



The Resolution That Didn't Make It To February

Paster Cody Schwanger



By January 2nd, gym parking lots look like airport terminals before a holiday weekend. Every treadmill is taken. Every dumbbell is accounted for. There are lines—for exercise machines. People are stretching muscles they haven't spoken to in years, nodding politely at one another like members of an exclusive club that has suddenly become very crowded.

By January 15th, things feel... calmer.

The machines are available again. Familiar faces have disappeared. A few faithful remain, but most New Year's resolutions have already been quietly laid to rest—somewhere between sore hamstrings and a busy week at work.

And it isn't just fitness. January brings bold plans of better diets, tighter budgets, early mornings, cleaner homes, fewer bad habits, and brand-new versions of ourselves. We mean well. We buy planners.

We download the apps. We tell ourselves, this is the year.

But strangely, even when we try hard—and sometimes even when we succeed a little—those resolutions rarely deliver what we thought they would. The scale may change. The calendar may look more organized. The habit might improve. And yet... something still feels off. The joy we hoped would arrive at the end of all our efforts often doesn't show up on schedule.

Perhaps that's because most resolutions are about fixing ourselves, not receiving what we already have.

Every January, we set out trying to improve life—while quietly overlooking the goodness already woven into it. We focus on what is missing instead of what has been given. We aim for happiness somewhere down the road, unaware that joy has been standing nearby the whole time.

And that's why, this year, we want to do something different.

Joy is a term most of us who have faith in Christ know well. We've heard it often. We can quote it easily: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice." Or, "Rejoice always... give thanks in all circumstances." We know the Psalms echo the same refrain—"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

We understand that faith in Christ leads to joy. After all, Jesus Himself tells us in the Gospel of John that He came so that our joy might be made complete. We also recognize—at least intellectually—that we are deeply blessed, even amid the many struggles we are called to endure.

And yet, at times, I look around at my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and find myself wondering: where's the joy?



Worship Times

Sunday School

9:00 AM

Worship Service

10:10 AM

Let me explain. Sometimes I think we need to remind ourselves that our faces—and our attitudes—should reflect the joy we profess. We might need to smile a little more. To laugh more freely. To bring enthusiasm with us when we gather—especially when we gather to worship.

After all, we have so much to rejoice in, every single day. And yet, like so many others, we can get lost in the day-in, day-out grind. We get wound tight. We grow discouraged. We take on burdens that slowly press the joy out of us. To make matters worse, and it's no secret, watching the news and television is a destroyer of joy because of the bleak and often false way it negatively paints our world.

Because of this, I think we sometimes take life too seriously—and perhaps even worship too seriously. Now, let me add an important caveat: this isn't a call to lose reverence. Worship matters deeply. What we do together is holy and significant. But reverence does not require stoicism, and seriousness does not require joylessness.

It's okay to smile and laugh. It's okay to clap. It's okay to raise your hands. Yes—even to sing that new song that feels just a bit outside your comfort zone along with all the other changes that we often make.

Now, I can already feel some of you shrinking into the pew as you read this. And I want you to hear me clearly: this is not a call to become someone you are not. Not all of us are bubbly and outgoing. Not all of us are naturally expressive. Trust me—I'm right there with you.

This is simply a gentle reminder that joy is meant to be lived and shared, not just quietly acknowledged.

Years ago, Christian comedian Ken Davis often reminded believers that joy and faith were never meant to feel burdensome. One of his most well-known refrains was simple but convicting: "Too many Christians look like they were baptized in pickle juice. Lighten up—God is still on the throne."

That may make us smile—and it should. But there's truth in it as well. Joy doesn't deny hardship. It doesn't ignore suffering. It simply refuses to let despair have the final word.

And that's the journey we want to take together this year as we focus on the word and theme of Joy. There's a small but profound detail in the Psalms that we often overlook. The psalmist doesn't say joy is found at the end of the road—but "in Your presence" (Psalm 16:11). Not someday. Not somewhere else. Right here.

That truth changes how we enter a new year. Joy doesn't need to be chased. It doesn't need to be postponed until life is calmer or circumstances improve. It's nearer than we think.

That's why, as a congregation, we want this year to be marked by joy—not forced happiness, not superficial cheer, but a steady, Christ-centered joy that endures. A joy that remembers blessings, even while carrying burdens. A joy that can say, with the psalmist, "The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad" (Psalm 126:3).

As we move forward together, may joy shape our worship, our fellowship, and our daily lives—until it becomes as natural as breath, and as visible as hope.

The text "My New Year's Resolution is" is rendered in a highly stylized, bubbly font. The letters are thick and rounded, with a color gradient transitioning from yellow at the top to orange and then to a vibrant pink/purple at the bottom. The text is set against a dark blue, almost black, background that has a slightly textured or grainy appearance.

CHURCH HISTORY

125 Years ago:

1. Council opened January 4th at 1:00 pm with Elder Israel Wenger presiding.
2. Brother Ezra Hertzog was given time between now and the next council to appear before the church, since through sickness he could not appear at this council.
3. Upon Sister Mary Mohler's own statement and acknowledgement she was reclaimed as a sister.
4. Brother Levi Snyder was charged with attending the fair and horse races, which he admitted to be so. It was decided that he acknowledge that he did wrong and that he ask forgiveness and promise not to do so again. He not feeling to do so, was given time between now and the Springville meeting February 10th, 1901 and if he fails to comply with the above request in the stated time he cannot be held any longer as a brother. (He did to comply and was disowned.)
5. Brother Isaac Mohler desires to be a brother again, and the church agreed to receive him as a brother if he is at peace, and is willing to make peace where it is possible.
6. The account of Church Treasurer, Hiram Snyder, was read and showed a balance of \$176.01.
7. The account of Love Feast Treasurer, Aaron Gibbel, was read and showed a balance of \$4.88 which was paid over to the church treasury.
8. It was decided to pay the shroud and laying out of Sister Troop.
9. Mary Pierce was baptized.



Ladies Tea

Ladies, is the cold weather getting you down? Are you looking to do something different? If so, you are all invited to a Ladies Tea on Saturday, January 31, at 10:30 AM in the church fellowship hall. Since we're calling it a "tea" we'll have to have tea, of course! But there will be many other tasty items on the menu. There is a sign-up sheet on the table in the narthex. Please sign up so we know how much food we need to prepare. You are welcome to bring friends, just let us know how many friends you will bring along. You have until January 25 to sign up. We hope to see you all there!



Last July, a few of us in the Trailblazers class were discussing what we could do differently. Someone suggested baking cookies to take to the Mohler folks for whom we Christmas carol. It was agreed by all that we should do that rather than give people poinsettias, which has been the usual gift for many years. We decided who would made which recipes. On November 15, we gathered in the kitchen. Having mixed the cookie dough at home, we baked and decorated them at church. Thanks to Wendy Shupp, who manned all four ovens and kept the different temperatures and baking times straight, not a single tray of cookies burned or even got browner than expected! Once they were cool, we froze everything until December 7, when we went caroling. We had some very pleased recipients.



On December 3, a group of us traveled to the Baltimore area to inspect shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. This was the fifth year we participated in this event. Mike Miller was our van driver. Thanks, Mike! Our job was to open each shoebox, look for items that are not permitted, such as toothpaste, soap, anything liquid, edible items, and war-related items. If found, the item was removed. There was a selection of small gifts from which we could choose an alternate item. The boxes were then taped shut, sorted by age group and boy or girl, and packed into large cartons. This year we were inspecting boxes bound for South Africa. We thought it might have been fun to be able to inspect the boxes we donated, but with the sheer number of shoeboxes, that was not very likely. Incidentally, Mohler donated 50 shoeboxes for the 2025 collection campaign.

