



# **Year of Plenty: One Suburban Family, Four Rules, and 365 Days of Homegrown Adventure in Pursuit of Christian Living**

*Craig L. Goodwin*

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In 2008, Pastor Craig Goodwin and his young family embarked on a year-long experiment to consume only what was local, used, homegrown, or homemade. In *Year of Plenty*, Goodwin shares the winsome story of how an average suburban family stumbled onto the cultural cutting edge of locavores, backyard chickens, farmers markets, simple living, and going green. More than that, it is the timely tale of Christians exploring the intersections of faith, environment, and everyday life. This humorous yet profound book comes at just the right time for North American Christians, who are eager to engage the growing interest in the environmental movement and the quandaries of modern consumer culture. It speaks also to the growing legions of the "spiritual but not religious" who long for ways to connect heaven and earth in their daily lives.

"Craig Goodwin invites us into a life of paying attention. This is an experiment in God's ordinary: life centered in relationship, lived in a physical world of spiritual meaning, and expressed in daily acts of attentiveness that are unhooked from patterns that degrade us and imperil the world. It turns out to be a wonderful and complicating adventure. Free from grandiosity, sentimentality, or ideology, this book tells its story with captivating humanity and motivating honesty."-Mark Labberton  
Director, Ogilvie Institute for Preaching  
Fuller Theological Seminary  
Author of *The Dangerous Act of Worship*

"As someone who had gotten good at resisting grumpy calls to reject our consumerist culture, I found this book delightfully refreshing and compelling. Craig Goodwin describes an experiment in 'familial art'-a creative effort to seek out new and very practical experiments living as more faithful stewardship of the earth's resources. I haven't started raising chickens or making homemade butter (yet!) after reading this wonderful book-but I have learned some profound lessons."-Richard J. Mouw  
President and Professor of Christian Philosophy  
Fuller Theological Seminary

"Many clergy and other church leaders ask for examples of how and where missional work is actually taking place. Here is a leader faithfully engaging this work in a practical, local, on-the-ground way that leads to new expressions of church in mission. This is the kind of story about a church-in-process we need to hear."-Alan J. Roxburgh  
Founder of the Missional Network  
Author of *The Missional Leader*  
Adjunct Professor at Fuller Theological Seminary

"I heartily recommend Goodwin's charming, thoughtful, and extremely funny book. With remarkable insight and refreshing humility, Craig Goodwin takes us with him and his family as they learn who and what is behind the things we so often thoughtlessly purchase. Goodwin reminds us how much of community and life we have sacrificed in the name of convenience and low price. Through engaging narrative he skillfully integrates lessons on faith, life, and God, integrating the spiritual with the material and the local with the global. This is an important contribution to the ongoing conversation about our role as Christians in taking care of and enjoying God's creation."-Scott Sabin  
Executive Director, Plant With Purpose  
Author of *Tending to Eden: Environmental Stewardship for God's People*  
Review in *Eco-Journey*

## **Year of Plenty: One Suburban Family, Four Rules, and 365 Days of Homegrown Adventure in Pursuit of Christian Living Details**

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# **From Reader Review Year of Plenty: One Suburban Family, Four Rules, and 365 Days of Homegrown Adventure in Pursuit of Christian Living for online ebook**

**Beth Postema says**

Goodwin's theology--that God is present in the everyday and that there is no reason to have the major divide between the sacred and the physical matters of life--is well done, relevant, and worth reading.

I have problems with his initial assertion that his family was a typical suburban family and essentially "if we can do it, you could do it."

A two-pastor family is not typical. Although pastors have a huge workload and are on call 24/7, they do have large amounts of unstructured time to allow the great amount of time that they dedicated to homemade food production. In contrast to some climates, Spokane is not typical. Goodwin's defined "buy local" territory included the Yakima Valley, which he even describes as "the fruit basket of the nation." Not everyone is so fortunate to have access to fruit in those quantities and varieties to support their "buy local" and canning efforts. And it is very rare that a city lot has an extra 5,000 sq. ft. on the side of the lot that can be turned into major garden/small farm.

His theology of consumption--where you can make a 2-hour round trip to buy a handmade gift for \$30 for a child's birthday party--is a theology of affluence. In contrast, I would like to point out a quote of Christian author & blogger Rachel Held Evans: "I've said it before, and I'll say it till I'm blue in the face: if our theology doesn't work on the ground, among the poor and the marginalized to whom Jesus first brought the gospel (Luke 4), then it doesn't work."

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**JF at SustainableTraditions says**

Craig Goodwin, who is a pastor and farmers' market manager at his church, just might be a "voice crying out in the wilderness" – a John the Baptist of sorts, preparing the way for the LORD in a land of materialism run-amok and idolatrous consumerism. Although I'm sure he had no intention of bearing such a role, his family experiment serves as a sign-post to those of us who also feel GOD's call to exit a life of unquestioning allegiance to 'the pursuit of happiness' – in exchange for the radical pursuit of Jesus and His kingdom of shalom.

Rooted in the suburban wilderness of American malls and SUVs- Goodwin and his family struck out, after a "post-Christmas funk" in 2008 (the same year of the global financial crisis), on a year-long journey armed with four rules to re-orient their lives beyond market forces, towards a reconciliation with the people and places that provide so much of the practical needs of their life- all in the context of pursuing a simpler life, and a more robust, whole-life Christian faith...

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**Emily says**

Two and a half years ago, during the inaugural SpokaneFaVS Faith Feast, I had the chance to glut myself on

dozens of delicious desserts at Millwood Presbyterian Church. After getting stuffed on appetizers and entrees at more exotic locales (a Muslim mosque and the Sikh temple), I'll admit that I was at first rather blasé about this third location, a Christian house of worship and a faith with which I already had a passing familiarity. The impressive spread of desserts knocked my complacency right over, though, and I enjoyed myself, and the conversations I had with other guests and with our hosts, immensely.

Millwood Presbyterian has a rather unique and special relationship with food, led in large part by their pastor Craig Goodwin and his family, that I found intriguing. Once a month, the church hosts the Second Harvest Mobile Food Bank, distributing food to those in need. And every Wednesday for four months spanning the summer, the parking lot is taken over by the Millwood Farmers' Market providing access to locally raised or produced meat, fruits and vegetables, breads, honey, flowers and more. With this background showing such long-term and ongoing commitment, I was interested to pick up *Year of Plenty* authored by Goodwin, and see just what he had to say about how faith, food, and family intersect.

The basic set up - a family of four commits to eschew "meaningless" purchases and consumerism for a year focusing on only homemade, homegrown, local, or used goods and products (with the notable exception of the Northwest staple not grown in the Northwest: coffee) - isn't completely unique, a fact Goodwin addresses early on in the book, and yes, it's a bit gimmicky, but I actually didn't mind. There's a real sincerity behind the impetus for the project, a thoughtful adaptation to his family's lifestyle and capabilities, and a true desire to learn and change that is authentic regardless of how many other iterations exist.

In fact, this exercise had far-reaching implications for real Christian living. In a family headed by two pastors, it's not at all surprising that spiritual lessons will be unearthed, but the continuity and inter-relatedness of daily actions and overarching beliefs showed up again and again. "Faith that doesn't touch everyday life is dead," Goodwin said, so examining exactly how faith touches and influences everyday life is vital...

To read the rest of this review, visit [Build Enough Bookshelves](#).

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### **Jan says**

This is by a local Spokane minister and author, who I had met but I was more than pleasantly surprised to enjoy the local issues of green living and the theological musings that go with how much is enough and some of the real issues with trying to get the local foods. I hope to apply more of his ideas to my lifestyle and give this book as a gift. I thought it was much better than Kingsolver's book which was similar...

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### **Clara Dearmore Strom says**

This was an excellent book. Lots of information about eating local, but also about changing your mindset about community. Author, Craig Goodwin is a local pastor in Spokane who started the Millwood Farmer's Market. I am looking forward to visiting it this season.

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## Daja says

“For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.”

Romans 8:22-23

I was reading the Fuller Focus magazine a few months ago and came across an article about a Fuller alum who had written a rather intriguing book. I was so fascinated by that article, that I immediately got online and ordered the book. Basically, Pastors Craig and Nancy Goodwin one day got a harebrained idea. They were experiencing a post-holiday hangover and that feeling that something was not quite right about the whole thing. (I’ve been there myself.) They were so burnt out from all the mad consumerism and blind consumption that they could hardly take it another minute. I’ve felt that way before, as I’m sure you have as well. While you and I might grumble, rant to our spouse or make an empty threat to cancel Christmas altogether next year, they did something completely unheard of. They decided to dedicate one year in the radical pursuit of incarnational Christian living. They would take drastically seriously the whole “what would Jesus do?” thing. Only rather than being abstract and obtuse they would get down and dirty with it. What would Jesus buy? What would Jesus eat? How would Jesus really live?

They didn’t take months planning this. They just jumped in with both feet! Talk about a faith moment! The Goodwins along with their two daughters settled on four shopping rules they would live by for one year:

1. Local. They actively sought out local producers, growers, artisans. They did all they could to put a face and a name to their products.
2. Used. Rather than going out and buying new stuff every time there was a need or a want they sought something used—trading stuff with friends and neighbors, shopping on Craigslist, eBay, and second-hand stores.
3. Homegrown. Here is one area where I had to repent for breaking the 10th commandment. They call themselves novice gardeners, but their yard became a thing of beauty. They didn’t just plant some vegetables, they designed it into a labyrinth! They also built a greenhouse and tried to maximize the growing season in Washington.
4. Homemade. They tried their hands at everything from their daughter’s birthday pinata to home churned butter!

A fifth rule they tacked on was they would buy responsibly from Thailand—a place where they were sowing seeds for missions. At the end of their adventure year they even took a trip there as a family to continue putting names and faces to the things they consumed.

Along the way they had to wrestle with many things, among them: Is it possible to apply the Christian faith to the tiniest details of our lives? Does Jesus really care where our coffee, zucchini or birthday gifts come from? Does the Christian in our globalized post-modern world have any responsibility for knowing where our stuff comes from, how it is produced and under what conditions it made its way to us?

Intriguing, right?

So, I got the book and devoured it. Honestly, I'm skeptical of Christian Living books. I've read a lot of them. A lot of them do not live up to expectations or potential. This book, however, was an adventure to read. It convicted me left and right. It challenged me to do better. It opened my eyes to what was really possible in joining together intentional living, stewardship of the earth, and being a living witness of Christ. The Goodwins show a lovely and powerful example of how one can care for the earth without worshipping it. This book is a breath of fresh air in the discussion of environmentalism, sustainable food, and the relevant church. It's a perspective that really needs to be heard.

"We affirm that God created all things and upon completing the work, proclaimed it all "good." We are the ones who inherit Adam and Eve's commission to take care of the garden. We passionately sing with the psalmist, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." (Ps. 24:1). We stand in the tradition of Israel in the Promised Land, where they are told by God, "The land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers" (Lev. 25:23). We know all too well our tendencies to abuse and exploit God's good gifts. As Paul says, because of sin, "the whole of creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth" (Rom. 8:22). We are the ones who try to get our heads on straight in this mixed-up world by following Jesus' instructions to look at the birds of the air and consider the lilies of the field. We are the ones who carry today the present hope that in Christ things are held together and the future promise that God is redeeming all things, "making everything new" (Rev. 21:5). We have a special commission as God's people to care and advocate for the poor... We can't love our neighbors without also caring for the creation that sustains our neighbors with work and food and health." p. 162

Pastor Craig asks some really important questions in his book, questions that I am still answering and working on. "What does the incarnation of Jesus look like in today's world?" "How do we follow the example of the disciples and dwell among the people, proclaiming the kingdom of God at hand?" Part of answering these questions is The Provision Room. We are learning to live a life of plenty—not by consuming more, but by being intentional, aware, and prepared. We are learning to live a life of plenty not just so we can get fat and lazy, but so we have enough to share with others and meet the needs of our communities.

So, are you wondering how the Goodwin's year with the four rules went? I dare you to get the book! I guarantee you'll laugh, you may cry, you'll relate to them and it'll make you think.

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## Emily says

Year of Plenty was a good read about an average suburban family spending a year living 4 principles 1)eat locally (though they pushed that envelope by including items from Thailand- for good reasons) 2)used items and 3)homegrown 4)homemade items. But, as the author admits, his isn't the first story of its kind and I don't think he offered much new to the genre. He makes great connections between the Christian faith and our call to stewardship. In Christian circles called "creation care" vs. environmentalism :p But, again, this was not the first nor best work I had read on our faith command/connection to creation care. Yet their story was inspiring and encouraging. He made many great points and provided action items of how our individual consumerism affects everyone from our neighbor to those on the other side of the world. My favorite part is the helpful appendixes included that covers some basic subjects 1)obsession with Wendell Berry (very interesting!) 2)plant with purpose 3)how to turn your lawn into a vegetable garden 4)how to raise chickens and 5)basics of home food preservation.

This is a very good introductory book to changing our consumer lifestyle and good motivation for those needing to kick their efforts up a notch.

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## Maya says

I have been diving into some books about living simply and this is one that seemed interesting. It's a look at a family that makes the decision to now partake in the consumerist world that we live in and go a different direction, purchasing only local items and choosing one country to support, Thailand, in which they would buy a select few goods. They come to the conclusion to pursue this type of life after a cheap purchase after Christmas for a gift and the realization of how they have just spent the holiday.

Goodwin takes the point-of-view with this un-consumerist and mixes it with a Christian vantage, looking at how it brings his family closer to God. It truly is an interesting take on the subject as he shares stories of how his family grows a garden, meets local farmers, gives handmade gifts and how that all ties them closer to their neighbors.

One of my favorite take-aways was Goodwin's discussion on gaining "stuff" versus having experiences. He says, "When we seek our "meaning and significance" in consumer goods, we are the ones burned up and worn out. It is experiences that provide us with a more enduring satisfaction. Unlike stuff that degrades and depreciates over time, our experiences become a web of memories and meaning that get better with age. Like a good wine, these recollections mature and are refined over time, getting more complex and satisfying." So true!

Overall, it's a good read to get a new perspective on this topic. I appreciated the stories about how it was fun for his family to take on this journey and the difficulties they encountered as well. It made me think of new ways our family can buy locally, educate our children on these issues and explore new experiences while doing it all.

Some of my favorite parts:

-When we seek our "meaning and significance" in consumer goods, we are the ones burned up and worn out. It is experiences that provide us with a more enduring satisfaction. Unlike stuff that degrades and depreciates over time, our experiences become a web of memories and meaning that get better with age. Like a good wine, these recollections mature and are refined over time, getting more complex and satisfying.

-I'm convinced that too often the faith community has been behind the curve in addressing the powerful influence of the "Buy More Stuff" banners that surround us. Instead of being pioneers, we have accommodated the rhythms of our consuming culture. Instead of innovating tenable alternatives, we have tried hard to find ways of making faith fit into the prevailing practices of consumption.

-...we wanted to raise our daughters as children of the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of goods.

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## Rachel says

I do not know why I bother reading these things. More smug nonsense. I am so tired of self-congratulatory writers on issues of the environment and sustainability. Sustainable communities should be the goal, not more smug books on "wow this was hard and we did it, look at how self-flagrattng we are for not BUYING



everything;" with little/no mention that there are people who live in poverty in THIS country for whom this is a fact of life, not a social experiment for a book deal.

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### **Elias says**

A Wonderful book that bridges the gap between our Christian beliefs and social responsibility and protecting God's creation. So much of what the author explained in the book connected with what my wife and I have been feeling has been lacking in the church. He was able to back up what he explained in the book with solid facts and theology, which I really appreciated.

I really enjoyed the author's humbleness and humor while documenting his family's steps over the course of the year that this book covers. I laughed aloud at parts, especially the portion about the piñata. Being a young parent with limited money and resources, I enjoyed the fact that Craig showed how his family took steps that connected them as a family and did not have a huge impact on the wallet at the same time. His story about becoming a master food preserver has made me consider taking a local class to become a master composter!

I have been inspired, along with my wife, to take steps now to consider more what we eat and consume now and be more connected with the people that produce these as well.

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### **Robert D. Cornwall says**

Craig has done a great job, especially, as a first time author, to remind us of the importance of being mindful of where the "material" of our lives derives from, from our food to our clothing. Spirituality isn't just an internal thing -- it relates to living! Good book from a fellow Fullerite!

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### **Staci says**

What a brave life change! I found myself agreeing with some of the changes the family made (getting to know local farmers) and thinking no way to others (not buying toilet paper or razors for a year). Absolutely, this family grew closer together, closer to their community and closer to Christ as a result of the changes they made. I'd call that a win even if I'm not willing to commit.

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### **Kim Dulaney says**

A wonderful book that really makes you think about what is possible in terms of changing your life to live more lightly on the earth. It also made me realize that a life lived in harmony with the earth is a life that is naturally abundant and healthy. A good splattering of theology as well, mixed with personal testimonies. Definately worth reading.

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## **Leslie Fields says**

Wonderful book on one family's efforts to live a more agrarian and modest lifestyle. There are a number of these kinds of books on the scene, but Goodwin's is well-written and theologically thoughtful (he is, after all, a pastor! And it shows in all the best ways.) I highly recommend this book ---and his website--for deepening our understanding of living more authentic, God-honoring lives.

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## **Sue Jackson says**

The Year of Plenty was an interesting book about a family that decided to cut back on their purchases after experiencing a stressful but not fulfilling holiday. He and his wife decided to consume only local, homegrown, used or homemade products for one full year. They did make a few exceptions but mostly held to that agreement.

This book explains what they experienced during that year in a humorous and straightforward way. Craig Goodwin tells how this decision was impulsive and then takes us step by step through the difficult times. It sounds like they were fully unprepared but still managed to survive the year. He touches on how his faith as a pastor and spiritually plays into this decision.

Although I love the idea of being cognitive of where all food and clothes come from, I couldn't help but think that this would not be possible for the typical family. First, both were pastors so had the free and donated services that many of us would not have. They also lived in an area that allowed them to dig up their yard for a good-sized garden. Again, something others may not be able to do. Still, it was nice to read that this family was able to set aside their typical buying ways and grow.

This book mentions that it is about Christian Living but it also would apply to everyone whether Christian or not. We should all be concerned with overconsumption. It is also true that he only wrote about his family and it didn't extend to others either neighbors or larger. Overall, it was an easy and good book to read full of great ideas and though provoking suggestions.

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