

19 Simple Ways to Pursue Joy in the New Year

by Amy Sloan at Humility and Doxology

1. Save at least 1 strand of Christmas lights when you're packing up the decorations and hang them somewhere in your bedroom. Turn them on at night while you get ready for bed or read.
2. Send an actual snail mail letter to a friend. Bonus: Include a pre-stamped and addressed envelope in this snail mail letter and you might get one back!
3. Next time you're at a restaurant or store and have good service, ask to speak to the manager. Tell them how much you appreciated the kindness of their employee. Everyone likes to complain to the manager. Be the person who gives an encouraging word.
4. Read an unread book from your own bookshelf. Is there a book you own that you've always intended to read?
5. Go outside on a sunny day. Stand still in the sunlight with your eyes closed for 5 minutes, breathing deeply. (5 minutes will suddenly feel really long. Go on. Keep breathing and soaking in the sun. Be still.)
6. Memorize all the stanzas of a favorite hymn. (Sing it during your quiet time...or in the shower...or during morning time with the children...or at the dinner table...or while driving in the car! You might be surprised how quickly you can learn it!)
7. Set the timer for 15 minutes. Fill a garbage bag with as many things you can declutter in 15 minutes. Set it in your vehicle immediately and drop it off at your local thrift store next time you're out.
8. Slip a note under your child's door (or your housemate's, or under your spouse's pillow) listing 3 things you're thankful for about them.
9. Gather your journal (or a piece of paper) and your favorite writing implement. Set the timer for 10 minutes. Write whatever comes to mind. This might be things you need to do, feelings, ideas, or even "this feels really hard and dumb" comments. Some people call this a "brain dump" or "freewriting." Notice the parts that make you feel uncomfortable...why do you think you feel that way?
10. Write a favorite Bible verse in pencil on your bathroom wall beside the mirror or above your kitchen sink. If that is too scary, write it on a 3x5 card and tape it to the wall instead. I have written Philippians 4:8 (in very normal, imperfect handwriting) on the wall above my pantry door!
11. Learn something new and outside of your comfort zone. You can read a book, listen to a podcast, watch a documentary, or attend a lecture...but stretch your mind and your interests!
12. Go to the produce section of your grocery store. Buy at least 1 item you've never tried before, learn how to prepare it, and eat it!
13. Bake chocolate chip cookies. Take half to a neighbor.
14. Walk briskly, breathing deeply, for 15 minutes. If at all possible, walk outside. If weather or small children do not permit, walk up and down the stairs. If even this is not possible, walk in place. You can do this.
15. Spend quality time praying for someone you know who is struggling, then send them a text or email to let them know you love them and are praying for them. We all need to know we're not alone.
16. What were some of your favorite songs in highschool? Blast them up, belt them out, and host a family dance party in the living room. (Embarrassing your children is good for them.)
17. Fill 8 glasses full of water in the morning. Drink them all before you go to bed.
18. Next time you're with a group of friends, practice **positive** gossiping. We all know how destructive backbiting can be. But what if we were the people sharing words that built others up, even behind their backs? Talk about how great other people are, even if they aren't around! (Never participate in negative gossip that tears others down!)
19. Set a repeating, monthly alarm right now on your phone. For example, it might be the 2nd Monday of every month at 9am. When that alarm goes off, go find all your children and give them a big smile and a huge hug! (Don't have children? Maybe skip the hug, but go find all your co-workers and give them a big smile and high five!)