



THE HOLY HOMESTEAD

10 Things Every Homesteader Needs

Real-World Wisdom Grounded in Scripture — A Free Gift



Garden • Livestock • Seasons • Stewardship

“Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.”
— Proverbs 16:3 (KJV)



Welcome, Friend.

Hey — I'm Jamie Dingus from The Holy Homestead, and I'm glad you're here. I've spent years learning homesteading the hard way — through failed gardens, wasted money, sick animals, and hard lessons in the field. This guide is my way of handing you a shortcut.

These are the 10 things I wish someone had told me when I started. No fluff, no theory — just real-world wisdom grounded in Scripture and proven on actual land. Whether you're starting on a quarter-acre suburban lot or 50 acres, these principles apply.

"Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

— Proverbs 16:3 (KJV)

Let's get to work.

— Jamie Dingus, *The Holy Homestead*

#1 — You Don't Need More Land — You Need More Knowledge

The biggest lie in homesteading is that you need acreage to get started. I've seen people do more on a quarter-acre suburban lot than others do on 50 acres. The difference is knowledge and intentionality, not square footage. Start exactly where you are. Master what you have before you expand.

- Start with a 4x8 raised bed or containers if that's all you have — it's enough to learn on
- Master 3 skills deeply before adding new ones — breadth before depth kills beginners
- Document everything from day one — your notes become your greatest long-term asset
- Observe your land through all four seasons before making major changes

Jamie's Tip:

My first garden was 8 raised beds in a backyard. I learned more about soil, pests, water, and plant timing in those 2 seasons than most people learn in a decade. Start small and go deep. The land will teach you more than any book can.

#2 — Soil Is Everything — Treat It Like Gold

Your soil is a living ecosystem that determines everything you will ever grow. A soil test from your county extension office costs \$10–15 and tells you your pH, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium levels. It is the single best investment



a beginning gardener or food plot manager can make.

- Test soil pH — most vegetables need 6.0–7.0
→ *Below 6.0 = add agricultural lime. Above 7.0 = add elemental sulfur.*
- Add 2–3 inches of finished compost every single season — there is no substitute
- Never till wet soil — you destroy structure that takes years to rebuild
- Cover all bare soil with mulch — bare soil loses moisture fast and grows nothing but weeds

Jamie's Tip:

I run a 55-gallon drum manure tea operation on my homestead. Liquid fertilizer from aged manure applied to garden beds is free, effective, and builds long-term soil health better than any bag product you can buy. Healthy soil grows healthy food.

#3 — Grow What You'll Actually Eat

Don't grow something because a YouTube video made it look cool. Grow what your family actually puts on the table. Start with your family's top 5–10 most-eaten vegetables and master those before branching out.

- List your family's top 10 most-eaten vegetables before you ever open a seed catalog
- Start with forgiving crops: tomatoes, green beans, zucchini, cucumbers, potatoes
- Plant at least 3x more than you think you need — preservation requires serious volume
- Choose varieties with good storage life — storage value matters as much as fresh yield

Jamie's Tip:

On my homestead our core crops are potatoes, onions, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, and spaghetti squash. Every one stores well and feeds us through winter. I grow for the pantry, not the garden. Think about what you want to eat in February and work backward from there.

#4 — Learn to Preserve Before You Plant

Growing food is only half the mission. Learn your preservation methods BEFORE your first big harvest — not during it. There's nothing worse than 40 pounds of tomatoes coming ripe while you're scrambling to figure out how a pressure canner works.

- Water bath canning: safe for HIGH-ACID foods only — tomatoes with added acid, pickles, jams
- Pressure canning: REQUIRED for ALL low-acid foods — beans, corn, meat, vegetables
→ *NEVER water-bath can low-acid vegetables. Botulism is real and it is dangerous.*
- Freezing: easiest method — blanch most vegetables first to preserve color and texture
- Dehydrating: herbs, fruits, peppers — excellent long-term storage



- Root cellaring: potatoes, onions, winter squash — zero electricity required

"She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet."

— Proverbs 31:21 (KJV)

Jamie's Tip:

Set a concrete goal for your first year: 50 jars of canned goods. Work backward from that number to determine what you need to plant. A full canning pantry going into winter is one of the most satisfying accomplishments in homesteading.

#5 — Build Skills Before You Buy Equipment

The homesteading industry wants to sell you equipment. Resist the urge to spend before you learn. Most beginners spend hundreds on tools before they've developed the skills to use them effectively. When you do buy, buy quality tools that will last a lifetime.

- Master hand tools completely before buying power equipment
- When you do buy, buy quality — cheap tools break when you need them most
- Maintain everything you own — a sharp hoe works 10x better than a dull one
- Learn to sharpen, repair, and maintain your own tools — a critical and undervalued skill

Jamie's Tip:

My tractor is the most expensive piece of equipment I've ever bought for the homestead, and my sawmill is right behind it. I purchased my sawmill outright and started milling on it from day one — I never borrowed or rented one first. What I'd tell anyone starting out is don't be afraid to dive in with your own equipment, but take your time learning it before you start pushing it hard. Your equipment will teach you what it needs if you pay attention.

#6 — Work With the Seasons — Not Against Them

God designed creation to operate in seasons, and those seasons are not suggestions. One of the most important habits on the homestead is matching your work to the season. Cool-weather crops go in early spring and again in fall. Warm-weather crops wait until the ground is truly warm and your last frost is well behind you. Firewood gets cut and split in fall and winter when the sap is down and the wood seasons faster. Fighting the seasons wastes time and money. Working with them makes everything easier.

"For every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted."



— Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 (KJV)

- Know your average last spring and first fall frost dates for your specific area
- Plant cool-season crops (kale, spinach, lettuce) in early spring and again in fall
- Wait until soil and air are warm for warm-season crops (tomatoes, peppers, squash)
- Cut and split firewood in fall and winter when sap is down — it seasons faster and burns cleaner

Jamie's Tip:

On my homestead I match the work to the season. When fall arrives I shift straight into firewood — cutting and splitting while the sap is down and the wood dries faster. When spring comes I'm thinking cool-weather crops first, then waiting until the frost risk is behind me for the warm-season plants. Fighting the seasons is a losing battle. Working with them is how you get ahead.

#7 — Animals Require Daily Commitment — Know That Before You Start

Livestock are one of the most rewarding parts of homestead life — and one of the most demanding. Animals need water, feed, and care every single day. Not most days. Every day. Before you bring home any animal, make sure your entire household understands this commitment.

- Start with chickens — easiest entry into livestock, low cost, high return
 - 6 laying hens produce 4-5 eggs per day in peak season — enough for most families.
- Have a backup caretaker established BEFORE you buy your first animal
- Build housing and fencing BEFORE animals arrive — fence first, housing second, animals third
- Learn basic animal health and first aid before you need it in an emergency

"A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

— Proverbs 12:10 (KJV)

Jamie's Tip:

The hardest part of livestock for most beginners isn't the daily chores — it's the loss. Animals die. Sometimes despite everything you do right. Prepare yourself emotionally for that reality, especially with poultry. It doesn't get easier, but it does get more manageable with experience and perspective.

#8 — Water Is Your Most Critical Resource

Every living thing on your homestead depends on water. Good water management means catching it when it comes, storing it efficiently, and distributing it where it's needed. In our area of Southwest Virginia we deal with EHD



(Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease) carried by midges that breed in shallow standing water, so I'm cautious about open ponds. What I am a strong believer in is having reliable water sources — a good well, rain catchment barrels off your outbuildings, or a cistern. Water security on your homestead is non-negotiable.

- Collect rainwater from outbuildings using gutters and barrels
→ *1 inch of rain on a 1,000 sq ft roof = 623 gallons of water.*
- Mulch all garden beds to reduce water needs by 50–70% in summer heat
- Water deeply and infrequently — trains roots downward for drought resilience
- Know your water source reliability — well, municipal, or surface water?

Jamie's Tip:

Water security is one of the most important things you can build on a homestead. Whatever form it takes on your property — a deep well, a reliable spring, rain barrels, or a cistern — having a backup water source separate from your primary one is something every serious homesteader should work toward.

#9 — Community Is Not Optional

Homesteading used to be done in community. Find your people. Your local farming and homesteading community holds more practical knowledge than you can find anywhere online.

- Contact your county Cooperative Extension office — free expert agricultural advice
→ *Find your local office at extension.org — one of the most underused resources in rural America.*
- Join a local farming or homesteading group
- Find a mentor — someone who has been doing this longer than you, and listen more than you talk
- Barter skills and labor with neighbors — community creates resilience no equipment can replace
- Share your harvest generously — generosity reflects the Gospel in practical ways

Jamie's Tip:

A lot of what I know about homesteading came from years of research and hands-on experience, but some of the most valuable knowledge came straight from my grandfather and great-grandfather. These were people who did this out of necessity, not as a hobby, and what they knew was real and proven. If you have older family members or neighbors who've worked the land their whole lives, sit down with them and ask questions. That knowledge is priceless and disappearing faster than most people realize.

#10 — Keep God at the Center of Every Decision

Everything else rests on this. Every seed you plant, every animal you tend, every board you mill, every jar you fill belongs ultimately to the Lord. We are stewards, not owners. When we operate from that foundation, our work takes on an entirely different quality.



"The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

— Psalm 24:1 (KJV)

- Pray over your land, your animals, your plans, and your harvest
- Observe the Sabbath rest — even the land needs rest (Leviticus 25:4)
- Give generously from your harvest — you cannot out-give God
- Let your homestead be a living testimony to God's faithfulness and provision

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

— Galatians 6:9 (KJV)

You've Got This — One Faithful Step at a Time.

The homestead life is not built in a day. It is built in seasons — one garden, one animal, one skill, one harvest at a time. Start where you are. Use what you have. Do the next right thing. Trust God with the rest.

— Jamie Dingus | *The Holy Homestead* | TheHolyHomestead.com

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