

A Year that Counts!



By Cindy Rushton

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Jeremiah 31:25

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A Year that Counts

By Cindy Rushton

[Http://www.Talk-a-Latte.com](http://www.Talk-a-Latte.com)



It's February! How is your year going? Has it been different? Have you gotten off to a good, strong start? Or...are you frustrated already with the same old stuff when you really wanted to make this year a year that counts?

Don't we all count down until the New Year, hoping for something different? Hoping for change? What happens as we dig into the New Year? Do we just get into the same-old, same-old? Do we just begin to get back into our same old rut? Do we let go of the dreams that we have for the New Year...until the next year?

Sweet friend, this is THE YEAR! This year holds abundance! This year holds lavish blessings! It is not too late to make this year different from those in the past. You have a new beginning, a new start. You have a new chance! You have a new work to do!

NEW!

What does that mean? The word NEW is thrown around so easily. But, listen to the definition and think about your new year...

Having existed or having been made a short time.

Having originate or occurred lately.

Having recently come into existence or into one's possession (I LOVE THAT ONE--INTO ONE'S POSSESSION! WOW!)

Not long in being.

Recent.

Fresh. (I want some of that!!)

Opposed to old--what has been.

Not seen before.

Not before known.

Although existing before, lately manifested or recently discovered.

Starting anew.

Now commencing, beginning.

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<http://www.Talk-a-Latte.com/MommyClub.html>

- Different from what has been.
- A new direction.
- A new course.
- A freshness--fresh from anything.
- Not familiar-unaccustomed.
- To make new, to renew.

Anybody ready for a NEW year? Ready to start again? Ready to start anew? Want something fresh? Want something that you have never, ever seen before? Want something that you have not known yet? Want that manifestation that you have not even dared to dream for? Want something different from what HAS BEEN? Ready for that new direction, new course? Want something fresh from anything that you have ever seen before?

Well, beloved, this is YOUR year! Soak that in...YOUR year. YOUR new year. Your defining moment. YOURS!

Today, right smack dab where you are--you can step into as new beginning. Right now! Yes! You can begin again! You can have a new you. You can have a year that counts! Today! It is not too late!

But, how do you get there? What can help make this year different from all of the others that you met with great intentions and left with disappointment? What can make this year count? Well, sweet friend, I have some ideas that I want to share with you today. They have worked for me. They have helped me to grasp onto all that God has given me. I think that they will help you too. Let's dig in and see...

New Year! NEW Changes with Talk-a-Latte!

We have the same great things you have come to love:

Talk-a-Latte Chats:
Every Tuesday at 1PM CT

Our Talk-a-Latte Retreats and ULTIMATE Events

Our Freebies at our Talk-a-Latte Website

PLUS! Introducing!

Our Talk-a-Latte Mommy Club!

For some time now, we have had requests from many of you for a special subscription program for Talk-a-Latte. You have not wanted to miss even one of our sets. There are some of you who have joined EVERY single seminar, retreat, event, and class that we have offered since 2006. Yep! I have noticed! You are Talk-a-Latte Mommy Pals through and through! You are going to LOVE what we are doing this year!

YOU ARE GOING TO LOVE THIS!

Talk-a-Latte Mommy Club is a monthly premium membership for Talk-a-Latte. Want to join the Talk-a-Latte Mommy Club? It is EASY! Just join at our website and you will be able to dig into this month's download page! Join us now:

**[http://www.Talk-a-Latte.com/
MommyClub.html](http://www.Talk-a-Latte.com/MommyClub.html)**

1. Get Away and Get a Plan.

Yes! Today! Even if the days and weeks have slipped by. It is not too late to pull back and get a plan. In fact, today is the day to do it!

Do you need to hear that? Maybe you are like me and had soooo many things to do to wrap up the old year that you have not had time to plan, dream, or even make a resolution. Feel like it is too late? Well, it is not! Today is THE day to do it!

Ever heard that without a plan, you are planning to fail? Well, without planning you ARE planning to fail. We need to take time to get a rock-solid, doable plan. We need it regularly. We need it right now.

Without getting away to get a plan, we will run all different directions and not get around to the things that really do matter. We are all geared this way. We have to be intentional if we want to get things done. I am not talking about "intending" to get things done that never get on our daily to-do's, much less never get done. I am talking about being intentional about what is and is not included in every day. Intentionally planning. Intentionally pulling back to evaluate. Intentionally doing what really matters.

So, how do you do it?

Get away for a bit. It may be for a few hours a week until you get it all out and organized into a plan. It may be for a whole weekend where you pull away from life and get a good, rock-solid plan. Do what works for you and your family. But, do it--it is SO worth it!

You may be thinking, "But, Cindy! I don't have TIME to do that! I don't have MONEY to do that! I don't have _____ (Fill in the blank)."

This is EXACTLY why this is a must!

Sweet friend, you do not have time, money or energy to live one more year of mediocrity. You do not have time, money or energy to go through the motions and end the year again with regrets, disappointment, and dust on your dreams. THIS IS THE YEAR!

Ecclesiastes 5: 3 (NASV) says **"For the dream comes through much effort."** The Amplified Bible says it this way, **"For a dream comes with much business and painful effort."** Another version says that the dream comes about with much hard work.

Yes, it is a lot of hard, hard work to plan and work our plans, but the difference is the end result--a life that counts!

So, today, take the time to pull back, dream, get a vision, brain-dump, put your to-do's on your calendar, and get a plan for making it all happen THIS YEAR. If you need more help, why not check out our Talk-a-Latte Mommy Club this month--we have an entire set available (A YEAR THAT COUNTS) just for you. It will come alongside of you helping you to get away and get a plan. Don't miss it!

That brings me to the next thing that will really help you to make this year count...

2. De-clutter!

There is something this time of the year that actually compels me to reorganize, declutter, and clean. No other season does it quite the same!

This is actually the time of year that we clean up from the holiday whirlwind and gear up for another super year. I guess it is because of all of the holiday hustle and bustle that comes with the holidays, but I HAVE to cut back for an easier pace after the holidays. So, this is also the time of year that I really look at my life, my schedule, and my commitments to make sure that "clutter" hasn't snuck in--it has a way of sneaking in and creating stress without me even knowing what is up!

So, want to de-clutter? Let me help!

First, **RECOGNIZE CLUTTER**. I am sure that you could look around and spot clutter around your home. We all have it. But, I am not just talking about STUFF that clutters, I am also talking about LIFE-clutter. You know, those things to do that plague us. Those commitments that create an underlying stress. Those things that we do and eventually have NO IDEA why we are doing them. Are you with me? Spot it all. Look at it for what it is.

Then, next step...

KNOW THAT YOU CAN'T CLEAN OR ORGANIZE CLUTTER. This is so essential. Ever get frustrated by cleaning and organizing to only look up and find that everything still looks messy? That frustrates me. If I will sit back and look, the problem is that clutter is always messy. It can't be cleaned up or organized. It has to be attacked. It has to go. Kick back for a bit. Look really close. Do you see the things that are just clutter? I am not just talking about STUFF. I am also talking about activities, commitments, things on the schedule. Are there things that have snuck in? What do you do? That brings me to the next thing.

Set up a **PLACE FOR EVERYTHING AND PUT EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE**. Got lots of paper? Should those be organized into a notebook on that topic? Should you copy those recipes into your recipe book? Should you copy those quotes into your journal? What about all of those receipts and paid bills? Why not invest in a Rubbermaid and store them away so you will have them for your taxes next year. What about those pencils, pens, highlighters, etc.

that are all laying around? Why not invest in a few tiny baskets to store them in? I have one for each end table and nightstand so those "essentials" are close by, but not cluttering up the room. Look at your clutter. Does it need a place? Does it need to be put in its place? Is its place the trash? :)

Struggling more with the LIFE-CLUTTER?

Treat it the same way as the STUFF. Take time to really look at your schedule. Is there a "place" for everything and everything in its place? If not, you will go through day after day without doing what really matters. Again, you cannot organize clutter--even LIFE-CLUTTER! You can re-work your schedule over and over and over. But, it will not ever really work. We have to get rid of anything that does not count. I know it is hard, but those things hold us back from doing what really matters. They keep us from doing what counts. At the end, all we look back and see is clutter. So, if it does not have a PLACE, get rid of it! More on that as we go along the way today.

Finally, **ATTACK!** Attack the clutter! Get rid of it! I know that so many of us are "attached" to our stuff. We are even attached to the things that we have been doing for a while. All of it brings us a certain amount of security and comfort. But, truth is, the stress from it is not worth it. It costs us far more than we really want to pay. So, let's attack it. Get rid of it. Then, we will be ready for this new year. We will be ready to live a life that counts!

3. FOCUS!

Last year, I started getting major headaches. They were unexplained. They were also hard to figure out. Sometimes I got them early in the morning. Sometimes I got them in the middle of the day. I got them when I was working and when I was not. I got them when I was driving and even when I was veg'ing out with the family for movie night. I would even wake up

Want More Help?

*You will LOVE our
Talk-a-Latte Mommy Club!*

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This year, we are changing up the organization of Talk-a-Latte. We will give full-focus to our Talk-a-Latte chats and ULTIMATE events and retreats. Those will be our live events. BUT! Wondering how we will make room for our special homeschool workshops and personal retreats with Cindy? That is where Talk-a-Latte Mommy Club comes in!

**YOU ARE GOING TO
LOVE THIS!**

Talk-a-Latte Mommy Club is a monthly premium membership for Talk-a-Latte. Want to learn more? Just check us out and become part of our Talk-a-Latte Mommy Club. You will be able to dig into this month's download page! Join us now:

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MommyClub.html](http://www.Talk-a-Latte.com/MommyClub.html)

some days and not be able to see with clarity. It was crazy!

Things were blurry.

Things were out of focus.

I was missing things.

Things were all mixed up.

Finally, my sweetheart convinced me to go to the eye doctor. Now, you must know, I went, but had the purpose of proving him wrong! It was something about how he thought that my problem could possibly be that I was just getting old. HELLO! I wanted to prove him wrong! :)

The first few minutes of the exam were excruciating! I got the worst headache that I had had in a long, long time and that was bad!

My precious doctor delivered the news. She told me that my eye muscles were not working properly. They were weakening. In turn, they were not focusing properly. They were the culprit behind my blurry vision. My eyes were out of focus and not pulling back into focus the way they had for years. Although I could still figure out small, small print, I didn't have the clarity that I needed. I was missing things, little details, because my eyes were not focusing.

Funny thing...I got to thinking how much this was like my struggle in life. I wonder how many of us have this problem as we start the New Year? Is this perhaps the reason that we do not see many NEW THINGS or MANY CHANGES that we had hoped for as we kicked off the new year? Could this be the reason that we miss the NEW THINGS? Could this be the reason that we miss the NEW CHANGES that are right before us? I think so!

We need focus!

This is one of my New Year's Resolutions for this year. In fact, it is part of my theme for this year. This year, I want to have an UNCLUTTERED and FOCUSED HEART! I think that this will help me to make this year really count. What do you think?

This resolution comes from a powerful passage in Scripture. It is found in 1 Chronicles 29:19. I love that passage in THE MESSAGE. Here it is...

"And give my son Solomon *an uncluttered and focused heart* so that he can obey what you command, live by your directions and counsel and carry through with building the Temple for which I provide."

Isn't that good? I have prayed this passage for my children for years, but God has convicted

me this year about how HE wants this for me, His beloved child. He wants the same good things for me that I want for my children.

Nothing could be a better resolution for the New Year --well, at least for me! :) Nothing could assure a year that counts--a life that counts or is a glory to God quite like this. Yep! I want a heart that is uncluttered and focused, so uncluttered and focused that I can--

--> Do all that God tells me to do--THIS YEAR!
--> Live a life that follows and heeds all of God's directions (the only way) and counsel above all else!
--> Step up to my call and carry through to finish well!

YEP! Talk about a year that counts--this is the way to get there! So, sweet friends, how about this one? Could it help you too? I am sure it can!

Are you crying out for a year that will be different?
Are you needing focus? What are you going to be all about this year? Do you know? Are you doing it? Well, maybe it is time to get focused!

Get a crystal-clear vision. Get moving. Know who you are and what you are to be all about and stick to that this year. Let all of the other stuff go! Step up and stick to YOUR call. Don't put it off even one more moment--THIS is the year! Get rid of all distractions and hindrances. We all have them, but this is the year to stop letting them hold you back. Push past them. Get over them! Keep on moving! Decide to stop procrastinating. When you spot it, attack it. Don't let procrastination steal away even one more moment this year. That is not all. Regularly pull back and evaluate everything you are doing and everything that you want to do. Make sure that you keep in mind what you are all about. Get all of the help you need to stay focused. And, give it all that you have got! This year does not have to be the same as all of the others--it CAN be a year that counts. But, that is going to take focus. This little thing makes a huge difference. So, today, get focused!

Counting Down!



Our Ultimate Women's Expo!
February 11-13, 2010
PLUS! Preview Chats until then!

A Year that Counts!

Kicked off another great year?
Want to make this year really count? Oh! You will not want to miss this awesome, or should I say ULTIMATE, event!

Well, it is time for our big Winter Expo! AND...great news! WE COME TO YOU! Can you beat that?

In the comforts of your own home, you can kick back and be blessed to overflowing. All you need is either a telephone line or your computer.

You can dial in or join us online in our online conference room right here on our website--Mac or PC friendly!

*Great workshops!
Free Gifts!
Doorprizes!
Fun and Fellowship!*

Learn more here:
[Http://www.Ultimate-Womens-Expo.com](http://www.Ultimate-Womens-Expo.com)

4. Know and Live Your Life Purpose!

Sweet friend, do you know that God has a purpose FOR YOU? FOR YOUR LIFE? Yes! He does! From your mother's womb, He knit you perfectly together just for the call He has on your life (Psalm 139). You have everything that you need to step up to your life purpose. It is all there! NOW!

Take some time away to think about this:

Who are you?

What is in your hand--what do you know? What do you have? What can you do? What are your gifts and talents?

What is on your heart?

You must KNOW this if you are going to live out your life purpose. Then and only then will you live a life that counts. Sweet friend, it's time to step up to the call. THIS is the year. Overcome all obstacles that have been in your way. This is YOUR year! It is time for you to know your life purpose and live it. Make this year count!



Peeked at Talk-a-Latte Lately?

We are here to encourage, inspire, and equip you for your call as a godly woman. Every single chat and seminar is loaded with wonderful teaching AND lots of SWEET goodies that will help you to step up to your call as a Christian woman. Don't miss even one! We would LOVE for you to join us and become one of our "mommy pals!"

Well, for now...why not dig into our site. Get to know us and what we are all about. You will find lots of fun freebies right there--audios that are free for you to download and enjoy, ebooks that are prepared just for you, and access to all of our previous seminars and retreats. Plus! You can connect with us regularly for all of the great sessions that we have coming up! Dig in! You are welcome at Talk-a-Latte!

OH! Don't forget! Subscribe to my update list there on the right side of the page. We will keep you updated on all we have going on! Get ready for a blast!

You will love Talk-a-Latte!

<http://www.Talk-a-Latte.com>

5. Stick to the Main Thing!

Satan would love to distract you. Do you KNOW that? Really. The enemy loves nothing more than distracting you. In fact, he stays busy throwing out things that can distract each and every one of us. It was once said that if he can't get you to avoid your call or stay in sin then he will do anything to distract you with lots of good things. Yep!

Good things are the enemies tool to keep us away from the MAIN THING. The enemy uses good things to distract us from God's very best things.

Soak that in.

Have you seen this in your own life?

What has kept you from doing the very things that will make your life count?

What do you get done?

What is hanging on for "later" or a "better" time?

We must KNOW how to spot the "good" from the "very best" if we are going to be faithful to the call. We must be able to discern the difference. It is so hard!

We have to be on guard at all times. We have to be ready to let go of all of the stuff--even the good stuff--if it pulls us away from doing the MAIN THING. If not, we will never have enough time or energy to do it all. We will end the year again having a lot written in our planners, yet having that MAIN THING unchecked, undone, and going into another year with hopes and dreams that we deep-down doubt will become a reality. Instead, let's let go of all of the STUFF, even the good stuff! Let's stick to what really needs to be done. Let's reach for the mark, the high call. Let's make this year a year that really counts!

6. Evaluate!

Oh! Talk about a key! If we want to make this year really count, we are must take time to evaluate--

--> We must take time to constantly evaluate little choices and big choices before we move forward.

--> We must take time to regularly evaluate to see what we are doing to LIVE IT ALL OUT.

--> We must set periodic evaluation points to stay on target and be accountable.

Yep! We must evaluate! It is too easy to get in a rut and let time slip right on by. It is too easy to de-value the importance of every single choice that we make. It is too easy to get and stay off track.

Making time to evaluate will safeguard against another one of those years that just slips by into history. So, today, make a commitment to evaluate--constantly, regularly, and at specific times throughout this year. When you do, you will make this year really count!

7. Simplify!

What is it about all of us that makes us think that something has to be hard to be effective? What is with us? We lose sooo much time doing things the hard way. We lose so much time, money, energy, and ground just plodding through systems and processes that are so complicated.

I have big news! This year, we can simplify and make this year our very best year ever. We can simplify and make this year really count. But, how? It begins with everything that we do. We need to kick back and get a real good look at all that we do each day, asking ourselves if we are doing it the easiest and simplest way possible.

How about meal preparation?
How about school lessons?
How about homemaking?
How about your home business?

Are we keeping it simple? Easy? Are we getting bogged down unnecessarily?

We don't get "extra credit" for doing things the hard way. In fact, it actually costs us much. The biggest cost is that we do not balance everything very well. We definitely do not fit everything in that really matters. The bad news is that what doesn't fit in is usually the things that matter the most to us.

YOU are Invited!



Talk-a-Latte Chats...

Our Talk-a-Latte Chats cover a vast array of topics-- marriage, mothering, mentoring, homeschooling, homemaking, home-business, organization, taking care of mom, and so much more! Join us EVERY Tuesday afternoon at 1PM CT at our website. Every chat is free! Absolutely FREE! All you have to do is become a Talk-a-Latte Member. Do that at our website:

<http://www.Talk-a-Latte.com>

Keep things simple and easy. Develop routines and systems that will keep things as simple and easy as possible. Don't allow clutter---in your stuff, in your schedule, or even in your head. Simplify and make this year really count!

8. Create Margin!

Oh! Yes! If we really want to make this year count, we are going to need margin.

What is margin?

Margin is room and space in your life and schedule so that you can do what really matters. With margin, we have space to enjoy the journey. We have space to minister to the little and big needs that pop up. We have room in our schedule and our day to make the most of the opportunities that have a way of typically interrupting our big plans--when they are probably the REAL PLAN all along. But, how do we do it? That is where it gets tricky! Here are some things that I do:



ULTIMATE Events Coming Up!



Ultimate Women's Expo! February 11-13, 2010

PLUS! Preview Chats Leading up to Expo Weekend!

Yep! We are recording for our Mid-Winter Ultimate Women's Expo right now! You can join us each Tuesday leading up to the event for Preview Chats PLUS you can join us for our event, February 11-13th. Don't miss it! Learn more here:

<http://www.Ultimate-Womens-Expo.com>

Ultimate Homeschool Expo! May 3-7, 2010

PLUS! Preview Chats for 10 Weeks Leading up to Expo Week!

Oh! YES! It is almost time again! Preview chats for this event will begin right after our UWE. We are even bigger and better. You can already grab your tickets at our website:

<http://www.UltimateHomeschoolExpo.com>

PLUS! Coming Later in 2010!
Ultimate Business Expo 2010 and Ultimate Writers Expo 2010

--> **Cut the STUFF!** There are so many unessentials that we bring into our life. Sure, they may be GOOD THINGS, but just as I mentioned before, GOOD THINGS will cause us to miss the very best. We have to be willing to cut the stuff if we are going to live a life that counts.

--> **Only allow the eternal--not the temporal!** This is a big test for everything that we do. Typically, the temporal screams, squeals, and pitches a fit if we push it aside. It blares out its demands. It pushes. It presses. The eternal quietly waits for you to do it. It is that thing that we would LOVE to do, but we put off. It is that thing that is on our list of resolutions, probably been there for 10 years, but we never get it done because there are so many other things that are squeaking, squealing, and demanding our attention. Funny thing, the eternal is really the only thing that counts. If we look back at last year, it was the thing that we KNEW we were supposed to do, but it was one of the only things that did not get done. Without the eternal, we live a mediocre life when we all want a life that counts. That begins with a year that counts. And, that begins by only allowing the eternal, not the temporal each day. Let's do it and make this year really count!

--> **Create space in your day!** One sure-fire clue that we are doing a lot of stuff and not really doing what counts in when we have a day that is full to overflowing without any space. It is a warning sign! This is why we need margin. Margin brings extra space. That extra space helps us to do the things that really matter. If there is not enough space and every day just keeps flying by, it is time to do some "surgery" on our daily schedule so that we can get rid of the "fat" that is weighing us down. Cut back. Eliminate. Cut out. Get down to what really matters and surround that with lots of space!

--> **Choose the best and let go of the rest!** Be picky! We all have the same amount of time each and every day. EVERYONE has to make a choice of what is going to be done. Those who are "making things happen" and living a life that counts are the ones who have made a big choice--they have chosen the very best and they have let go of all of the rest. Every choice costs us something. It takes time, energy, money. Either we spend it with something that matters or we waste it away on things that just fritter our days away. Want for this year to count? Be picky! Choose the best. Let go of all of the rest!

--> **Be reasonable!** Don't push your limits! Oh! I see this all of the time. Perhaps it is a symptom of a culture that does not value margin as much as functioning on overload. Let's face it--we have so many amazing tools at our fingertips. But, what do we do with it all? MORE and MORE and MORE AND MORE! The typical Christian woman pushes her limits, burning the candle on both ends, then wonders why she has nothing left over. There is nothing more to give! More is not better! We have got to learn to be reasonable. We have got to learn how to do the things that matter and rest. We do not need to push to the point of collapse. Too much of that and we will end up in the pit! This year, let's make every choice count! Then, we will let go of all of the excess that pushes us past our limits.

--> **Remember strength comes from focus not from how much is in your day.** I guess you are seeing by now how important focus is, but here it is again. Far too many people equate the big long list as THE THING. I have my big long lists too. But, the real strength behind doing the RIGHT THINGS--THE THINGS THAT COUNT-- is in doing the thing that God has called us to do with laser sharp focus. Giving IT our all. Not comparing to others. Not throwing it aside in order to chase the next shiny object. Not trying to be super-mom. If we want to get things done that really matter, we are going to have to learn the importance of focused attention to the MAIN THING. That is real strength! That clears away the stuff. That helps us to live a life that really matters! That helps us make this year count!

--> **Know that you don't come this way again--these are the days that you will remember.** Talk about a great way to weigh out the value of things that fill our day. What DO we want to remember? What will really matter? Keep those things. Let go of the rest. That will bring the margin needed to make this year count!

That brings me to the next thing to remember...

9. Prune!

Years ago, one of my friends bought an amazing piece of property. It is probably the most perfect piece of property that I have ever seen--has a little bit of everything on it, including an orchard.

I remember going to visit her after she had been there on the property for a while. Her orchard looked totally pitiful. It had been so amazing before. That day it looked like some sticks stuck in the ground. Everything was so bare, so lifeless.

She must have been able to discern my thoughts. She told me that she had hired a guy to prune her orchard. She even commented that when she first saw it that she thought he had destroyed her trees--EXACTLY what I thought! I will never forget what she told me next--it was actually perfect preparation for the season that I was about to go into in my life.

She told me that he had pruned back the limbs so that each tree would only have a few branches. She told me that with fewer branches, each branch produced more fruit, bigger fruit, and juicier fruit. If a tree were just let-go and not pruned, it would actually produce less fruit and that fruit would be smaller and not nearly as juicy and delicious.

My brain got to buzzing with thought. I had known for a while that God wanted to do something more with me. I had SO MANY "branches" that were zapping me, but all of it was producing fruit. Of course, much of that fruit was small and not as good as it could be. I knew that God wanted to do a work in my life to make every single thing count. But, I also knew that it was going to take some painful pruning back to get there.

Over the next year, God took the "pruning shears" to my life. In fact, the visual I still have of that season in my life is of those poor trees at my friend's home that were bare and seemingly lifeless, yet amazing work was going on. I felt just as bare, just as stripped. I actually wondered if I was ever going to do anything that mattered. I had no idea that God was doing a major work in my life. He was deepening my "roots" and preparing me to produce larger, sweeter, juicier fruit with my life. He was working in me to make my life count.

I have no idea what God is doing in your life. Perhaps, he is preparing you for a big work. It is now time to let go of all of the extras so you can pour your best into that big work. Sure those things have had a purpose. They have prepared you. They have trained you. But, to move into the new place--the big, open space that God has for you--it is time to let God loose to prune and prepare you for a mighty work. Let Him loose. You can trust Him. He will not mess up. He will only take what needs to go in order for you to produce larger, sweeter, juicier fruit. Let Him loose!

Perhaps, you have let God prune, but you are in a place right now where you feel like stick in the mud. You don't see that fruit yet. You wonder if He will ever use you. Beloved, stick it out! You are right where you need to be. Let Him deepen your "roots" and prepare you for what is ahead. We all need depth to withstand the storms of life. We all need to be rooted and grounded for the call. We all need to prepare for the demands of the harvest. This time is a time of preparation. It is going to be exceedingly, abundantly, above-and-beyond what you have ever dared to ask, dream, or imagine. Embrace the pruning.

Finally, you may be in the midst of the demands of producing fruit. It is sweet. It is huge. It is juicy. It is taxing. Don't think that pruning is over. The Master takes pride in you and will not allow extra branches to sprout up or take over. They are dangerous. They take away from the fruit He wants for you to bare. Submit to His pruning all along the way. He will keep you producing big, sweet, nourishing fruit for those who come to you. But, pruning

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never ends.

Want to live a life that counts? Want for this year to be a year that counts? Dare to prune. Let the Master loose to prune. Embrace the pruning. Let the Master prune all along the way. He has great things ahead!

10. Decide to be PRODUCTIVE--Not Busy!

Last year, when I was setting my New Year's resolutions, I had one resolution that was burning deep in my heart. I guess that I had caught myself answering the question, "How have you been?" with the ugly answer, "Busy" for far too long. Yes, I had been productive much of the time, but honestly, there was too much of the time that I have admit that I was just busy, not productive. I don't like that feeling.

We are all so busy. But, let's get real. Let's get honest.

Are we PRODUCTIVE?

Are we as productive as we want to be?

Are we getting the things done that we really want to get done?

Or...do we constantly battle with STUFF?

Do we constantly battle with the disappointment of not quite reaching our goals, dreams or even our daily to-do's?

This year, let's make every day count. Let's make everything that we do count. But, how?

--> **Guard Your Time!** Every day, you and I are given a great resource--a new day filled with time. 24 hours. 1,440 minutes. 86,400 seconds. EACH DAY! Consider this like a big bank account. You are given "daily deposits." You get the same as everyone else. You can spend this resource however YOU choose. Yet at the end of everyday, it is all used up. No one gets more. No one gets less. No one can save it for another day. It is used up each and every day. No one gets it back. Think about this awesome resource. Each day you are given this gift without any regard for how you used it the day before, without any regard for how productive (or not) you are, without any regard for whether you have used it to the full or not. Oh! Beloved, guard your time! It is a priceless resource. Don't let it slip by. This is the year to make every minute count. That is how we end up with a year that counts!

--> **Know and Stick to Your Priorities!** If we want to be the most productive, not just busy, then we need to know exactly what we are supposed to be all about and stick to it. I think that we all really know this. The difficulty is in sticking to our priorities. I disagree with those who say that you can look at your schedule and bank account to see your real priorities. I think that we all have a tendency to push aside the very people and things that mean the most to us. This is because it takes more than intention to do what really matters. It is too easy to take them for granted and put them off for "another day." We have an enemy who

loves to distract us from what really matters, from the things that really do count, and from the things that last. We have to be very intentional if we are going to stick to our priorities. We must plan our day around our priorities first, then fit in the other options. When we do that, we will be truly productive and live a life that counts this year.

--> **Do not procrastinate!** OH! I have a whole series on procrastination coming up for those who are a part of our Talk-a-Latte Mommy Club (You won't want to miss that! Join us today --we have some great studies ahead!) This is one of my worst enemies. I am constantly learning how to battle this enemy--it keeps on hitting with such creative weapons! I have learned that I have to be on guard against this enemy at all times. Procrastination gets me off-track soooo easily! Relate? But, what do you do? For me, it helped me to really look at what makes me procrastinate and why? I have to be very honest about how and why I commonly get off task and fall into procrastination. I am so much better at catching it early on now. When I see it, I stop and get back on task and get moving strong. I also have to watch out for my emotions--my emotions TOTALLY feed on procrastination. I procrastinate every single time that I dread doing something. It is funny how much better I feel when I get it done. But, nonetheless, if I have something to do that I really dread, I will do a million other things to avoid that one thing. I have learned that it helps me to put it on the calendar and not allow myself to do anything else until THAT THING is done. Want to know what normally happens? When I do it, USUALLY it does not take as long if I dig in. Plus, when I get it done, everything else is easier and faster--it opens the bottleneck. Still amazes me. But, I still battle this one. I can usually spot it by what is getting done--when the things that I get done are just busy, unessential work and not what really matters. So, this year, let's watch out for procrastination. Let's make this year count--every minute!

--> **Get a plan!** Brian Tracy, wrote in his book EAT THAT FROG, "*The better the plan you have, the easier it is for you to overcome procrastination, to get started, to eat your frog, and then to keep going.*" Productivity demands a plan. Without one, we all have a tendency to just get busy. Sure! We are all working hard. But, one counts and one is just loss. We need to get a plan if we want to really make this year count.

--> **Organize for Productivity!** We cannot truly be productive if we are not organized. We need to take time to get ready for every year, every month, and every day. Little things make a big, big difference. They determine our productivity. Things like: taking time to brain-dump (dumping all of your ideas, wishes, to-do's, plans, dreams into a notebook so you can work on them), setting goals, using to-do lists, developing a doable schedule, and developing systems and routines. It may seem to take more time than it saves. However, it is key for productivity. It will make a difference in whether this year is a year that counts or not.

--> **Focus until it is done!** Oh! Yes! I am a huge advocate of multi-tasking. If you have heard me teach or joined me for any of my coaching courses, you have heard me advocate multi-tasking. I think that a busy mom has to learn how to manage everything well. We do have

to multi-task if we are to get things done around our home. BUT! True productivity demands that we FOCUS everything we have on some tasks. Just as I mentioned earlier, I have spotted some things that I tend to do when I procrastinate. One thing that I tend to do is try to juggle too many things at one time. Everything takes longer. Things are not done as well. Some things are not done at all. When I set aside time to just work on one thing with complete focus, it is amazing how much faster it is finished and how much better it is. When I will slow down, set aside time to focus, I am so much more productive. Focus is the key!

A Year that counts!

Ok, sweet friend, these are my tips for making this year really count. I pray that they help you.

You have a new year, a new beginning, a new leaf, a new start, a new work to do. Today is a NEW DAY! What will make this day, this year really count? Will you grasp on to all that Christ died to give you? Will you make this year different from all of the others? Will you make this year count?

I am here cheering you on!

Happy New Year!
From Cindy and the Rushton Bunch!

Come Join us at Talk-a-Latte!

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with Tara McClenahan

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A Year that Counts!

It's February! How is your year going? Has it been different? Have you gotten off to a good, strong start? Or...are you frustrated already with the same old stuff when you really wanted to make this year a year that counts? Don't we all count down until the New Year, hoping for something different? Hoping for change? What happens as we dig into the New Year? Do we just get into the same-old, same-old? Do we just begin to get back into our same old rut? Do we let go of the dreams that we have for the New Year...until the next year? Sweet friend, this is THE YEAR! This year holds abundance! This year holds lavish blessings! It is not too late to make this year different from those in the past. You have a new beginning, a new start. You have a new chance! You have a new work to do! Join Cindy as she helps you get started making this year a year that really counts!

Cindy Rushton is the wife of her very best friend, Harold Rushton, and the mother of Matthew (22) and Elisabeth (19) who are both homeschool graduates—after always being homeschooled. Matthew is now married to his beloved, Whitney. They are expecting their first baby in August.

Cindy lives in the beautiful mountains of North Alabama in her dream cedar cabin. Cindy is the author of over 100 books, Bible studies and homeschool resources. She edits and publishes two magazines, *Time for Tea* and *Homeschooling The Easy Way*. If that is not enough, she also manages two of her own blogs: *Cindy's Desk(Top!)* and *A Writers Nook* and she produces an online weekly radio show, *Mom-to-Mom Radio Show*. She has become a beloved and favored speaker for homeschool conventions and retreats across our country. As you pour yourself a cup of tea and pour through the following mini-book, you will find a dear, dear friend to give you a great big hug, loving smile, and take you by the hand into a journey of homeschooling the EASY WAY! Get ready...you are definitely in for a treat! Want to see more of her writing or listen in to her podcasts? See her websites: <http://www.CindyRushton.com>, <http://www.Talk-a-Latte.com>, <http://www.MomtoMomRadioShow.com>, or her blog: <http://www.CindysDesktop.com>



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