families who don't even do Christmas gifts until epiphany on January 6th when the church calendar recognizes the wise men coming to worship Jesus because it's cheaper because there are sales at the stores after December 25th and so they don't even bother Christmas shopping until after then. That is way less stressful because then you don't have that weird deadline of December 24th in the evening like so many people do and the stores aren't just mad houses.

I'm just tossing that out. You do you, if you're listening, don't feel like you need to make 12 days amazing. That's actually not what I'm saying at all. I'm saying the opposite. That you are welcome to spread it out and enjoy your Christmas day but also not sweat it if it's not exactly how you want because there's other things you can still do for 11 more days.

These are our holiday good lists. I would love to hear what yours are as well. Look us up on social media and other places like that and let us know what you are enjoying because I would love to hear.

You can find Christine christinemariebailey.com and on Instagram @organicstine. And to keep up with me, I'm on Twitter @tsh and Instagram @tshoxenreider, and of course at theartofsimple.net where you can find my writing as well as Christine's. Head to the show notes for this episode number 224 at thesimpleshow.com where you can find all sorts of things, links to things we talked about, where you can sign up for my weekly email called Five Quick Things, how you can upgrade and become a supporter so that the work can happen as well as how to connect with Christine and myself. Don't forget there's only one more episode of Simple and then I'm taking a short holiday break for launching my new show called The Good List. Head to the show notes to find the link where you can sign up to get a quick email to know when it launches so you can subscribe and never miss a future episode. I really can't wait to share it with you. This show was produced by Chad Michael Snavely, and thanks also to Caroline TeSelle, Andrea Debbink, and my furry intern, Ginny. Thanks so much for listening. I'm Tsh Oxenreider and I'll catch you back here one more time.