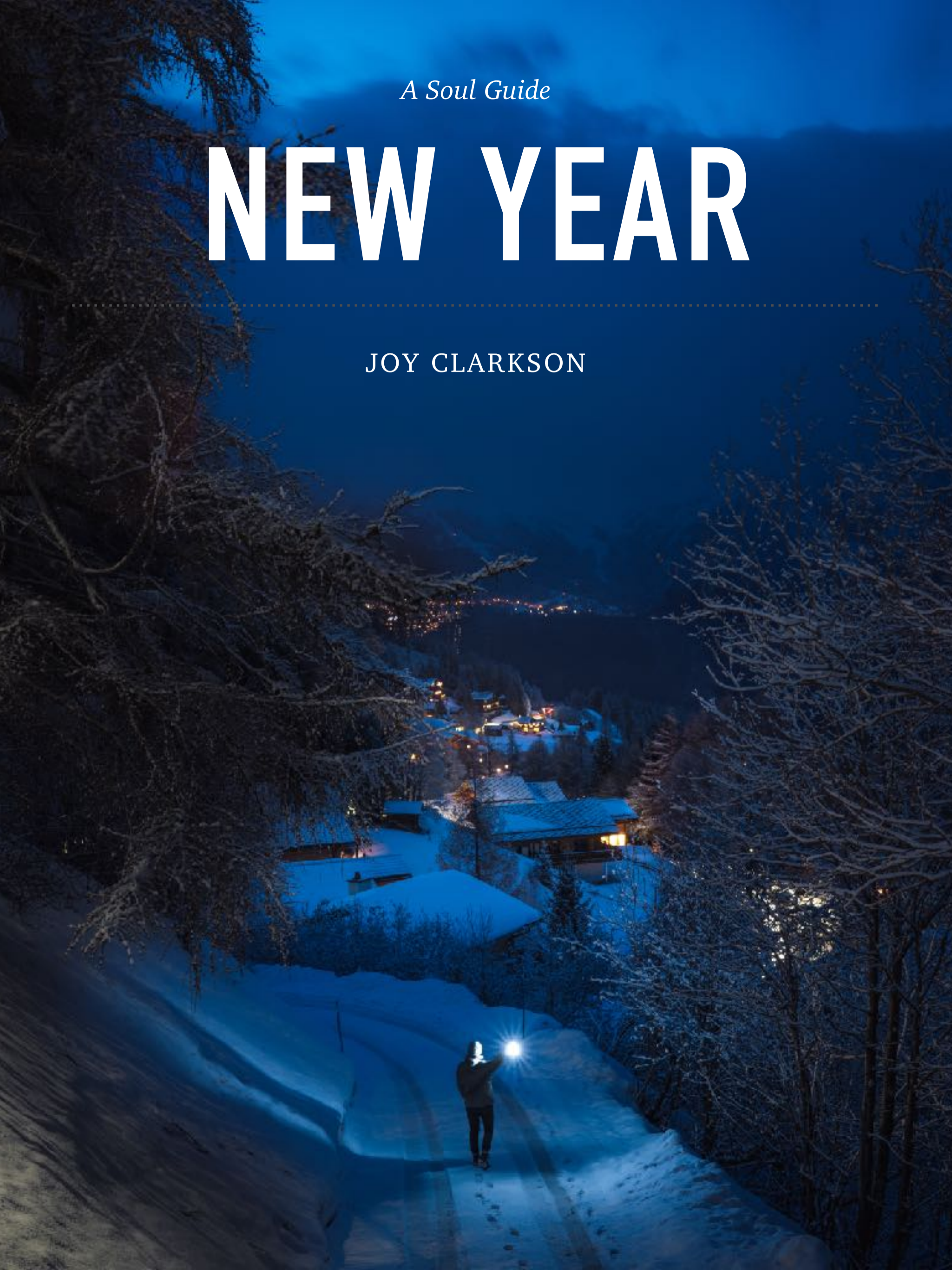


A Soul Guide

NEW YEAR

JOY CLARKSON



*Teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.*
- PSALM 90:12

INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends,

Here we stand at the cusp of another year. Something that has become important to me is to pause at the beginning of each year, to remember what has past, to give thanks for the blessings in my life, grieve the sorrows still remaining, and to prepare my heart for what is to come. This is a guide designed to help you do just that, to greet the new year with open arms, and to be like the wise lady of Proverbs, who “smiles at the future” (Proverbs 31:25).

This booklet is divided into three parts: **remembering, planning, dreaming**. Each section has questions designed to help you meditate on what has past, how you want to live in the present, and what you hope for the future. I invite you to explore these questions prayerfully, asking the Holy Spirit to make you sensitive to significant patterns and themes.

You don't have to do it all in one sitting.

Work through this packet in whatever way seems helpful to you. It's designed to have a logical flow, but you can do it a little at a time, out of order, or all in one sitting. I'll be working through this myself and will post a podcast on my Patreon with some of my thoughts.

Most of all, I hope this is a blessing to you.



Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

- SOREN KIERKEGAARD

1. REMEMBERING

Life can rush by in such a hurry. It is important to take a moment to remember what has passed. To relish good memories. To congratulate yourself for accomplishments. To grieve sadnesses past. To give thanks for the good. On the line below note the major moments in the timeline of 2019. (get a bigger piece of paper if you need to).

What did you accomplish?

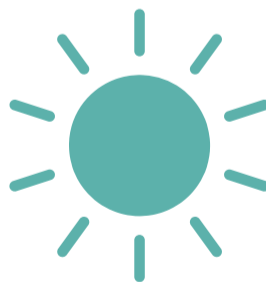
Who was important to you this year?

What are you thankful for?

What did you learn in 2018?

What do you want to take with you from 2018?

What do you want to leave behind from 2018?





2. PLANNING

“It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him.”

J.R.R. Tolkien

In my experience, one key to a good beginning of a new year is a strategy, a realistic appraisal of what is coming, what adds to you, what drains you, and what you can do to face it all with grace. You must, as Tolkien wittily puts it, take account of the dragons in your life, but also make space for the soul care you need to keep going. Remember: You are an agent in your life, your choices will shape your life. The next section is oriented around helping you realistically appraise the year to come, and to make space for your soul to flourish so you can live, love, and give well. It will begin with some general questions about life, and then focus on the four categories previously mentioned— intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social.

What are you looking forward to this year?

What will drain you this year?

What do you want to accomplish this year?

Who do you want to stay in contact with?

What area of your life do you most want to grow in this year?



INTELLECTUAL

You must love the LORD your God with all your mind...

- Luke 10:27

Make a plan to grow in knowledge and wisdom this year. Our minds are like a muscle we use; if we don't use them, they grow weak and useless. Work out the muscle of your mind.

What is something you wish you knew more about? What is something you would like to be a "master" of?

What are some ways you could cultivate your mind this year? Here are some ideas: make a book list, find a podcast on a topic you're interested in, make a commitment to read at least 15 minutes every day (you'd be surprised how much you can read in a year at that pace!), enrol in an online class...

Who could you seek to grow intellectually with? Perhaps through a book club, a weekly discussion of a podcast you listen to, a bimonthly email exchange.

Who could you pass your knowledge onto? Who is someone that would benefit from what you know and have learned?



PHYSICAL

"Cakes are healthy too, you just eat a small slice."

Mary Berry

Make a plan to move toward health and strength in your life. It is easy to beat ourselves up about health.

Thing of it as caring for yourself as you would a plant– you water it, weed it, and prune it with care.

Do you feel strong? How is your health? Are you tired a lot?

How healthy do you feel in these areas of your life:

- **Sleep**
- **Regular exercise/time outside**
- **Food**
- **Time to rest/rejuvenate**

What is one area you would like to be healthier in?



SPIRITUAL

Prayer is the beginning and the end, the source and the fruit, the core and the content, the basis and the goal of all peacemaking.

Henri Nouwen

Make a plan to cultivate your spiritual life this year. The point of spiritual growth is not to perform, but to draw close to God's love for you, and from this richness, fruit will grow.

What makes you feel close to God? Another way to think of this: what makes you feel at peace, loved, and sensitive to the Spirit? How regularly are you doing that thing?

What spiritual rhythms do you have in place right now? What rhythms do you wish you could have in place?

What steps do you want to take to have a richer spiritual life? Though it is not always natural to us, sometimes we need to invite others into our spiritual walk to grow. Perhaps you could meet/call a friend every week to pray and read scripture with.



EMOTIONAL

*Out of the good stored up in his heart...for the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.
Luke 6:45*

Make a plan to have a healthy heart this year.

How is your heart right now? Is your emotional cup full? Are you weary?

What fills your heart? Perhaps time with friends, regular time alone, reading, exercising. What makes you joyful and peaceful?

Could you incorporate one of the above things into your weekly schedule? How can you make having a peaceful heart a priority?

If you have sore spots in your heart, wounds or obstacles to wholeness, what is one step you could take toward wholeness this year?



SOCIAL

**Who are the most important people in your life? Why are they important to you?
How are you prioritising spending time with them?**

Think through each of your friends. How do you leave interactions with them feeling (drained? inspired? discouraged? loved)? Of these friendships, which do you think are worthy investments of your time? Which would you like to invest less time in?

Who do you feel God has put in your path to care for, love, attend to, teach? How can you be faithful to that calling?

What person or group of people support you in your calling, whatever it may be? How can you prioritise spending time with them?



3. DREAMING

You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.

C.S. Lewis

Allow yourself space to dream this year, time to hope. Take some time to examine your heart and desires. What do you wish for? What dream would you love to see come true? Write it down as a prayer, a wish, a hope.

- **What is one thing you hope will happen this year?**

- **What is one prayer you wish would be answered?**

- **Choose one word as a theme for your year, something that describes what you hope for the upcoming year.**

I hope this guide was helpful for you. Blessings to you in the new year!