



By Major Beth Desplancke, THQ

Decorations: Decorate the room with New Year Party Decorations.

Refreshments: Have a potluck and have the ladies bring traditional New Year's food from their culture. If they don't have a traditional New Year food, perhaps have ladies share their favorite dish.

Be sure to include the following edible treats with the explanation behind them in your refreshments:

- **Grapes** - In Spain they quickly eat 12 grapes, one at each strike of the clock; these are supposed to bring you good luck.
- **Cuties** - In the Philippines they eat round fruits because they believe it will bring them prosperity.
- **Sweet Cake/Bread** - Armenian mothers bake special bread. While preparing they knead luck and good wishes into it.

Fun and Games:

- **A Kiss at Midnight.** The tradition of kissing at midnight on New Year's Eve stems back to old English and German folklore. It is said that a midnight smooch will set the tone of your relationship for the coming year - so pucker up! *Fill a jar with Hershey kisses, and have the ladies guess how many are in the jar. The one closest wins all the kisses.*
- **Plate Toss.**

In Denmark they collect dishes through the year and throw them at the front door on New Year's Eve; the more broken the plates, the more friends one shall have in the New Year. Well, we aren't going to break plates, but we are going to toss paper plates to see who goes the farthest. *Have ladies write their name on a dessert size paper plate; stand at one end of the room and have them toss it "frisbee style" to the other end. The plate that goes the farthest wins.*

- **New Year Around the World.** *Handout of game is included on page 6.*

Can you guess which country does which tradition in honor of the New Year? **ANSWERS**

1. In this country, decorative rice cakes called mochis are made and they hang straw ropes at the entrance of their homes to bring in good luck. (Japan)
2. In this country, New Year occurs in mid-April. Rituals include house cleaning, lighting of the hearth, herbal bathing and making auspicious dishes, and strengthening of family relationships (Sri Lanka).
3. In this country, families get together for meals at midnight and leave some leftover tidbits to serve as a good omen ensuring abundance in the coming year. (Germany)
4. In this country, they paint their doors red as a symbol of happiness and good fortune. They may also choose to hide their knives so that nobody cuts themselves, as it is thought cutting could impact on the luck of the entire family for the coming year. (China)
5. In this country people splash water on one another in order to start the new year with a purified soul (Burma).
6. In this country, as the bells ring in the New Year, it is traditional to open your front door and sprinkle salt on the doorstep. The act is thought to bring peace and abundance to your home or business. (Turkey)
7. This country sees pigs as a symbol of good luck; as such they celebrate the New Year by feasting on sucking pigs and giving gifts of marzipan or chocolate pigs (Austria).
8. In the hope of having a travel-filled year ahead of them, natives of this country carry a suitcase around with them on December 31 (Colombia).
9. In this country they believe it is possible to predict what the coming year has in store by cutting an apple in half and looking at the shape of its core (Czech Republic).
10. In this country they believe eating beans as part of your New Year Celebration will help you either keep your current job or find a better one in the coming year (Argentina).
11. In this country people stand on a chair and jump from it as the clock strikes 12 to welcome the New Year (Denmark).
12. Every year those who live in this country write down wishes for the New Year on white spheres and are released onto the river (Singapore).

- **Pin the Onion on the Forehead.** *Printable picture of child with x on forehead and paper onions are included on pages 7 and 8.*

In Greece an onion is traditionally hung from the front door of a house on New Year's Eve as a symbol of rebirth for the coming year. Parents then wake their children the next morning by tapping them on the head with the onion. We aren't going to toss onions, but we are going to play a pin the onion on the forehead of the child game.

- **Lucky Underwear.**

In several countries, the color underwear you wear when celebrating the New Year will have importance. For example, in Italy wearing red underwear on New Year's Eve is thought to bring love, prosperity and good luck. In Argentina, it is thought that wearing pink underwear will attract love in the New Year. In Bolivia, wearing bright yellow underwear on New Year's Eve will increase their fortune for the year to come. If you are wearing red, pink or bright yellow undies, you are going to have a great year!!!

- **Coin Toss.**

In the Philippines circles have long been considered sacred; as such they feature heavily in the new year with people wearing polka dots, eating round fruits and tossing coins into pans, which they believe will bring them prosperity. *Have ladies do a coin toss into a pan to see who gets the most in.*

Craft Idea: A Year Full of Blessings/Blessing Containers

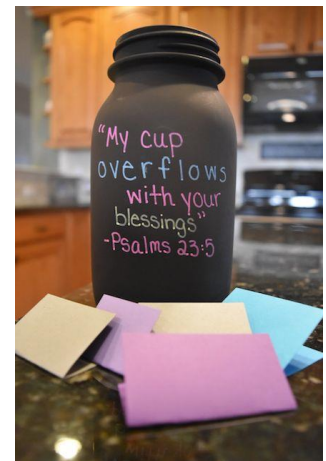
Have ladies decorate jars in some way and make them "Blessing Containers" Challenge the women to write down at least once a week one blessing (be sure they date each entry) and store them in the blessing jar. At the end of the year, for your next New Year's Eve celebration, spent time reading how God has blessed you this year, because as God's children we are not lucky, but are blessed by our heavenly Father.

Below are a few sample ideas from Pinterest.



<http://visitingteachingsurprise.blogspot.com/2013/12/count-your-blessings-jar-labels.html>

<https://www.theodysseyonline.com/how-to-make-your-own-blessings-jar>



<https://www.icanteachmychild.com/blessing-jar/>

Devotion: Seeing the Blessings

When my kids were little we used to play the game “I Spy” when we were waiting at our table in a restaurant or at the doctor’s office. One person would locate an object in the room that was visible to all, and say, “I spy with my little eye something that is...” and would say a color. And then the others would try to guess what the object was. As the kids got bigger they stopped going for the obvious objects around the room and would try to find more difficult items that were harder to spot.

It is the same with God’s blessings. Sometimes we are looking for obvious blessings that we miss the small ones that God has sent our way. In Genesis 28:10-22, there is a familiar story of Jacob and stairs leading to heaven with angels going up and down the stairs.

In case you don’t remember the story of Jacob, here is an abbreviated version of what has led Jacob to where he is. Jacob was the younger twin brother of Esau. Jacob’s blind father, Isaac is close to death and tells Esau to go hunting to prepare a stew for him, so that Isaac can give Esau his blessing – which was in essence, his passing the family responsibility and ownership to the oldest son.

Rebekah, the mother, overhears this and tells Jacob to pose as Esau so he could receive the blessing. He puts animal skins on his arms so he’ll feel like Esau who is a hairy man, and Rebekah makes a meal for Jacob to serve Isaac. Jacob does this, poses as his brother Esau, and receives his father’s blessing. Esau comes back and waits for his father’s blessing. They realize they both have been deceived, and obviously Esau is upset and plans to kill his brother, Jacob. Rebekah warns Jacob and tells him to flee. **Read Genesis 27:43-46.**

Jacob hadn’t expected the events that took place – this wasn’t part of his plan. But we need to see God – sometimes actively search for God in the unexpected places and unplanned events of life.

Many times the unexpected and unplanned of life are negative things: unexpectedly getting laid off, traffic jams, your car breaks down, etc. For Jacob, this unexpected event wasn’t necessarily a good thing. But even in the negative unexpected and unplanned events, God is at work.

These events may be unexpected and unplanned to us, but they don’t take God for surprise. Jacob hadn’t planned on having to leave his home, but God had. **Read Genesis 25:21-26.** God knew there would be conflict between Esau and Jacob before they were born and He knew what future He had in store for Jacob. In the future Jacob will be renamed Israel, he will have 12 sons (which become the 12 tribes of Israel – God’s chosen people), one son was Joseph, who would be sold as a slave to Egypt, and would later save his entire family. And if you keep following through the generations you will discover that Jacob is an ancestor of the Messiah – the Lord Jesus Christ. **Read Matthew 1:1-2, 17.**

Being forced to flee his home and in fear for his life isn't what he had planned or expected. But God was right there and met with Jacob. **Read Genesis 28:10-22.** Notice what it says in verse 16: ***When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."***

Jacob wasn't conscious of God's presence in his life. Oh, he knew about God, he had worship with his dad – he even went through the hassle of stealing the birthright and blessing from his brother Esau. But he, like many of us, went about his every day affairs largely unaware of the continuous presence of God in his life. Sometimes it takes the unexpected and unplanned for us to see God and His work in our lives.

Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. Whatever unexpected or unplanned occurrence you have, look for God, search for Him. When you consciously search for His presence and look for the unexpected, you will be able to say, *"I spy God!"*

Throughout this New Year, be consciously looking for God's presence and working in your life and record them on pieces of paper. Store them in your blessing jar. At the end of the year, you can read over all the God sightings you experienced this year.

Around the World New Year's Traditions

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Country Options

Argentina
China
Denmark
Singapore

Austria
Colombia
Germany
Sri Lanka

Burma
Czech Republic
Japan
Turkey

