



## The Year of Small Things: Radical Faith for the Rest of Us

**Sarah Arthur**

**Erin F. Wasinger**

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*This funny and grace-filled project shows that living simply is doable—especially if you've got a supportive team.*

In *The Year of Small Things*, two families share their yearlong project of living in a way that is more in tune with their Christian values.

Inspired by the tenets of the New Monasticism movement, the Arthurs and Wasingers incorporated prayer, lived frugally in order to give more, opened their homes to the needy, and decluttered from possessions. Each chapter relates a new monthly goal for living more faithfully, and each ends with questions and titles for further reading. By admitting that the two families still haven't aced their mission, the book establishes a welcoming, realistic-but-striving vibe.

Both writers are accomplished and know how to tell a touching story. Their voices blend fluidly together—it is sometimes hard to keep track of who is saying what—forming a chorus in a book which is, after all, about striving for a more spiritual life through togetherness.

In describing the families' spiritual journeys, *The Year of Small Things* makes some wonderfully honest points about the hardships of raising young children. Both families deal with depression, but their community and their faith help them shine light on their sometimes uncomfortable feelings.

Funny, poignant questions are asked. A chapter called "Stuff" covers December's goal of living more simply—no easy task while celebrating Christmas with little kids. About limiting their family's "stuff," Wasinger points out, "Keeping your sense of humor is a spiritual discipline too, right?" while Arthur asks, "Where do new monastics keep their high school yearbooks?"

Some goals are secularly trendy, too: limiting social media and finding time for date nights, for example. The families garden, and eat seasonally and locally, all with the added goal that stronger relationships and simpler lives help them carry out their faith.

Their experiment is summarized and analyzed, punctuated by often sweet vignettes. *The Year of Small Things* acknowledges that striving toward God is an ongoing process, that there will be setbacks, and that there is no finish line, but it's all easier to do with a supportive team.

MEREDITH GRAHL COUNTS (March/April 2017)

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