



MARY SOUTHERLAND  
The Stress-Buster and Women's Ministry Motivator



## 10 Ways to Enjoy the Holidays

- 1. Create a Christmas countdown calendar.** We often hear or say, "I just never got around to it this year, but next year..." Get a jump on the holiday season by creating a Christmas countdown calendar. Plan a special holiday event to mark each day of the season. Those plans don't have to be elaborate:
  - An evening with hot cocoa in front of a crackling fire
  - Choose one night of the week to watch a Christmas movie or program
  - Make picking the perfect tree a family event
  - On December 1, buy a box of Chocolate-covered cherries and have one a day
  - Buy or exchange Christmas books to read during December
  - Invite close friends over for a casual Christmas dinner. Keep it simple. Ask everyone to bring a favorite Christmas dish
- 2. Embrace the senses of the season.**
  - Enjoy the sight of green and red lights
  - Keep cinnamon sticks simmering on the stove
  - Make a batch of Christmas cookies
  - Buy candles and burn them every day
  - Listen to instrumental Christmas music so you can concentrate on the melody instead of the words
- 3. Share the holidays.** In other words, don't deny others the opportunity to invest in the Christmas season by trying to do it all yourself. Delegate and let others help you. Children can wrap gifts and help bake. Teenagers can put up lights and clean the house.
- 4. Stick to the lists.** According to the American Bankers Association, it takes an average of four months for a credit card user to pay off stress-inducing holiday bills. Decide how much you can afford to spend on each person. Put that amount of cash in an envelope with that person's name on it. When the envelope is empty, you are done – no exceptions.
- 5. Put away the Credit Cards.** Hide them and do not take them with you when shopping. Freeze your credit cards in a jug of water or mail them to a friend until the holidays are over. If you prefer to use debit or credit cards, keep all receipts in an envelope. Keep a running total of what you have spent.

6. **Cancel Duty Gifts.** Cut down on the number of gifts you give. If you are still exchanging gifts with friends and relatives you rarely see or neighbors and co-workers you are reluctant to offend – stop. Chances are good that they too will be relieved to hear they have one less gift to buy.
7. **Give yourself a break.** Take a candlelight bath. Go to a movie in the afternoon. For every five gifts you buy, treat yourself to a small gift for yourself.
8. **Avoid the Scrooges.** Do not yield any part of your Christmas to a Scrooge. When they say something negative, respond quickly with “Yes, but...” For example, if someone complains about the crowds, you might say, “Yes, but seeing all of these people really puts me in the Christmas spirit!”
9. **Start celebrating right now!** Christmas is not just a holiday or a date on the calendar. Christmas is a way of life. So let the celebration begin ... now!
10. **Keep one Christmas decoration out all year long.** When you begin packing away all of the Christmas decorations, keep one or two of your favorite ornaments out in plain sight as a reminder that we are to celebrate the birth and life of Jesus Christ every day of the year.

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