

**WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for December 21, 2020**  
**Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.**

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about the joy of reading.

Over the past week I've heard several references to the greatest Christmas movies of all time. Many of us have our favorites that make us laugh, make us cry, and make us treasure this time of year.

However, I rarely hear about the "Top Favorite Holiday Books." Maybe that just doesn't have the same appeal, but I am going to go out on a limb today and share a few of mine. From stress reduction to slowing cognitive decline, there are many research studies that show reading is of benefit our health and wellbeing.

One of my favorite books to get out at Christmastime is called "Heart and Hearth: Christmas on the Farm" by Georgia Kohart. This book is full of memories – of the person who gave it to me and the people I've shared it with over the last 12 years. Kohart shares recipes, gift ideas, and many of the columns she wrote in a Defiance, Ohio newspaper and other magazines. Her candor and humor about real country living, especially during winter, always brings a smile.

Last December our family began reading "Unwrapping the Names of Jesus," an advent devotional by Asheritah Ciuciu. This year we started lighting our own advent wreath in our home. We've been reading two or three of these devotions each week. It has given me a deeper longing for, anticipation of, and astonishment about Christmas.

I also have a special place in my heart for the Little House books. Several of them tell stories of Christmas through Laura's eyes. They are a reminder of much simpler times before we began to bury this special time of year under so much stuff and busyness.

The top of my list is reserved for a tiny book, that according to the inside cover, my mom gave to me Christmas 2001. "If You're Missing Baby Jesus" is written by Jean Gietzen. It is 57 short pages with beautifully illustrated artwork every other page. Each time I reach for this book, my children immediately bring me a box of tissues. I can't help it. My eyes leak every time I read it.

In the story, the family purchases a nativity set that contains not one, but two baby Jesus figurines. Mother notifies the store, and a sign is placed near the remaining sets alerting anyone

whose set might be missing the main attraction. It is a beautiful, yet simple tale of sacrifice and serving those in need.

When we combined households two years ago, my husband had several nativity scenes. As my daughter unwrapped a set with large ceramic figures, she got to the bottom of the box and announced, “This time we really are missing baby Jesus.” And a new tradition was born. We place this incomplete manger scene near the hearth with the book, a gentle reminder of who the center of Christmas really is.

In a similar way the Presbyterian Church leaves the manger empty until Christmas day. It adds anticipation to the advent season. As we enter this anything from normal Christmas week, I hope you will turn off that Hallmark movie you already know the plot to. Instead pick up a favorite book. It just may lead to a new holiday tradition.

At this time the OSU Extension office is closed to the public and all staff are teleworking. We are available by phone and email this week Monday through Wednesday from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm, and next week Monday through Thursday. We appreciate your patience and kindness during this time.

Be sure to tune in next week as I highlight some of my favorite topics from 2020 and share my “one word” on which to focus in 2021.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at [coshocton.osu.edu](http://coshocton.osu.edu). Make it a healthy day and Merry Christmas!