

Happy Thanksgiving



The Holidays, which should be a time of joy and peace, can instead be spiritually, emotionally, and physically draining.

The discomfort we feel comes from more than just over eating on Thanksgiving Day!

Just past the veneer of the ideal Norman Rockwell painting is the flawed, stressed out reality of grumpy grandpas, needy nephews, and agonizing aunts.

If we're not careful, not prepared, we'll respond by getting irritable, passive-aggressive or pouting. We switch to survival mode just to make it through.

The Holidays can be challenging, for sure, but not just survivable, but thriving!

There are three interconnected vital components that, if we focus on taking care of them in our lives, will help us successfully make it through the Holidays with our heart and relationships intact.

The first one is our spiritual preparation.

Spend time with Jesus this week. Set your heart on Him.

2 Chron. 12:14 says King Rehoboam didn't set his heart on seeking the Lord and things didn't go well with him.

King David, on the other hand, prepared for the throne in, among other places, the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1). Adullam, by the way, means retreat or refuge.

Even Jesus prepared for Golgotha in the garden of Gethsemane.

So what cave or garden, what secret place, what retreat or refuge, what prayer closet do you need to go to to prepare your heart this week?

Let me encourage you to store away the joy, love, peace, and patience of Christ. Let the fruit of the Holy Spirit rule your spirit man.

The second area is our emotional preparation.

Be so careful not to let others dictate how you feel.

It's really a heart issue at its core.

Release your frustrations to God, not others. God can take it. He understands.

Stress and exhaustion are part of life and can create all kinds of negative emotions; anxiety, anger, and depression, to name a few.

Don't stuff them. Express them...to God. Don't let them come out in other ways (passive aggressive, cutting sarcasm, hateful words & actions, regrettable and/or irreversible decisions).

Guard your heart and give your tongue to Christ.

In Ps. 62:8 King David wrote , "Pour out your heart to God, for He is our refuge."

Say, "God, here's how I feel. I'm angry. I'm stressed. I'm tired." Whatever it is, pour out your heart to God and He will provide you what you need (peace, clarity, long suffering, self control, compassion, patience, kindness) to make it through the turkey dinners in your near future.

Stop focusing on what frustrates you and start focusing on God's goodness.

Stress makes you lose focus. You look so intently at the problems that you take your eyes off of Christ.

Jonah, in the very depths of despair in the belly of the whale, cried out to God a prayer in Jonah 2:7, "When I had lost all hope, I turned my thoughts once more to the Lord."

Turn your emotionally upheaved heart to Christ.

Be thankful in and for the challenges your family gatherings might bring you.

Use them as opportunities to grow to be more like Christ and be Christ to others.

Resolve to be part of the solution this season instead of part of the problem.

Finally, we need to be physically prepared.

Get some rest. Sleep well. Don't exhaust yourself. Take a nap every so often. It's okay. Lack of sleep makes us more apt to be short with others.

Jesus invited us in Matthew 11:28-29 to come to Him with your burdens and find your rest in Him.

So, are you tired? Worn out? Weary? Dreading the holidays? Come to Jesus for real rest. He'll show you how to walk in the rhythm of grace and strength you'll need spiritually, emotionally, and physically to not just survive, but thrive, through the holidays!