

FOR **GIRLS** **YOU**

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021

**iFeliz*
*NAVIDAD!**

SAMANTHA FLORES

AND HER
MEXICAN-AMERICAN
FAMILY CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS
IN **TWO** COUNTRIES!

*Christmas
AROUND THE
WORLD*



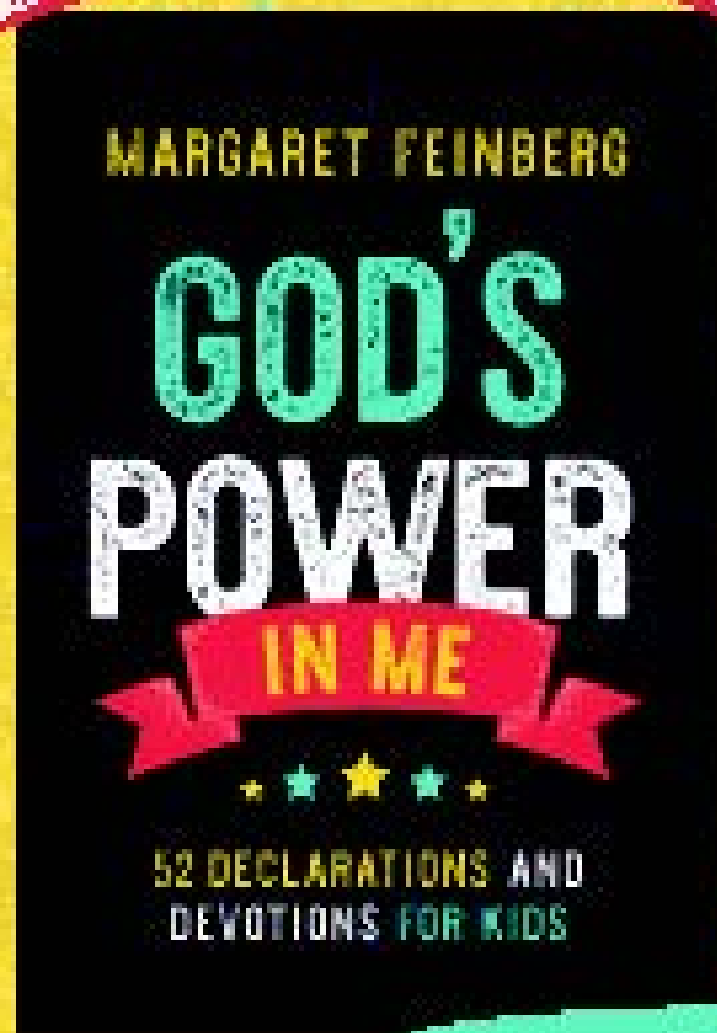
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FOR **GIRLS LIKE YOU**

Volume 11 Issue 6

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hello **FRIEND**

Hello FRIEND!

**SALUT L'AMI!
HOLA AMIGA!
KON'NICHIIWA TOMODACHI!
SAWUBONA MNGANI!**

WE ARE SO EXCITED TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR BY VISITING WITH GIRLS LIKE YOU ALL AROUND THE WORLD! **FOR GIRLS LIKE YOU** has readers on almost every continent of the world—(what's up, Antarctica?) and in this issue you'll meet girls from Mexico, India, Belgium, Northern Ireland, Zambia, Canada, and Burundi and learn how Christmas is celebrated in their homelands. Plus, our cover girl, Sammy might live in California, but she is super proud and connected to her Mexican heritage and shows us how she celebrates "international" Christmases every year!

The awesome thing we discovered while hearing from all these girls like you was that no matter where you live in the world, or what the weather is like in December, (or if you even celebrate Christmas in December!) or what language you speak, or what silly, fun traditions you may have in your country—the one thing that remains the same? We all celebrate the greatest gift ever given to the world.

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON..."

Jesus is the reason we exchange gifts with one another as we remember and honor the wonderful gift first given to us. The Prince of Peace, Everlasting Father, Emmanuel (God with us!)—born one starry night in a forgotten corner of a tiny town. A mighty God's love delivered in the most unexpected package!

This year as you celebrate Christmas with your family—ask about the traditions that your family history has brought and borrowed from around the world. You might be surprised!

Our Christmas wish for you, and Girls Like You around the world, is that we all may sing together the words the angels sang on that first Christmas night:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Merry Christmas

**YOUR FRIENDS AT
FOR GIRLS LIKE YOU!**



Jonathan's niece, **Felicity**, and her family spent their last two Christmases in Okinawa. You can read more about that in this issue's GIRL TALK! And like many of you in this issue, she created a special Christmas card just for us!



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Feliz NAVIDAD!

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SPRINKLES

SPRINKLE JOY. SPRINKLE FUN. SPRINKLE BEAUTY.



AN EGG-CELLENT UPDATE

Last year in the September/October issue you published my piece about why people should buy cage-free eggs. A little after I got published my friends and I wanted to do something to let people in our community know about cage-free eggs and why you should buy them! So we started planning. Our event was held at a local park and three of my chickens were there along with lots of information sheets about free-range chickens versus caged hens. We also had a friend ice-die some t-shirts for people to buy. Lots of people came and I think we changed the world for the better that day! My friends and I even started a club about chickens. Our goal is to help the community and educate people more on chickens so that they can raise them. Thank you **For Girls Like You** for putting out this great magazine! — Eden (12)

SO CREATIVE!

I painted this picture with watercolors. I watched a painting tutorial to help me. Over the past year, many positive things have happened, including learning to draw and paint, spending more time with my family, and reading and learning about God's Word. God has been showing me that we are all creative. Besides, we were made by the Creator, so that means we all have a little creativity. You just have to find it! — Sarah (11)



TRUE ME

I chose to draw this because it is my favorite thing to draw even though I like to draw a lot of things; my inspiration is me! I like photography and drawing, and I want to show girls that they are perfect how they are. — Payton (9)



A GIRL LIKE ME

I live in California with my Mema and Papa and my big sister. My first book I read was the set of *All Eyes on Lena*. I was hooked. I started asking for more. I like hearing about other people's stories and how they live a life with God, especially how each girl got to have their story told. I really like how the stories are true. I love when the magazine comes in the mail. I enjoy the crafts. I learned what an entrepreneur was from your magazine. I want to try and be one now. Thank you for continuing your mom's legacy. — Linda (11)

SPRINKLES

SPRINKLE JOY. SPRINKLE FUN. SPRINKLE BEAUTY.

HOME RUN DREAMS

Top of the 5th inning, score is 7-5, us losing. We've beat Slinger all three times we've played them; we can beat them a fourth time, I told myself.

I'm catcher and don't let a single ball pass my glove. You're not stealing a base on my watch!

Three outs; now we hit. Ellie is up first: strikes out. Lilly is next and hits a single. Now I'm up to bat. I had no idea what was going to happen next. I hit the ball hard down center field. I'm running to first. Coach tells me to keep going. Sweet! A double! Dad, at third, is telling me come by him. A triple? That's a first!

Now Dad is telling me to keep going. A home run?!

I stamp my feet on home plate. I can't believe it.

I'm this close to tears. I go to the dugout, and my teammates tell me that they're gonna lose their voices with yelling and screaming so much.

I look at the scoreboard. 7-7. Next batter gets out. Two outs. Aubrey hits a single. Payton is up to bat. She hits the ball hard, making it all the way to third. That's it. That's game. We won, 8-7. Take that, Slinger! The Jackson Hornets have done it again! Coach gives me the home run ball.

That's probably the most I've ever smiled in my life. The only way I got to that home run is five years of practice. Five years of practicing in the front yard when no one is watching. Five years of going to softball practices and games, doing my best. Hard work pays off. Just keep working at what you love, and your hard work will pay off. Never give up on your dreams. They're worth chasing. — **Charity (12)**



TEX IS BEST!

God has created such wonderful creatures! But my favorite is Tex the golden retriever. He is my grandparents' dog who lives right around the corner from our house. I am so blessed to get to see him almost every day! He is the best dog I have ever known. If I were to walk in the door, he would scurry to the sofa and grab a pillow—sometimes it's hard to take it out of his mouth! But he wouldn't hurt a fly. You could do anything, and he wouldn't change the love he has for anybody. One of the funniest things he does is chase squirrels that he can't even reach on the tall privacy fence in the backyard! He gets so hyper! He is so cute! He loves everybody he meets!

Me and my family all agree that he LOVES kids! I hope you like this picture!

— **Charlotte (11)**



HOW FUN-NY!

This is a picture of me and my doll Becky! This will be my first time in a magazine!

I also have a few jokes:

Why did the chicken cross the road?

To get to your house.

Knock, knock. Who's there?

The chicken!

I don't really like cooking that much.

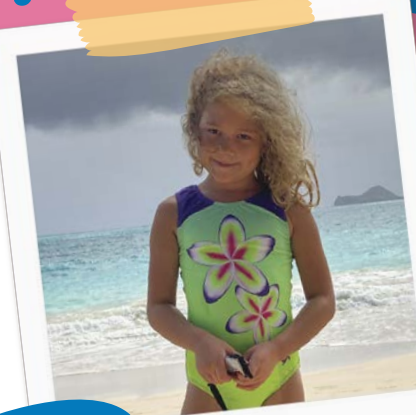
It's very "whisk"-y!

— **Bekah (11)**



WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! We'd love to showcase your paintings, poems, songs, stories, drawings, photographs, anything! And we'd like to see you! Email your entries and photo to sprinkles@forgirlslikeyou.com!

MEET DESTINY T.



I am 7 years old, and I love living in Hawaii!



The best thing I ever said YES to was adopting my cat Kai last year!

A GIRL LIKE YOU



HAWAII

How was your name chosen? My family waited two years trying to adopt. During this time, my family traveled to Destin, Florida and prayed all the way down if they had really heard from God to adopt since no one picked them for their baby! When my oldest brother ran into the ocean there, he stepped on a river stone (not normally found in the ocean!) and when he picked it up, it had the word "Adoption" written on it! They were so shocked!

They felt very encouraged and decided that maybe God meant for them to adopt an older child so they switched to the agency's China program which takes almost a year to get through. Fast forward a few more months to New Year's Eve — my mom's birthday — the agency called and asked if they were still interested in a baby and when they prayed who to offer me to our family kept coming to mind! My mom said I was "destined" to be in our family (and the Destin rock kept them encouraged) and that I am the best birthday present she ever got!

Tell us about your family. I have one sister who is 17 and four brothers, 19, 10, 5 and one who died when I was almost 2 years old. My mom and dad are both in the Air Force.

Tell us about your pets: We have 13 pets! Four dogs, five cats, two rabbits and two turtles! It was hard to find houses here in Hawaii that could take us all!

Describe yourself in three words: Cats. God. Turtles!

What are your favorite hobbies? Colored-pencil art, flower picking and arranging, and studying about animals

What do you want to be when you grow up? I want to be a veterinarian along with an underwater explorer.

What is something you want all the girls to know about God? That He LOVES them!

Do you have an unusual talent or ability? I can make my eyes shake! Seriously! My mom calls it "earthquake eyes!"

What are some things on your bucket list? Attend cooking school and also, make a lot of money so I can help kids in orphanages.

What has God been showing or teaching you lately? To really trust Him for the future.

What is one of the coolest things you have ever seen? Or done? Seeing snow in person!

CHRISTMAS IN HAWAII

Christmas in Hawaii is great! We moved here only two years ago, however, Hawaii definitely suits me—the heat and no beaches where we lived in Georgia did not! I love getting to watch my oldest brother surf on Christmas Day from our back yard and getting rainbows on Christmas Day! Also, the beautiful flowers we can have to decorate our dinner table.

Our tradition of singing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus is carried on here in Hawaii also but now includes singing with the beautiful sunrise!



MY FAVORITE THINGS

Color: Black
Song: "Jesus Loves Me"
Singer/Band: TobyMac
Food: Watermelon

Thing To Wear: Shirts with cats on them!
Class in School: Math
Bible Verse: John 3:16

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE."

GOD'S girl

DEVOTIONALS & MORE TO GROW YOUR W

WYNTER'S WORDS



ARE ANY OTHER GIRLS LIKE ME?

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT THIS: There are millions of Christians all over the world! Seriously, millions! This means a lot of people love Jesus and God's love is everywhere!

This also means many families like yours and girls just like you love Jesus and want to follow Him. They speak many different languages. Their churches probably look different from yours. They may even wear a different style of clothes when they go to church.

But do you know what? None of that even matters! If you love Jesus then you have something in common with other girls all over the world!

No matter where you live, or what your church looks like, God loves all His children the same. That is good news, right? *John 3:16* says,

"GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE."

That is pretty awesome. It means girls all over the world are loved by God and can have Him in their lives now and forever.

So here is what I want you to do. Choose a place in the world (Germany, Australia, Canada, America, Uganda, China, the Bahamas ... ask an adult to help you choose a place if you can't decide) and pray for the Christians there. Especially the Christian girls who are just like you!

Can you do that? Can you pray that God keeps them safe and helps them to learn more about Him? You can also pray that they are bold and brave and will tell others about God's love! You can ask God for that same bravery as well.

From For Girls Like You! A Devotional for Tweens by Wynter Pitts. Courtesy of Harvest House Publishers.

DEAR GOD, THANK YOU FOR THE WAY YOU LOVE EVERYONE. WILL YOU HELP ME CARE ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD? TEACH ME TO PRAY FOR THEM AND TO SUPPORT THEM. THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME YOURS! AMEN



ALWAYS HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

WE'D LOVE FOR YOU TO MEET OUR AUNT ERIN—AND OUR "GIRL LIKE YOU" COUSIN FELICITY (SHE'S 6!) AND OF COURSE, OUR UNCLE ANDREW AND COUSINS OLIVER, XAVIER AND TREVOR TOO!) Their family spent the last two years in Okinawa—an island 400 miles south of Japan, but still a part of Japan. So, we asked her to tell us all about celebrating Christmas while in a different country and thousands of miles away from home.

My husband is a U.S. Navy general surgeon who was given orders to the Naval Hospital on the island of Okinawa. Have you ever been away from home? Just imagine being as far away from home as you can be on a tiny island in the middle of the ocean. Christmas has always been my favorite holiday. It's my middle name, Erin NOEL. I LOVE celebrating Christmas and especially with my family. So, Christmas in Okinawa was difficult in a way, but our church in Okinawa, Calvary Christian Okinawa (CCO) included US military, missionaries from the US, and local Okinawans, so we really were with family even though we were so far away from home. In Okinawa, although places like CCO do exist where girls can come to know Jesus, most girls do not grow up in church. Since Christianity has been introduced to the island, so have Buddhism and Shintoism, the major religions in Japan. And the religion that is native to the island is Animism—a religion based on worshiping ancestors and nature. Will you stop and pray now for Okinawa, and for girls in Okinawa to learn the true meaning of Christmas?

So, there are traditions for Christmas in Okinawa, but many still don't celebrate, and those that do don't think of it as a big holiday. Someone said that Christmas for many Okinawans is like St. Patrick's Day for many Americans. There are things that they do on that day, but what they do doesn't hold a lot of meaning.

One of the most interesting Okinawan Christmas traditions

GIRL talk

WITH THE PITTS GIRLS



that takes place in all of Japan is the tradition of eating KFC on Christmas. It is so popular that you must order your KFC Family Christmas Meal in November. Since turkey is almost impossible to find in Japan, KFC advertises their chicken under the slogan "Kentucky For Christmas" (KFC). We never got a chance to participate in this tradition, but we were one of the few families that didn't.

Living in Okinawa was life changing in some ways. It was an unforgettable experience that will always be a part of our family story in big and small ways. One of our family traditions that changed while living in Okinawa is our Christmas morning breakfast. Now, for breakfast on Christmas mornings we eat Spam, rice and eggs (especially in the form of Onigiri which is like a seaweed and rice sandwich) and a very common food combination in Okinawa! We also had stockings made from Kimono, and a wooden Japanese-style nativity carved by local artists. We will put these out each year and remember our Christmases in Okinawa fondly. —Erin Wang



Organizations like the USO (United Service Organization) put on Christmas concerts, parades, story times and craft events to celebrate this time of the year. One of our family traditions was to attend "Brunch with Santa" every year at the Officer's Club on the base where we lived.



The Botanical Gardens is a popular place to go to at Christmas time in Okinawa, since it is lit up at night very festively. We would go there, walk around, look at the lights, take pictures, eat snacks, and have warm drinks.



I asked the **LION** in my wardrobe what he was doing.
HE SAID NARNIA BUSINESS.



How does the **SNOW GLOBE** feel this year?
A LITTLE SHAKEN.



Why does everyone love **FROSTY THE SNOWMAN**?
BECAUSE HE'S COOL!

What is red, white and blue at Christmas time?
A SAD CANDY CANE!

It's getting harder to find an **ADVENT CALENDAR** this year...
THEIR DAYS ARE NUMBERED!

How do sheep say **MERRY CHRISTMAS**?
FLEECE-NAVIDADI!

Where do you find **REINDEER**?
IT DEPENDS WHERE YOU LEFT THEM!

What did the stamp say to the **CHRISTMAS CARD**?
STICK WITH ME AND WE'LL GO PLACES!



SEND US YOUR FAVORITE LOLS! What jokes make you laugh? Have a great riddle to stump us? Have you drawn a cartoon you'd like to share? Anything funny at all—we want to hear from you! Email LOL@forgirlslikeyou.com!

TRUEgirl

WITH DANNAH GRESH



CHICAS LIKE YOU!

HI TRUE GIRLS! THIS ISSUE'S COLUMN IS COMING FROM A VERY SPECIAL PLACE—THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. You might be wondering why. Well, there are actually True Girls all over the world, in over 50 countries including Greece, Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and more! There are so many True Girls across Latin America because of the prayers and hard work of our friend Marlene Luna who started a Spanish team in the Dominican Republic. It's called Chica Verdadera! I'm so excited for you to hear from her today. —Dannah

Lights everywhere, singing, sharing, gifts, candies, food ... December has arrived! Only one thing is missing—snow! You see, I live on a beautiful island in the Caribbean. It is warm and sunny the whole year in my beautiful Dominican Republic. In our country, on December 24, a special dinner is held. We call it "Noche Buena," which means the Good Night. (You may know this as Christmas Eve!)

The kitchen was always full while my mother, grandmother, and aunts, prepared the dishes for our feast. The music set the mood for the day as my brothers, cousins and I played all over the house.

Before dinner, we took the opportunity to gather food and take it to families in need. It was a great chance to share the gospel and remind others that Christmas is all about Jesus and His love for us.

As we ate dinner, my grandmother read this Bible verse:

"FOR A CHILD IS BORN TO US, A SON IS GIVEN TO US. THE GOVERNMENT WILL REST ON HIS SHOULDERS. AND HE WILL BE CALLED WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE." (ISAIAH 9:6)

She would remind us over and over again that this celebration is about the true meaning of Christmas—Jesus. No matter what other fun things we did during Christmastime, we needed to remember that He is the reason for this season.

Finally, we each took time to thank God. We shared why we were grateful for the past year.

I don't know what your Christmas traditions are, but I encourage you to **SHARE THE GOOD NEWS!** Here's one idea: make Christmas cards! Write a verse that talks about the birth of Jesus and the story of salvation. Give it to your friends or a family member to help them know the true meaning of Christmas.



Marlene Luna de Flete, is the director of Chica Verdadera ("True Girl" in Spanish!) She lives in the Dominican Republic with her husband Irving and her two beautiful daughters. She is a woman with a passionate heart to serve God, her country, and her community.





Christmas AROUND THE WORLD



JOIN US FOR A GLOBE-SPANNING TRIP AS WE VISIT WITH
12 FOR GIRLS LIKE YOU READERS IN THEIR HOME COUNTRIES
TO DISCOVER HOW THEY CELEBRATE THE SEASON!

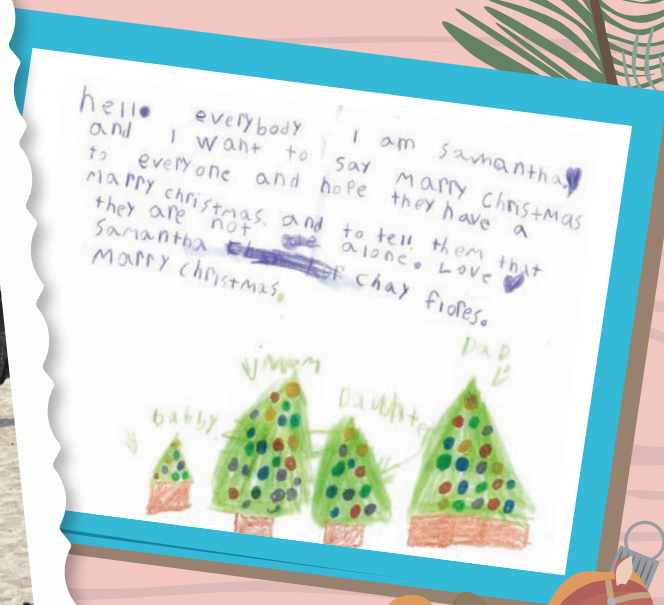


FIRST STOP ON OUR WORLD TOUR
is right here at home in the USA where we meet
Samantha and her mom Rosie. They live in California, but
their heritage is just a little farther south ... in MEXICO!

Samantha Flores is a third-generation Mexican-American whose grandparents were born in Mexico and Guatemala. Samantha's mom, Rosie Rivera Flores is a minister, author and an advocate for the voiceless through her organization, Sister Samalia. Rosie's husband Abel is a minister, too, and they preach in Spanish most of the time as they feel in their heart to reach all of Latino America and anyone who speaks Spanish.



"While Samantha connects more to her Mexican heritage, she is excited to one day travel to Guatemala. She loves the food, the dance, the music, and beaches of Mexico—they are her favorite in the whole world. She also loves spicy food (she has since she was a child). Her love for hot Cheetos comes from her Mexican side. Samantha is learning Spanish and while English is her first language, she knows that it's a sign of respect to talk to her grandmother in Spanish. She is excited about being bilingual because she wants to connect to both her nationalities. She is also excited about serving her purpose—in both languages!—whether it's modeling, Broadway, or skateboarding. She appreciates that it has expanded her horizons, while not separating her from her friends." —**Rosie**



SAMANTHA (8)

MY NAME, SAMANTHA WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE IT MEANS “TO HEAR GOD” AND THEY GAVE ME THAT NAME SO I CAN HEAR THE LORD. My middle name Chay is after my aunt who was a fabulous singer who passed away while my mommy was pregnant with me. I would describe myself as confident, creative and beautiful. When I grow up, I want to be a model and a singer and a businesswoman and a mom because my Tia Chay could do all those things. She can do anything, like all of us. My favorite hobbies are learning new things like swimming and spending time with my family. **One of the most fun things I said yes to was riding a pony in Mexico.** I like the color teal and the Judy Moody books. I love chicken nuggets and fries from Chick-fil-A and my favorite class is math! I want all girls to know that God blessed us with all kinds of things like how He protects us and understands us. God has been teaching me to be respectful to everybody and to be kind and to be thankful for what I have. My favorite Bible verse is the Golden Rule: **Treat others the same way you want to be treated.**

I HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA—and I love everything about it, but I am connected to Mexico because my grandparents are from there. I visit different parts of Mexico every year to learn the traditions, culture and language.

Something interesting about Mexico is that it has a lot of fruit and there are street vendors where we always buy pineapples on a stick. Some of the food is spicy and they have tiny chocolate bars called Carlos V that are very good. The weather is cold in the morning but hot in afternoon. The people are very friendly and there are palm trees everywhere in Cancun.

During Christmas it doesn't snow in Mexico but it does get very cold. There are celebrations called *posadas* where everyone gets together like a potluck, plays music and traditional folklorico dances with big puffy dresses.

The churches in Mexico have Christmas trees and give out tamales to those in need and have toy drives for all the kids in the town. What make Christmas in Mexico unique are the tamales and pozole. We have a tradition of taking a piece of bread and we cut it up. Whoever gets the piece with the baby Jesus inside, has to bring the tamales to the Three Wisemen celebration on January 6th—which means our Christmas celebrations continue for two weeks after Christmas Day!

Some Christmas traditions in my family are very much like many other girls in the US. During Christmas season we will not have school. We open one of our presents on Christmas Eve before we go to sleep. Christmas trees are very big, and we have an Elf on the Shelf that visits us. Christmas Day we will pray, we eat, and we celebrate with the birthday cake we made for Jesus because it's His birthday. All our food during Christmas is from Mexico. My grandma makes the tamales, beans and pozole. We play traditional Mexican games called *Toma Todo* and *Loteria* and a game called Bolo which is when Grandpa throws coins onto the ground and we all race to get the most coins. In our home we do the white-elephant exchange and we swipe each other's gifts. We all laugh a lot.

MY CHRISTMAS WISH IS FOR THE WORLD TO GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER.

My Favorite Thing about
CHRISTMAS
IS SPENDING TIME WITH MY FAMILY.



POLAND

It is traditional on Christmas Eve that no food be eaten until the first star is seen! So, children look at the night sky to spot the first star and remember the three wise men who followed the star to find Jesus.



ICELAND

It is traditional in Iceland that everyone have a new piece of clothing for Christmas—and also a book! The custom of giving books is called *Jolabokaflopp* which means “Christmas flood of books!”



Sharing some Christmas fun



Our birthday cake for Jesus!



Our Christmas Service

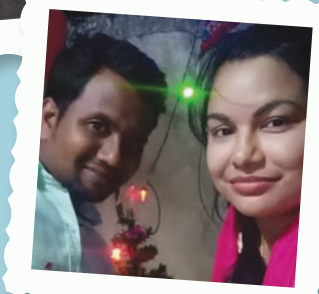
VILLAGE GOSPEL MISSIONARY OF INDIA

I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MY FRIENDS, SAMUEL AND JENNY. THEY ARE FROM BIHAR, INDIA. Jenny and her husband, Samuel have a ministry there called V. G. M. Ministry, where they reach the poorest of the poor and teach others about the love of Jesus and the Gospel. They also run an orphanage, taking care of the needs of young children without a mom and dad of their own. They have dedicated their lives to loving these children and making sure these precious ones know they are loved by God. My pastor had the privilege of flying out to meet them three years ago and has kept in touch with them through Facebook. We have been able to directly help fund some of their needs, like getting flooring for their Orphan House and helping with Christmas presents. Jenny asked for prayers for God to provide beds, and God laid it on our hearts to help. If you feel led in your heart as well to contribute to their mission in any way, our church has set up a direct link to make a tax-exempt donation. One-hundred percent of donations goes directly to their orphanage.

—Amy Christian



TO HELP THE GIRLS AT VGM, you can give through Living Hope Worship Center at this link. Or take a photo of the QR code to go directly to our page. <https://www.kindridgiving.com/app/Giving/livi1566110>



JENNY HAS FIVE GIRLS LIKE YOU THAT SHE WOULD LOVE TO INTRODUCE TO YOU!

SUJATHA (8)

Glory to God. I am thankful I have come to the Orphanage Home led by Pastor Samuel and Jenny and am happy and studying 3rd class. We all hope that all children have better future days to come. I like to play sports and would like to be a role model when I grow up. I would like all girls to know that Jesus Christ is the living God, and He is showing me how to preach His Word.

My favorite color is red, and my favorite food is finger millets. I love to read Bible stories and my favorite Bible verse is Psalm 23:1—**"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."**



SELITHA (9)

Glory to God. I am so happy to be at the Orphanage Home and to be educated and have meals and clothes. I like to play games for fun and I want to be a teacher when I grow up. I would like all girls to know that Jesus Christ is the Creator, and I want to learn to preach the gospel. The most wonderful thing I have ever seen is the love of God. My favorite color is pink, and I like to read Bible stories. I like to wear kurti, frock and jeans and my favorite food is curd rice. I like the Bible verses Psalm 1:1-2—**"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked ... but his delight is in the law of the LORD."**



VENI (10)

To God be the glory. My family was poor, and my father was sick and my mother could not work—we struggled to live. One day an evangelist came and proclaimed the Good News.

He came to our house and prayed for us and shared about Orphanage Home. Pastor Samuel and Jenny took me into their home, and I am thankful. I would like to be a teacher when I grow up and my happiest place to be is the Living Hope Reach Home! God teaches me that He is good all the time and the best thing I have said YES to is the grace of God. I like the color green and my favorite food is biryani. My favorite Bible verse is John 14:6—**"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life..."**



IAVANYA (9)

I thank and praise God. My mother died when I was 3 and my father worked hard to serve our family, though we struggled to get even one meal a day. My father desired that I have better circumstances, so our pastor took me to Samuel and Jenny's Orphanage Home. Now I am studying 6th class, happy and comfortable, so I thank God and all who worked hard to support me. When I grow up I want to help others. I like learning and I like to play games. My favorite color is yellow, and I like to read Bible stories. I like to eat sambar/dall and my favorite Bible verse is Psalm 119:105—**"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."**



RASMITHA (12)

I thank and praise Almighty God. My father died when I was young, and we had only my mother to depend on but she was unable to feed our family. We did not think we would ever have a chance for education for our future life. One day Pastor Samuel offered for us to study in the Orphanage Home, so now am happy and studying well. I thank God for the beautiful opportunity in my life.



JENNY TELLS US ABOUT HOW THEY CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS IN INDIA AT VGM'S ORPHAN HOUSE

We celebrate according to our Indian traditions by preparing different dishes including sweet and hot. We also purchase new dresses for our whole family. Christians in India will invite friends and relations who are Hindu or Muslim and treat them to a Christmas lunch, as the Word of God says, "Love your neighbor." We tell the story of Jesus during the lunch. Christians also serve food to those who are in poverty, going door to door, and also sing songs and dance.

In our family at Orphanage Home during the season we plan how to give what we have to those who do not have food or clothes. The younger children practice and perform skits, dances, recite Bible memory verses and they also play sports and games as we prepare the different food dishes and the small gifts for them. We also decorate our House, mostly with stars! Then we have our Christmas service with songs, a Christmas message by a special speaker, then prayer and finally cutting our birthday cake for Jesus for everyone to share.

CHRISTMAS UNDERGROUND

COUNTRIES ALL OVER THE WORLD COMMEMORATE CHRISTMAS. And while traditions, music, and food might differ from place to place, there is something they all have in common. They can freely share in the joy of the good news that our savior, Jesus Christ, was born.

But what if you live in a country where believing in and worshipping Jesus Christ is not allowed?

Several countries around the world follow strict religions (or no religions at all) and have made practicing Christianity illegal! Believers in countries like North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and others are often forced “underground” when they want to celebrate and worship.

China is probably the home of the world’s largest underground church.



China is under communist rule. This form of government seeks to control every aspect of its citizens’ lives, including how they practice their faith. While government “allows” churches to exist, it keeps strict watch over those churches to make sure that members follow the rules. If they don’t, they can go to jail.

The Bible is also very hard to get in China. Only government approved bookstores are allowed to sell Bibles, and no one may buy (or bring to China) more Bibles than one needs for personal use. (This is why you may have heard of the many ministries that try to take Bibles into China!)

Christianity is seen as a threat to the government’s power and authority. What they don’t realize is that God is real and the Father of all nations, all peoples, all races. We are all His children, and we all belong to Him!

Since Christian families in China cannot freely celebrate Christmas, they often worship in “underground” churches. This doesn’t mean those churches are literally under the earth (although some do meet in basements). It means Christians meet in secret, small groups, and in private homes where they can read from the real Bible and praise God together.

This Christmas, you can give a beautiful birthday present to Jesus by praying for Christians in China and other countries with underground churches. Pray especially for girls like you and their families and that His Word reaches the people despite the government’s attempts to stop it. And read the true Bible with your family because you can. In particular, read the Christmas story aloud together, remembering to thank God for coming to live among His people so that we ALL might know Him!

—Janel Rodriguez Ferrer

On Christmas Eve my family and I drive around and go see a light show set up by a local radio station. You tune in to the station in your car while watching the lights. On Christmas morning we have a special breakfast, open a few presents and then we go to church for our Christmas service. (My church plays upbeat African music!) When we come back from church, we open the rest of our presents, and then we have Christmas dinner. My favorite thing about Christmas is celebrating Jesus’ birth, watching Christmas movies as a family, and celebrating with family and friends.

MY WISH FOR THE WORLD THIS CHRISTMAS IS THAT COVID ENDS, AND THAT THE WORLD KNOWS JESUS.



Tobogganing is what we call sledding in Canada!



Sweet Leilani the Baker!

LEILANI (12)

My parents were looking online for names for me, and they liked the meaning of Leilani. It means heavenly child or flower in Hawaiian. I have five siblings and I would describe myself as quiet, tall and funny! I love to bake, read and listen to music. When I grow up, I want to be a baker and have my own bakery/restaurant. My happy place is in the kitchen—and one of the best things I said YES to was at church when I was asked to do a baking segment for our online Sunday school. My favorite colors are blue and orange, and I love reading the *Daniels Sisters* series by the Pitts Girls! I want all girls to know that God loves you no matter what. I think God has been showing me that He’s always good and faithful. My favorite Bible verse is John 3:16—**“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”**

I was born in Canada, and I’ve always lived here. I like living in Canada because it is a safe place to live, and there are a lot of museums! Canada is a bilingual country, which means people speak both English and/or

French. There are lots of forests. Yummy poutine (French fries covered in cheese curds and gravy!) was invented in Quebec which is the French part of Canada. Also, the Rideau Canal is the longest canal in the world, which is in Ottawa, where I live. People skate on the canal in the winter and eat beaver tails, which is a pastry coated in a brown sugar-cinnamon mixture. In Canada there is twinkling white snow. We almost always have a white Christmas. Most people think Canada is just snow, cold winters, beavers and lumberjacks!

For Christmas in Canada, most neighborhoods set up lights and some neighborhoods have A LOT more lights than others! (So much so that people drive by to see the light show!) People have Christmas dinner, they set up Christmas trees, and exchange gifts. At Christmas most Canadians eat turkey and *tourtières* (delicious meat pies!), and some people eat *Bûche de Noel*, which is a French dessert that is like a Yule Log cake. People also do Secret Santa — a gift exchange tradition. If you came to visit me at Christmas, we would go tobogganing, ice skating on the canal and eat beaver tails and drink hot chocolate!



GREECE
In Greece a special bread called Christopsomo (Christmas bread) is made on Christmas Eve and eaten on Christmas Day. It's a round sweet bread flavored with cinnamon, orange and cloves.



In Burundi, on Christmas Eve, the whole city would be very busy shopping for food and clothes. My oldest sister and I would help our mother gather everything and would make sure everything is set for Christmas. Our parents would always surprise us with new clothes and shoes. It was always the best gift we all received on Christmas Eve so that we could wear it on the day of Christmas. We did not have much and there was not much to give, but this was something we were always super grateful for. The love and joy we shared were what mattered most. The whole night people would be blasting loud Christmas music and would be dancing outside. We would share food and laughter. My family and I would do all-nighters and would sing, decorate the house with papers and other decorations, and watch Christmas movies because this holiday is very big and special. Christmas in Burundi always happens in the season of rain, and it would usually rain on Christmas Day. We would go to church in the morning, and we would have plays going on there, and food would be served afterward. After church, we would go home and cook even more and would share food with neighbors. In Burundi celebrating Christmas is so festive and many gather and celebrate together. Giving gifts is also something that is done, but it is not a very big tradition like it is in the US. Now that we live in the United States, we still do all-nighters by playing card games and Connect Four, eat a lot of food, watch Christmas movies and decorate the house on Christmas Eve!

DORCAS (16)

I was born in Bujumbura, Burundi, and lived there until I turned 9 years old. This is a country located in East Africa. Although I was born in Burundi, my nationality is Congolese where my parents are originally from. I speak two languages and English is my third. I am also learning Spanish, so about four languages—but my native language is called Swahili. My family and I came to America about six years ago, because we were being evacuated from what was going on in Burundi, and because it was not very safe for our family. I am very thankful and blessed that God gave us the chance to come and live out here.

My favorite colors are pink and purple, and I really like strawberries. Some of my favorite hobbies are writing, playing basketball and volleyball with my friends, and playing drums or other percussion instruments. Sometimes I also enjoy painting and drawing as well. I am a very adventurous person and love to try new things. I liked learning about how everything came into existence through Jesus, and one of my favorite Bible verses is John 1:1—*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*



With Santa in Burundi!



VICTORIA (11)

My parents wanted to give us names that speak to our lives, so my brother and I have the same name! Victoria is my parents' saying they want us to be victorious. My brother has the same name but it's in Swahili—Mshindi! My dad is a pastor and he spends a lot of time with us. My mother has a very busy job—she is responsible for following political situations in many countries, about 70, I think. She travels a lot and meets some leaders in the world, but she is also my children's church leader, and I think she loves this better! The three words I'd use to describe me are creative, smart and brave. My happy place is where my family is, and my favorite colors are pastel purple and neon yellow. I love to eat Belgian fries, and I would love to try a s'more. I have never tasted one! My hobbies are drawing and dancing, and I want to be an architect when I grow up. I would like all girls like me to know that God loves you a lot and He always wins! God has been showing me lately that He always forgives. The coolest thing I have ever done is say YES to Jesus! My favorite Bible verse is Psalm 42:1—*“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.”*

I have always lived in Belgium, even though I always visit Kenya where my mom is from at Christmas and in summer I go to Netherlands where my dad is from. What I love most about living in Belgium is that there isn't a lot of noise in the town I live in so I sleep very well! And Belgian waffles for sure—I eat them all the time I go to the city with my family! In Belgium, there are many markets and fairs. My favorite is the Christmas fairs because these are full of stands selling ornaments from local schools to support a cause in other countries. These ornaments are made by young kids till age 8. I used to make them as well and this was one of favorite times in my school year. Some other unique Christmas things that happen in Belgium at Christmas is that people dress the famous fountain statue of a little boy as Santa.



They are everywhere! There are beautiful Christmas light shows with music to watch—it is a most beautiful thing. On December 6th, children get early Christmas presents from St. Nicholas so we put a shoe and a carrot out for him, and he leaves us presents. They are usually not very expensive gifts—it could even be cookies.

Since I was 2 years old, my brother and I have always done Christmas plays and every year my dad is the donkey I sit on! We do a play for my parents and then my dad will do a devotion, and then we can open the presents. We have special Christmas dumplings for breakfast and then we eat a special rice only made at Christmas for late lunch. Everything about Christmas is special, but my favorite thing is that I am guaranteed to see my aunt who lives in Austria—she has always spent Christmas with us!

MY WISH FOR THE WORLD THIS CHRISTMAS IS WORLD PEACE, AND THE END OF GLOBAL HUNGER, AND NO MORE MISTREATING WOMAN, OR RACISM.



A "Victor"-ious Christmas Play



HANNAH (12)

My mum named me after Hannah in the Bible and Mum says I'm a prayer warrior just like Hannah. I have two older sisters Chloe and Lydia and my younger twin siblings Noah and Ella-Grace. And I have a cat called Bounty! I would describe myself as bubbly, creative and adventurous! I love to take photographs and to paint, draw and color in. I love to play outdoors. I am also learning how to play the piano. My happy place is my windowsill, as I can look out and admire all of God's creation—the bright, blue sky in the morning and the shining stars at night!

My favorite color is lilac, and my favorite songs are "King of Kings" and "Majesty." When I grow up, I really want to be an author, and write novels and devotions to help people grow in their faith. I would like girls like me to know that God has amazing plans for you all. Also, that God answers prayers, and it is never a waste of time, ever, He hears and answers all our prayers. God has been teaching me a few things lately—that it is so important to read my Bible as it will teach me so much, and to always try to have an attitude of gratitude and remember the verse Philippians 2:14-15. I may not remember when I asked Jesus into my heart, but every day I can say YES to knowing I

am a child of God. My favorite Bible verse is Ephesians 5:2—*"And walk in love as Christ also hath loved us ..."*

I LOVE NORTHERN IRELAND! And even though it rains a lot it is better because, at least I don't get sunburnt! I like it because it is small, and it doesn't take long to get to many places, two to three hours is the very, very most I'd travel in Northern Ireland. People usually think about the fact we have one of the seven wonders of the world at our doorstep, The Giants Causeway. And also the lush, green grass. Northern Ireland is 100 years old! In 1859 Northern Ireland had a great revival, and many people came to know Christ.

A very cool thing happened to me one Christmas. I won a competition where you had to design a cover for Radio Cracker for that year's Christmas, and it would go on the cover of all the leaflets. Radio Cracker is Ballymena's only charity radio station, broadcasting annually leading up to Christmas.



My winning cover!

Some Northern Ireland Christmas traditions include Christmas dinners where we have turkey, ham, cocktail sausages, stuffing etc., every Christmas Day each year. Every year people watch the lights of the huge Christmas tree in Ballymena go on and there is a popular Christmas Market in Belfast. Also, our schools have Christmas fairs. All around town you would see lots of Christmas lights, trees and decorations!

In my family our traditions are, on a Saturday before Christmas, Mum's side of the family will all get together at a place called Rockmount for some dinner, dessert and chat. We do Secret Santa, and the parents/adults all do something called Bad Santa. It is the same as Secret Santa, but the present is an old unwanted gift! On Christmas Eve my mum's parents, Granny Jean and Granda Fred come around and stay for dinner and give us our presents and we do a singsong with Granda's guitar. Granny and Granda go, and we hang up our stockings and leave out some food and milk for Santa and some carrots for the reindeer. On Christmas Day, we get up and get dressed, and get photos, we then go downstairs and open presents. Then at night we go 'round to one of my dad's family's house for supper and Secret Santa. On Boxing Day, the day after Christmas, we go round to one of my mum's families houses and have some supper and fun and singsongs. I love Christmas! It is my favorite time of the year! My favorite thing about Christmas is the advent calendars and the dinner and the giving presents. I love to make or buy and wrap a present for someone and see their reactions! I love also remembering and watching things about Jesus' birth.

MY WISH FOR THE WORLD THIS CHRISTMAS is that even as much as we love the presents, food and decorations, that we will not forget the true meaning of Christmas, (which is hard sometimes!)—Jesus' birth.



I love to see (and craft!) gnomes for Christmas!



On the road at the Dark Hedges.



Visiting Northern Ireland's famous world wonder — Giant's Causeway!





The Girls of FAMILY LEGACY'S TREE OF LIFE CARE FACILITY & ACADEMY SCHOOL

We would like to introduce you to **JOSEPHINE** and **SARAH**, two wonderful Girls Like You who are a part of our Family Legacy ministry in Zambia. We believe that there is no greater gift than to work for love. Sometimes just being a kid and going to school and playing is complicated. In Zambia, with most of the population living on less than \$1.50 a day, families can struggle to put food on the table, send their children to school or seek out adequate healthcare. Family Legacy saw the need in Zambia and made it their mission to glorify God by empowering vulnerable and orphaned children in Zambia to live up to their God-given potential. They started a sponsorship program to provide physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual care to the children who need it most—children like Josephine and Sarah. With a sponsor, girls like Josephine and Sarah can receive a daily hot, nutritious meal, attend a private Christian school and receive fundamental spiritual and emotional care. Josephine and Sarah are becoming empowered to be the future doctors and nurses in Zambia and transform their nation! You can sponsor a girl like Josephine or Sarah by visiting familylegacy.com/sponsorachild.

JOSEPHINE (10)

I was named after my aunt. She's a very nice person so I like that I'm named after her. I live with my father and have five siblings. We all get along and my siblings are my best friends. I would describe myself as friendly, interactive and happy! I love cleaning things up but other than that, I love playing soccer with my friends. There is also a game we love to play called 'chiyato' which we play all the time. I want to be doctor when I grow up. I like the idea of helping people who are sick. I want all girls to know that He is a God who answers prayer and will hear us when we talk to Him. Also, girls should go to church so they can know God better. My happy places are my house and my school. I can just be myself in these places. I've been learning that we must be persistent in our prayers. We should never stop praying and should trust that God can answer our prayers. I've been hearing stories of how God has answered people's prayers and it has given me confidence that God will hear me too when I pray. My favorite color is yellow, and my favorite song is called "I'm Going to My Father's House"—it's a worship song that I love to sing and hear. My favorite Bible verse is Genesis 1:1—*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."*

Things I love most about living in Zambia are the trees, the markets, the churches, and the people. At Christmastime,



I think people generally celebrate it as a day to honor the birth of Christ. Many people drink, laugh, and do things that make them feel happy. People also cook a lot of food on Christmas. I think other countries celebrate Christmas in bigger ways with Christmas trees, clothes and gifts. In Zambia we just spend time with our friends and family. If you came to visit, you would see children playing with each other in the street. You would also see grown-ups talking and laughing. There is also a lot of food and a lot of music. My family and I usually go to church on Christmas morning. After that, we go home, play tag and dance to Zambian pop music. We eat nice food: chicken, sausage, fish, rice, scones, juice and soda. My favorite thing about Christmas is the food! It has to be the food. That's the best thing. My siblings and I also use Christmas as an opportunity to bless our parents. We try to buy them Hungry Lion (a fast-food franchise) on Christmas.

MY WISH FOR THE WORLD THIS CHRISTMAS is that everyone around the world would have something to eat and be happy.

SARAH (10)

I live with both my parents and have two siblings. I enjoy playing with my friends, but I also love cooking. *Nshima* (a popular food in Zambia that is like grits) and sausage are my favorite combination to cook. I want to be a nurse when I grow up. I think they are very nice people. My favorite color is pink. It makes me smile. Watching my siblings having fun and dancing makes me laugh. Mathematics is my favorite subject. I love to think hard, and it makes me do that. I want all girls to know that God is loving and takes care of people!



I live in Zambia and I love the way people take care of each other here, and I love the natural beauty of this country. People like to have fun during Christmas in Zambia. They celebrate with small fireworks and eating a lot of food. I honestly don't think we know how to celebrate it as big as other countries. When I watch TV of how people celebrate in other countries, it seems very big with a lot of things happening. In Zambia we stay and home, we dance to music, and we also eat nice food. If you were visiting me at Christmas, you would see my mother cooking food, my friends and I playing outside, and you would see people playing music and relaxing. For Christmas Day in my family, we go to church in the morning and then we go home and start cooking nice food, especially rice and chicken. And then my friends come to my house so we can play together. We also dance to my favorite song, "Chimwemwe Dance."

MY WISH FOR THE WORLD THIS CHRISTMAS is that people in the world will know Zambia and will know that God loves them.

ARGENTINA

In Argentina, a popular Christmas Eve tradition is lighting "globos"—paper decorations with a light inside (like Chinese lanterns) that float into the sky right after midnight.

WE wish you A MERRY Christmas!

HANDMADE CHRISTMAS CARDS AND WISHES FROM GIRLS LIKE YOU!



Brooke (9)



Hannah (11)

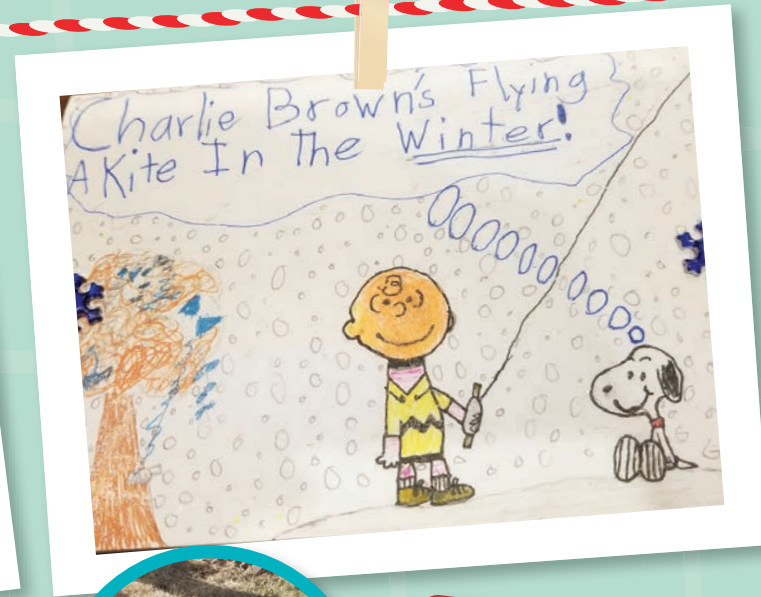


Leah (12)



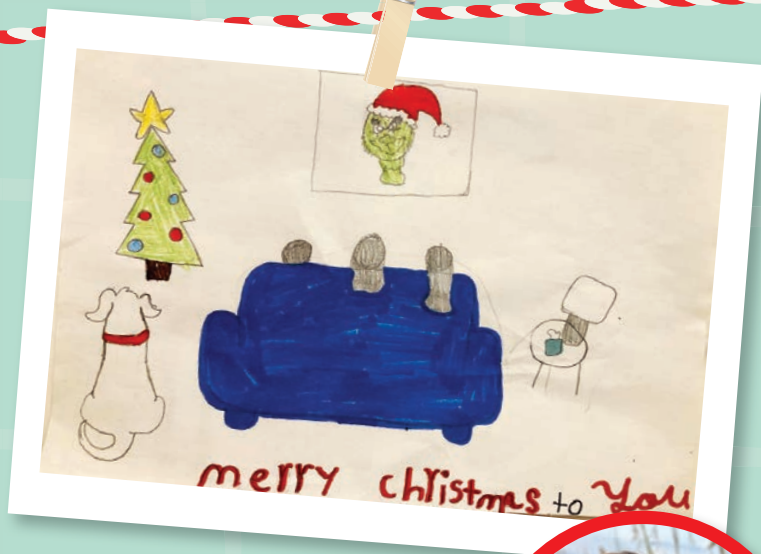


Claire (11) 
 "MERRY CHRISTMAS!
 JESUS IS BORN!"



Madison (12) 

"MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYBODY!
 I WISH THAT EVERY GIRL AND BOY IN
 THE WORLD WOULD GET AS GOOD OF A
 CHRISTMAS AS WE DO. WE LIKE TO PACK
 SHOEBOXES WITH TOYS AND OTHER THINGS
 AND THEN SEND THEM ALL OVER THE
 WORLD THROUGH OPERATION CHRISTMAS
 CHILD. HAVE A GOOD CHRISTMAS!"



 Adeline (8)



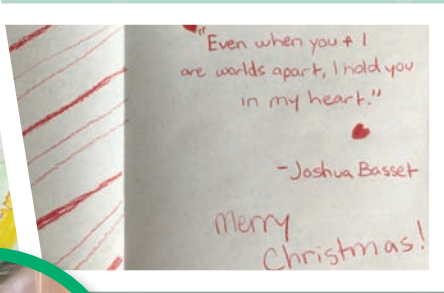
 Alyssa (8)



"HAVE A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND
 REMEMBER THAT JESUS LOVES YOU!"



 Raelyn (6)
 "MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU"



Amelia (11)

"I LOVE FOR GIRLS LIKE YOU!
 I ALSO LOVE HIGH SCHOOL
 MUSICAL: THE MUSICAL: THE
 SERIES, WHICH IS WHY I PUT SOME
 QUOTES FROM THAT ON MY CARD.
 MERRY CHRISTMAS!!"



Rose (6) 
 "HAVE A JOLLY GOOD CHRISTMAS!"



Lilla (9) 
 "SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT, ALL IS
 CALM, ALL IS BRIGHT. HAVE A
 BLESSED CHRISTMAS!"

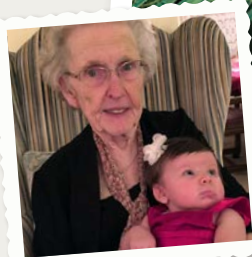


SWEDISH STAR ORNAMENTS

OUR ART DIRECTOR **MARY** SHARES HER FAMILY'S CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

My great-grandma moved to the United States from Sweden when she was only a teenager. Thanks to my grandma, **Maxine**, we grew up with many Swedish Christmas traditions. Every Christmas Eve, we had a big family dinner that included a special homemade Swedish cheesecake dessert called *ostkaka* with lingonberry sauce. My grandma would spend hours making the custard from milk we picked up at the local dairy farm. We also always served a stinky white fish called *lutefisk* — which I was never brave enough to eat! My grandma and her sisters always blessed our dinner with a traditional Swedish prayer. We also decorate our trees with traditional Swedish straw ornaments. They are handmade intricate designs. Here is how you can make a simple star inspired by my favorite Swedish ornaments.

SWEDEN



Grandma Maxine with my daughter Lily at Christmas



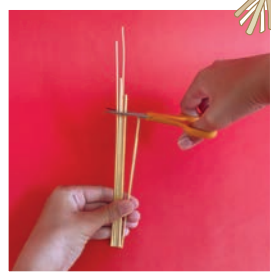
SUPPLIES: wheat stalks (we ordered from Amazon) • scissors • red embroidery floss • ruler • baking dish



1. Trim the tops of the 30 pieces of wheat. Soak the stalks in water for an hour to make them more flexible.



2. Measure and cut one piece of wheat to 6 inches long.



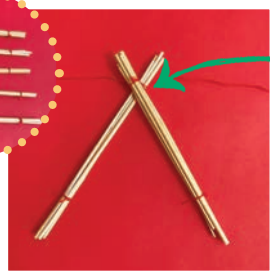
3. Using your first cut piece as a guide, trim the rest of the 29 pieces to 6 inches long.



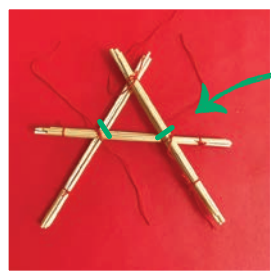
4. Divide the wheat into 5 piles with 6 sticks each.



5. Using two 6-inch pieces of embroidery floss, tie double knots tightly on both ends of each of the six bundles.



6. Tie two bundles together tightly with double knots.



7. Add the third bundle and be sure it is under the right side and over the left. Tie it at the 2 joints marked in green.



8. Add the fourth bundle and secure at green-marked areas.



9. Attach the last bundle and secure at the green markings. Trim any extra strings once done.



10. Evenly trim all the ends of the star and wrap extra embroidery floss around each point and secure with knots. Add ribbon to the top and hang on your tree!



Family Swedish Prayer

FAITH. SERVICE. FUN. AMERICAN HERITAGE GIRLS

FAITH. SERVICE. FUN.



MEET TRAILBLAZER **REBEKAH** FROM INDIA!

DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN AMERICA TO BE AN AMERICAN HERITAGE GIRL? You don't even have to be an American. Through their Trailblazer Program, girls can be a part of all the faith, service, and fun of American Heritage Girls no matter where they happen to live! This is how many girls in missionary or military families in countries all over the world are able to still be a part of American Heritage Girls.

EVERY DAY IS CHRISTMAS!

My name is Rebekah. I am 12 years old. I have lived in India for 10 of those years. My grandparents live in Mississippi, and we visit there when we are home in the USA. I do not remember much about the USA since we moved to India!

India is a big country. The food is really good. I love to eat egg curry and all the fresh vegetables.

I have many friends and those around me who celebrate holidays and special events differently from our family.

Most people in India follow Hinduism or Islam so those religions will affect most holidays.

India does not celebrate Christmas that much. Christian families will put up a tree 24 hours before Christmas and then go to church for a "love feast" where everyone brings something to eat after church. The youth groups go caroling to each believer and non-believer's house to raise money for the next year. It is so much fun.

My family does a **Jesse Tree** every year along with building gingerbread houses. We also bake cookies for our neighbors and friends. We put up our tree a month before Christmas and many of our Indian friends want to come over and look at it!

Many Christian families will identify themselves by hanging a large star outside of their home during the month of December.

My prayer is that all the world will hear the gospel and choose to follow Christ with all their heart.

If we are followers of Jesus, then every day is Christmas!



START YOUR FAMILY'S JESSE TREE TRADITION THIS YEAR!

The Jesse Tree tradition comes from Isaiah 11:1—**"A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots."**

Jesus descended from the line of David, whose father was Jesse. A Jesse Tree is a way to prepare for Advent by remembering the stories that make up Jesus' family tree. Each day of Advent, families read a Bible story about someone on Jesus' family tree and hang an ornament (usually homemade!) that symbolizes that STORY.



Although the program was originally created for girls in military and missionary families, today Trailblazers can be found anywhere there are girls unable to experience a Troop setting due to location, availability, or accessibility. To learn more about American Heritage Girls' Trailblazer Program, for girls just like Rebekah, visit americanheritagegirls.org/trailblazer-program/.

GO Girl!

WITH JACKIE MARUSHKA



OLD TRADITIONS ... NEW MEXICO

MOST OF MY CHRISTMASES HAVE BEEN CELEBRATED IN A SMALL TOWN IN SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO, where my family's history can be traced back to the 1600s when Spanish settlers first arrived and joined the Native American Pueblos in the territory that is now known as New Mexico. Through that time New Mexico has been claimed many peoples, including the Spanish Empire and Mexico, and became a state in 1912—so my Christmases include traditions from many of these cultures.



Christmas morning and me!

My earliest memories of Christmas are with my mom, and her mom, my Grandma Sylvia. Christmas was a time for family to be together. Uncles, aunts and cousins came in from other states and that was exciting because we didn't get to see them very often. It also meant Grandma would be cooking her traditional holiday foods. These recipes and traditional ways of preparing food have been passed down through generations on both my grandma and grandpa's sides of the family.

Grandma's house was where everyone gathered. It was a small, one-story brick building. The back part was their home, and the front section was the general store and Texaco fueling station. Grandma would open the store in the morning and then she'd walk back into the house and start cooking a pot of beans or making the dough or "masa" for tortillas, served at every meal, or peeling peaches for making jam. She was always making something and her house, and therefore the store, always smelled so good!

Whenever a customer would come in, she'd hear the little bell ring, rinse her hands, straighten her handmade apron and greet the customer with a joyful "Bien venidos! Como Está?!" (Which means: "Welcome! How are you?!")

Traditional holiday food at Grandma's house was all home-made—except for the cranberry sauce because Grandpa Mike loved the canned kind! Grandma made *posole* (hominy), tortillas, tamales, green and red chile, ham, turkey and stuffing. The traditional pastries she made are called *pastelitos* (pa-stel-EE-toes) — flat pies made on cookie sheets filled with apple, apricot, peach or prune. Grandma would also make traditional southwestern shortbread cookies called *biscochitos* (bee-sko-CHEE-toes). It's so neat knowing that these recipes are the same ones used by my great, great, grandmas, only they baked their pies and *biscochitos* in an outdoor oven made of mud-brick called adobe!

On Christmas morning, we would exchange gifts (my sister and I would make gifts for each other and our parents) before piling into Mom's green and wood-paneled Ford station wagon which took us to Grandma and Grandpa's just a quarter mile down the road.

When we arrived, there was a joyous greeting from Grandpa Mike that sounded like he hadn't seen us in a year. "Merry Christmas!" he'd say and give my sister and me big hugs.

I remember all the smells, the sound of Grandma stirring the *posole* in the giant pot on her yellow stove, Grandpa laughing, grown-ups helping with the table setting and firewood, and all the cousins giggling and running around the house.

When I got older, I became aware of how many people around the city and around the world didn't have what I did. Family or food. So, I've kept a tradition to extend my spirit of family to those people, whether I know them or not. Through a church or through an organization like the Angel Tree program (Salvation Army) you can do that, too.

**MAY YOUR CHRISTMAS BE A BLESSING,
AND MAY YOU BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS
THIS SEASON AND THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.
GOD BLESS US, EVERYONE!**

A PRAYER FOR Christmas

BY KAYLA CRAIG

O LIGHT OF THE WORLD,
BE WITH US AS WE REMEMBER STORIES
OF SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS AND
PEACE FOR ALL PEOPLE.
RING THE BELLS
OF JUSTICE AND OF HOPE.

HELP US PREPARE THE WAY
IN OUR HEARTS AND IN OUR FAMILIES
AND WITH OUR FRIENDS, TOO.
AS WE HANG STOCKINGS AND ORNAMENTS,
AS WE FROST COOKIES AND TIE BOWS,
WE KNOW THAT YOUR LOVE
CAN'T BE BOUGHT OR PACKAGED.

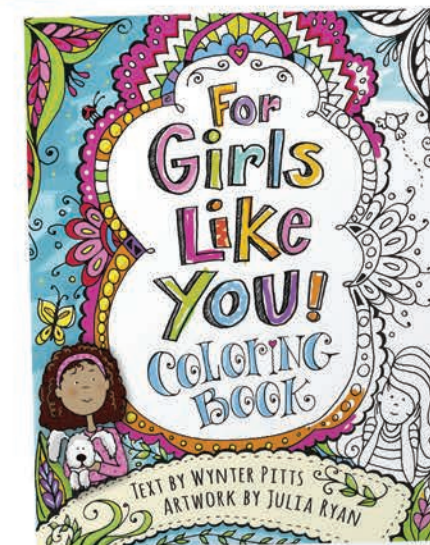
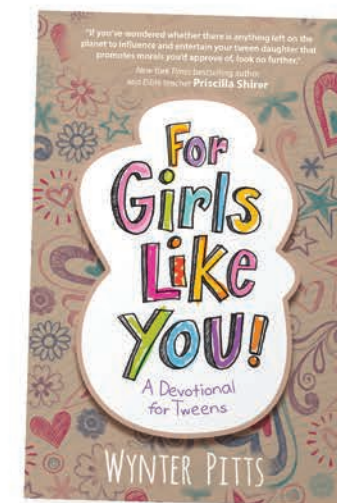
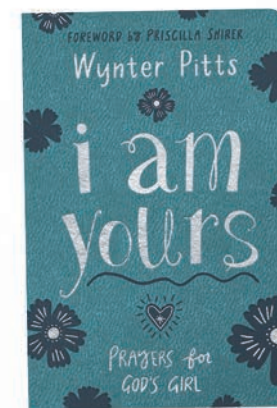
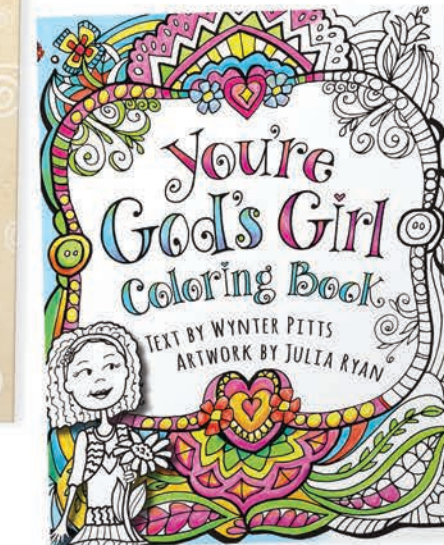
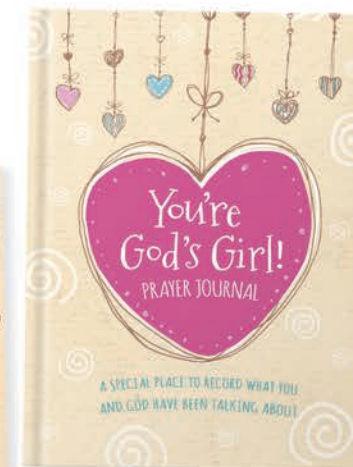
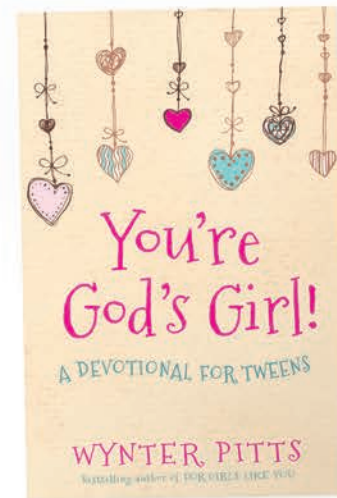
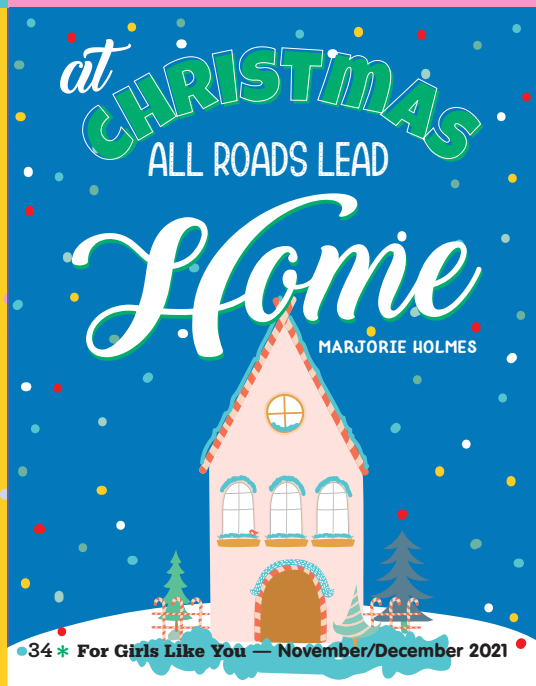
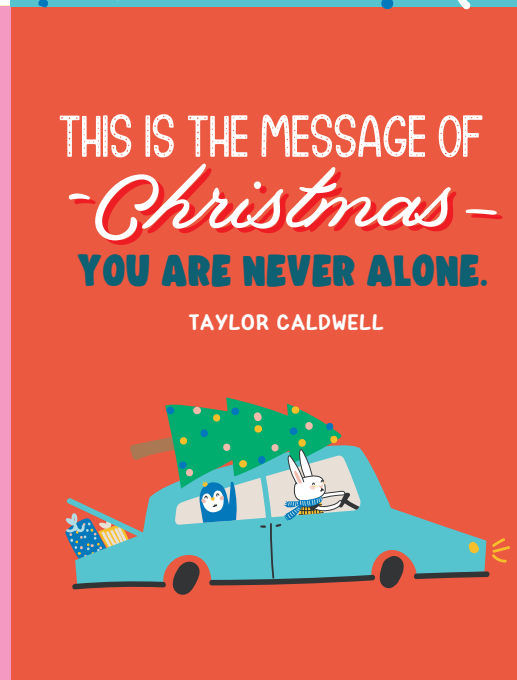
BREAK INTO THIS WORLD
AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN,
LIKE YOU DID SO MANY YEARS AGO.
BRING JOY TO THE PEOPLE,
HOPE TO THE HOPELESS,
LIGHT TO THE DARKNESS.

HELP US TO GET QUIET
SO WE CAN MAKE SPACE IN OUR SOULS
FOR JESUS —THE ONE
WHO CHANGES EVERYTHING.



Adapted from *To Light Their Way: A Collection of Prayers & Liturgies for Parents* by Kayla Craig, Tyndale Momentum





Add these favorites to your Christmas list and see what God has in store for you in 2022!

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