



# CREATING A LIFE WHERE ONLY GOD CAN TURN THE LIGHTS OUT

t h e o f f g r i d g u i d e

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BY DEZERAY RATHJEN MTN DOG FARM

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# CONTENTS

04	Prologue
08	Chapter I How Will I Do the Dishes?
09	Chapter II What's My Water Source?
10	Chapter III Will I Bathe?
12	Chapter IV How Will I Cook?
13	Chapter V How Will I Heat My Home in the Winter?
14	Chapter VI Am I Prepared to Not Have Internet?
15	Chapter VII Will I Have Electricity?
16	Chapter VIII Will I Do Laundry?
17	Chapter IX Where Will I Poop?
18	Chapter X How Will I Refrigerate My Food?
19	Chapter XI How Will I Stay Firm in my Faith?
21	An Off Grid Checklist

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



## Dezeray Rathjen

For quite some time, Dezeray has dreamt of bringing a resource to light to inspire others to live a simple life; a life in tune with the land and dependent on God alone. She's passionate about teaching, about community-sufficiency and about the Lord — hoping to ease all in her off-grid guide. She wants to simplify the steps necessary to create an off-grid home.

Dezeray lives in the back woods of Montana with her husband, two daughters and will be welcoming a third baby into her arms in the spring. Though her lifestyle is vastly different from how we was brought up. She had a tough upbringing with lots of change, lack of stability and times of uncertainty. Through Christ alone, she learned that He loves her. Because of that, she was set on a path to live for Him and glorify

Him through her works.

A handful of years ago, Dezeray and her husband, Troy, moved their family off-the-grid. They weren't too sure what was in store or how they'd navigate this new journey, but they were set that this was how they could honor God's will for their legacy to come. Paving the way for the generations to follow.

*That's how Creating a Life Where Only God Can Turn the Lights Out was born. The resource they didn't have, but would have been thankful for as they wandered their way through this newfound life. Through their trial, error, lessons learnt and things they'll never do again — you're in for lots of information and hopefully some inspiration, so that you too can create a life where only God can turn the lights out.*

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# PROLOGUE

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## WHAT'S THE FIRST STEP?

Today, I teach forgotten skills and encourage others to live a community sufficient lifestyle. I'm often asked, "How do I start" or "what's the first step?" I'll give you the first step, and all eleven that follow, but you need to understand that this first one is the most important of all — —

up until a few years ago, I lived scared. I will never pretend that I grew up homesteading, or that a life to this extremity came natural for me. In fact, it's quite the opposite. It can be petrifying to desire a life so different from all you know, feel so convicted that the Lord's will for you is vastly different from the life you've been brought up in. But *that's where you start, that is the first step*. Surrender. Surrender the fear, surrender the control that you think you have, surrender it all and let your desires be known to Jesus.

Before we dive into the list that I have for you; a list to take home with confidence, a list that will get your gears turning, to encourage you to make changes, to reassess and feel empowered with. A list to help you *create a life where only God can turn the lights out*. Before I hand that over to you, I first should tell you how we, MTN DOG FARM, ended up here.

Zillow. *Oh Zillow*. As I was scrolling, BAM a little trailer house on a bit of land with a creek flowing through. An off the grid setup. The listing was what authors write about; just the most gorgeous I'd seen. A homesteader's dream. Beautiful garden, mountain springs, livestock infrastructure, outbuildings galore. I'm talking just ready to move right in and live off-grid in a seemingly modern way. So, what do I do? *Send*.

Don't be fooled. This was a fun game that my husband and I played together. Find the property, send the property, laugh at how we could never make it work and move on. I had mentioned to him a time or *twelve* that I would really love to move off the grid.

## PROLOGUE

Leave modern-world behind. Grow all of our own vegetables, raise our meat, milk the animals, collect the eggs, drink from the spring, light candles in the evening, gather the water for baths – the whole ordeal. He knew it was on my heart, and living in such a way (maybe far less extreme) was on his too, but was it a conviction? Was it the Lord's calling or were we just daydreaming? Life always seemed to get in the way, and the some-day dream of ours terrified us, especially in the lifestyle we led.

My husband was working his union career eight months out of the year. Work away, be home for four months; we'd do visits and make it work. But in no way would it accommodate that life. In no way would Dezeray be able to live out in the backwoods, off the grid, and make it work while Troy was away. We couldn't do it. The fear smacked us in the face. We wrote off that dream quicky, amicably.

But I pressed on. And I don't know why, because it's not like the experience was there. Sure, I'd had my three raised beds out back, I had canned a bit, I knew how to identify some wild herbs and if you left me alone with some matches I could sort of figure out how to light a fire in the stove.

We were living on an acre of land, and I was learning, but I wasn't fully utilizing

*what we had because I was so over consumed by this life that I just knew was for us.*

*This isn't to say you cannot create a life in tune with the land on a small homestead. But I certainly wasn't. The sufficiency mindset, for me at that time, was lacking. My experience was next to none, and my heart was discontent. God used that discontentment of mine to get me here, so I could tell you, you absolutely can have a life in tune with the land and dependent on God alone anywhere.*

He continued to press on my heart a little more. I just kept on sending that listing.

The same one. Again and again.

You know when you suggest something so many times that it starts to become your husband's idea? Well, my husband had a really good idea. Let's do it. Let's jump right in. We could figure it out. After months, the veil of fear was lifted, and to this day I am still so amazed that we actually pulled the trigger.

So, here we go! We sell our little one acre parcel, we finalize all the things for that cute little trailer house with the creek front, the mountain springs, the infrastructure, outbuildings galore; the ready to go off the grid set up.

## PROLOGUE

Everything is going great, and closing dates on both our sale and the purchase are even pushed up on the calendar several weeks. Wow, God, you are so good!

We plan to close on both on the same day. Meaning, move in and move out were simultaneous. We aren't moving zipcodes so I didn't think much of it. My husband's working out of town, but I can make it work.

Remember that cute little trailer house? Set up with running water, heat, a tv, shower, washer and dryer, automatic hot water heater, yet still off the grid? *Oh yes, I can do that. I can live off the grid like that.*

*As I carry my infant on one hip, a box on the other and my oldest, who's two at the time, helps by toting around her little purse stuffed with her favorite toys; I see it.*

*Mold? I start tearing up that beautiful, updated vinyl flooring. Ripping cabinets off the wall; more mold.*

*The mirrors are coming down, more mold.*

*Until eventually I've got this cute little trailer house ripped apart floor to ceiling exposing mold like I have never seen before. The kind that can't be painted over, can't be bleached off, there's no fixing this. And, like I mentioned before, this was move in and move out day. Our toe wasn't just dipped in- we had jumped in full force and were now suddenly gasping for air. What in the world did we just do?*

*I won't get into all of the finite details, but to spare the rest of the story and the curse words that went with it; we didn't get an inspection. Heck, why waste money on that?*

God pressed on. Hindsight now, I'm not sure I'd have made it through that day without Him. Also hindsight, He knew that that cute little trailer house wasn't our worldly home and thank you Jesus that I caught the mold before we'd moved things in. Thank goodness there was a little dry cabin on the property. 16 x 20, four walls and a wood stove on a cement slab. By the grace of God, we still had a home when our new home was no longer live-able.

I remember in that pivotal moment of "oh no, I'm going to have to figure this out real fast" realizing exactly the life that I wanted to create. I was scared, but I had a clean slate. I could cultivate for us the life we wanted. I could dream big. This is where our journey began. From here on out, it was us and God. No middle man. I was putting my foot down.



## PROLOGUE

I was going to create a lifestyle that seemed so impossibly far away, yet close as I looked into this dry, empty cabin.

*I was going to create a life where only God can turn the lights out.*

This was the moment that I finally surrendered. I finally took that first step to life off the grid. I handed my fear and my idea of control over to Him and decided this was it.

I stood at the door realizing that I could make this tiny shed into anything that I wanted it to be. I wanted it to be home, to provide well, to help us as parents lay a foundation of Jesus for our children, I wanted it warm, I wanted a kitchen and we needed to bathe. And we needed to poop... where would we poop?

Then, I didn't have a checklist. I had basic needs that I knew I couldn't meet alone. God provided; He provided so well. Over the years, it all worked out okay. But, those early days of not knowing left from right sure would have been made easier by a checklist. An off-grid checklist. A checklist for creating a life where only God can turn the lights out.

As I walk you through how I set up my off the grid home, it's non-negotiable that you remember this: no two set ups are going to be the same.

Rightfully so. Every off-grid home is going to have different climates, microclimates, resources and needs.

Just as every person has individuality, so do our homes.

In no way will I be able to give you all of the answers, but I do want to get you thinking. I do want to encourage you that this is achievable in many seasons of life and even if you think you can't; God can. Don't underestimate Him.

We are off the grid 100% of the time. We have no utilities, we have no connection to the power grid, we have no dependency on someone else when it comes to supplying our home with heat, power or water. You are capable of creating this lifestyle for yourself.

It's not always going to be easy; actually, it's hardly ever going to be easy. But it doesn't have to be overwhelming. You too, can create a life where only God can turn the lights out.

# A CHECKLIST FOR CREATING A LIFE WHERE ONLY GOD CAN TURN THE LIGHTS OUT.

# CHAPTER I

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## HOW WILL I DO THE DISHES?

Looking into my tiny cabin, the first thing that came to mind was dishes. How would I set myself up to do dishes? As I walk you through my solutions, you'll notice that the way that we live is a bit more straight forward. We like easy systems, even if that means we do the heavy lifting. Intentional living doesn't have to have the stamp of 'modern day efficiency'. We don't always have to mimick the way that we've always done it. *You can, but you don't have to.*

My dishes set up came together fairly easy and without much cost. A utility sink. Above the sink we have an igloo water dispenser and below the sink a bucket. What I figured out over time is that if I'm conscientious of what detergents I use, our water waste could be next to none. Because I use soap nuts and their natural saponin to clean dishes, I feed our gray water right back to the land or the chickens or the pigs.





# CHAPTER II

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## WHAT'S MY WATER SOURCE?

How would I fill my igloo? What's the water source? We have a couple of springs at the height of our property. So the solution for this was simple: avoid the pine needles. Maybe this means a manual pump for you, maybe this means having a clean way to dip into your spring, maybe this means gravity fed filters after you've collected from a nearby creek.

The idea here is to not only know where your water will come from when the men playing God turn off the lights, but to also have the skills in your pocket so that you know what to do. Whether you're planning to be off grid in case of emergency or full time, become proficient with it. Don't wait for the day of emergency to figure it out.

Life in our little 16x20 called for lots of water still, so I would hike up the hill to the spring to fill my gallon sized jugs. This would cover drinking, cooking and dishes. Eventually, this led to a 275 gallon tank in the corner of the cabin.

It took precious space, but saved us in time and energy as we would only have to fill it every third or fourth week.

As of recently, we have started utilizing a mountain spring for water. From the spring runs a water line. The water line feeds right into a 250 gal potable tank. The water goes in the top and out the middle, leaving the bottom to collect any sediment in the line. From the tank, it goes right to our kitchen sink, our bathhouse and a frost-free spigot. We have about a 200 ft drop in elevation between the spring and the cabin.

# CHAPTER III

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## WILL I BATHE?

If you're going to live off the grid, will you bathe? Whether you're planning to be an in case of an emergency off the grid-er or full time, you have to consider if this is something you'll be using your valuable resources for.

The moldy cute little trailer house was no longer an option. The mold was too much, couldn't be salvaged so it was scrapped. Pulled right out of the driveway to the scrapyard. We couldn't just sneak past for showers, and I certainly wasn't going to bathe my two toddlers in the mountain creek mid-fall. The logistics of trying to squeeze myself into the utility sink just weren't working. Without room in my tiny cabin for a bathtub, I needed a bathtub that I could haul in and out of the house each day. I headed down to the feed store and grabbed a fresh trough, a 100 gallon. We certainly never filled it to the brim. Instead, I scoop a pot from the creek and warm it over the wood stove. We don't want to waste our clean spring water from the tank, so strictly creek water for bathing (prior to using the spring for water).

At one point, we decided that we needed a little more efficiency, and especially during the summer. Some summer evenings are just still too cold to hop in the creek. We created a system.

from a water source, we ran a hose to a small rv pump, that pump then fed into a tankless water heater, and finally the heater to a shower head. The rv sized water pump, Troy had wired to a 12v battery and the heater plugged right into our cabin's battery bank. to charge the 12v, we would plug an electric battery charger into the battery bank but this was only needed every so often. We now had an on demand hot shower!

**Food for Thought**

Did you know that in most states propane is not regulated? You can store whatever quantity you'd like, and the government does not require you to tell them about it. I'm sure they know somehow, but that's a song for a different day. Stock up on the propane.



# CHAPTER IV

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## HOW WILL I COOK?

Speaking of propane, that may just be the answer for how you'll cook. Looking in at my tiny dry cabin, I saw potential. I could cook on the wood stove as the weather permitted, as well as pulling the propane cookstove out of the cute trailer house and using that for the warmer months. To cook on most propane cookstoves, you actually don't need power at all. With a flick of a match and the turn of a knob, you've got heat. Just remember, unless you have a pilot light on the back of your stove, you will not be able to use your oven without electricity.



Our farm is a bit individual in the sense that we have a pavilion, also known as an outdoor kitchen.

It's a screened-in circular structure with a fire pit in the center. There are grates off to the side to set hot coals under, to then warm the grates for cooking. It's a great setup that was used on this homestead for generations before us. It could easily be replicated over an outdoor fire for an off the grid cooking area.

With that said, I really want to stress how important it is to sharpen your skills prior to the time of need.

If you're writing down, "Dear Diary, when the blackouts happen again and the world tries to shut us down, we will be cooking in cast iron over an open flame", that's wonderful and a well thought out plan. But you'll be sorry if you hadn't even pulled the cast iron out when the day comes you need it. Get proficient in your skills before the day comes.

# CHAPTER V

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## HOW WILL I HEAT MY HOME IN THE WINTER

When looking at your checklist, keep all seasons in mind. Wherever you are, you'll have changes in weather. Heat may not be necessary all the time, but it's an important piece of creating a life where only God can turn the lights out.

Wood. I always recommend wood. It's a resource we can use indefinitely, without any machinery or much of a system in place.

When some think of off the grid, they'll sometimes get confused that whoever is leading that life needs to be practicing an extreme lifestyle. Sure, as a whole it can seem extreme to some. But, you're still allowed to use a chainsaw. You're still allowed to do whatever "modern day indulgence" you'd like; understanding that if and when something occurs you need to have a backup plan. Nobody has the authority over you to tell you that because you're leading a life where only God can turn the lights out, you aren't allowed to use gas powered tools. Someday, He might

rid the world of gas someday, and you'll be thankful for a sharp saw then. But, you don't have to implement that now. Have the tools on hand, know how to use them, become proficient in the skill but it's still okay to "indulge" while you're able.



# CHAPTER VI

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## AM I PREPARED TO NOT HAVE INTERNET?

Write things down.

On our off the grid farm, we're a bit fancy right now. We have fancy internet. I'll explain how we power that next, but the internet is there. I recognize that what I'm about to say may seem situational, and some aren't as far fetched as I am. I'll gladly admit that I'm a little loonie and often times my husband has to pull me down from my lofty... theories. Hear me out. We do need to consider the time that could come where our internet is not there. Maybe the satellite is broken, the solar panels aren't working, the chemtrails are too thick, and I don't know if you've read about the HAARP experiments lately causing artificial auroras and artificial solar storms but.... Who knows? The internet isn't certain. Write stuff down.

When we moved up to the farm, there wasn't any internet and there's certainly no cell phone service.

Our fancy internet took six weeks to arrive. During this time, I had many moments of reflection. I needed to be better prepared in all areas; to function without the power of youtube.

Over the last year especially, I've made an extra point to write things as I go. Butchering deer, that caramel sauce recipe, how to work a water pump, the dairy ration. Write it down. If not for when the internet goes out, for emergency use. For decades from now when you can't remember left from right and want to pass along those coveted things to your grandchildren.

Though thinking for how you'll live without internet may feel unrealistic, it is import that if you're preparing an off grid home, looking to buy an off grid home or considering having the preparations within your home to function off the grid if needed; will you have internet and in the case that it's not available, how will you continue to run a functioning homestead?

# CHAPTER VII

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## WILL I HAVE ELECTRICITY?

How are you going to power it? Maybe you won't, and that's okay. As long as you have all of the other boxes checked without the need for electricity, you don't need electricity just for the sake of it.

currently, we have internet, a freezer and water heater connected to our battery bank. But we don't have our house connected at all. It's not needed, so there's no use in drawing an extra trickle.

Remember those fancy clouds that block one of our last free resources that I mentioned before; the chemtrails? Consider those nasty things when you're planning how you'll power the place. We've got options here.

sun, water, wind and if absolutely necessary there's always the possibility of dipping into that propane storage to run a propane-generator.

How will you power your off the grid home? How will you create a life where only God will turn the lights out? Maybe that's having a top notch power source to a top notch battery bank. Maybe that's using the creek to cool your food and canning all the rest. That's up to you.

*I do want to bring something to light here.*

Instead of creating a power source large enough to sustain the mainstream necessities, evaluate what you're working with. The washer, the mixer, the fridge, the lights, the grain mill, the vacuum sealer. How many areas in your life could you make small changes to become more self-sustaining?

# CHAPTER VIII

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## WILL I DO LAUNDRY?

Washing clothes is easy to overlook. But, we must consider the events of real life. The tiny humans around my house are quite messy. That being said, I won't judge you if your long-term off the grid plan is to just not wash clothes. You do you. I'm washing my clothes though. That cute little trailer house had a washer and dryer fully functioning. The regular ol' kind. So I was prepared to do my laundry as I always had. This can also give you hope. With adequate water pressure and a little bit of power, you can have a modern-day laundry set up off the grid.

As I watched my cute little trailer house dreams wane, so did my laundry setup. I was stumped. Thank goodness there were some wringer washers stored away in the woods. Granted, I wasn't sure how to use a wringer washer but I had an answered prayer. Thankfully, I was able to find a mentor in this area to teach me how to use my new-found laundry solution.

Other ways you could wash your laundry could be a washboard in the creek, a plunger in the utility sink, could be a store bought wringer. I'm not too certain that they make these washers any longer, but there are plenty of ways to scrub your clothes. Again, become proficient before you need it!





# CHAPTER IX

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## WHERE WILL I POOP?

Where will you poop? When you are off the grid, where will your family go to the bathroom and how sustainable is the choice that you've made? You can only poop and shovel for so long before you have quite the pile accumulating. This was an area I didn't think much about as I planned our lives into the tiny dry cabin.

What's your first thought? Dig a hole in the ground and build a shed over it? In the current day of government overreach, that'll get you in trouble quite quickly. So don't tell your neighbor if that's your backup plan.

Doug and Stacy, years ago, paved the way in the area of pooping off the grid. They created an at-home compostable toilet using a bucket, a toilet seat and sawdust. In turn, letting the waste compost for several years before amending their garden with the nutrient rich matter. It's really not too wild of an idea. Point being, there are many ways to ensure your family is comfy pooping off the grid.

There's not a wrong way to go about it, as long as you're going.

Like I've said time and time again, be sure to get your plan in working order prior to the day of necessity. If your plan is to poop in a bucket, you best have the stock piles of shaving and composting area built prior. I'd hate to be in an emergency situation and not know where to poop.

With creating a life where only God can turn the lights out, comes creating a plan for pooping.

### **Food for Thought**

with a little bit of water, and a septic tank, you can go to the bathroom on a regular toilet. This is what we currently do, after building out a shed into our bathhouse (with shower and toilet). Keep in mind, this doesn't default the need for cleaning your septic tank. So it's still a good idea to have an emergency plan.

# CHAPTER X

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## HOW WILL I REFRIGERATE MY FOOD?

Location matters. Location matters so darn much. It's the reason I could never give you all of your answers. I will never have every solution for everyone compiled into one book, because every off the grid set up will look vastly different, especially true when it comes to refrigeration.

Winters in the backwoods of Montana are cold. We suffice just fine with an "icebox" setup on the back porch. I keep our fridge full of food with a couple chunks of snow set at the bottom in a bowl. Our food stays plenty cold and I'll often have to check to be certain that the milk doesn't freeze. What a blessing; it'll be spring before we need to supplement refrigeration.

In the summer, the creek is especially handy. Milk truly is my biggest refrigeration demand. Mid summer, I milk in the field, process into jars the fastest I can and stick them right into the creek. We have a small crate

attached to a tree using a rope. Because the creek flows year round, supplied by mountain springs and snow melt, we can utilize this option all of the time. We do, however, keep a propane refrigerator as a modern-day non-necessity.

How will you refrigerate your food off the grid? Your well water will be cool enough? You'll throw a box into the spring? A propane stock pile to run your electricity-free refrigerator? Your hydro power will give you enough energy to have a good old Samsung? How will you refrigerate your food in the winter *and in the summer*?

# CHAPTER XI

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## AM I PREPARED TO STAY FIRM IN MY FAITH?

I want you to create a life where only God can turn the lights out. I want that enough for you that I have the courage to tell you that this lifestyle isn't always easy. It's hardly ever going to be easy.

You started by asking "what's the first step?" and , "where do I begin?"

I'll tell it to you straight, it starts and ends in the very same place. Surrender. Surrender the fear, surrender the idea that you have control and let God lead the way.

Don't set out to create a life where only *you* can turn the lights out. Give it to God.



IT'S HARDLY EVER GOING  
TO BE EASY, BUT IT  
DOESN'T HAVE TO BE  
OVERWHELMING. YOU TOO  
CAN CREATE A LIFE WHERE  
ONLY GOD CAN TURN THE  
LIGHTS OUT.

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JOHN 16:33

I HAVE SAID THESE THINGS TO YOU, THAT IN ME YOU MAY HAVE PEACE. IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION. BUT TAKE HEART; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.”

# AN OFF GRID CHECKLIST

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**How Will I Do the Dishes?**

n o t e s

**What's My Water Source?**

**Will I Bathe?**

**How Will I Cook?**

**How Will I Heat My Home in the Winter?**

**Am I Prepared to Not Have Internet?**

**Will I Have Electricity?**

**Will I Do Laundry?**

**Where Will I Poop?**

**How Will I Refrigerate My Food?**

**How Will I Stay Firm in my Faith?**