



Grace Christian Counseling Ministries

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The Problem: The Holidays. **The Solution: Jesus Christ**

Charles Dickens began his book *A Tale of Two Cities* with the following lines, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times It was the season of light, it was the season of darkness... It was the spring of hope; it was the winter of despair.” For many this is a perfect description of the way they feel about the holidays. But, what makes the holidays both the best and the worst of times? Let’s look at the Holiday Report Card. First, the Fs. Fantasy, Family, Food, Finances.

Fantasy: For some, the media portrayal of the holidays is much more like fantasy than reality. Whatever problem is presented on the TV, in the song, or in the movie is solved or resolved by the end. But, in reality, the problems of the real world, while suspended or escaped during the holidays, rarely get solved or resolved during the holidays. Trying to act happy, and merry, and thankful while battling the issues of life adds an added strain to an already hectic season. Wanting the holidays to be “picture perfect” adds an added dimension of stress and depression.

Family: Coordinating the activities of families in this day and age can be quite complicated. With families living in different cities, deciding where family members of today’s blended families will spend the holidays, finding a place large enough to accommodate an extended family...all of the preparation can tax even those with the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job. Add in the confusion of missed flights, delayed flights, rising gas prices, and plain old forgetfulness, and you now have a formula for chaos and insanity.

Food: Ah, let’s not forget which family member likes what food and who is to bring what. What happens when the store is out of your favorite food and you burned what you only intended to cook. And by the way, what happened to that promise to watch what and how much we were going to eat this holiday season? Oh, the guilt, the guilt, the guilt.

Finances: Did we really mean to spend that much? Or, where will we get the money for all of those gifts? Why are those toys so expensive? The psychological pain of balancing a rewarding holiday with good old financial common sense often leads to confusion and anxiety. We wrestle with our consciousness as we debate the excitement of the moment and the realities of next month when the bills become due. Let’s now welcome anxiety to our holiday gathering.

Wow! So far the Holiday Report card is not looking too good. But, I have Good News for those who are worried about the 4 Fs on their report card. The “A” outweighs them all. **Attention on Jesus!**

In the Bible (Luke 10:38-42), the story is told of Martha and Mary. *“Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. [39] And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord’s word, seated at His feet. [40] But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and*

said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." [41] But the Lord answered and said to her, "*Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; [42] but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*"

Notice, Martha was concerned with the preparation and the serving, while Mary was focused on Jesus. During the holiday season, take the time to remember what the holiday season is about. While we take the time to give gifts to our loved ones, let us remember the gifts that God gave us: The gift of His Word, His Son, and His Spirit. He gave us the Gift of Salvation. He gave us Grace. He gave us Peace.

For good psychological health this holiday season, and all year round, focus on Him and His Word. Take the time to talk to Him in prayer. Take the time to imitate Him in behavior. Take the time to reflect Him to the rest of the world.

The Apostle Paul has given us the formula for peace. Practicing these things will bring Peace to ourselves, as well as Peace on Earth. In the book of Philippians (4:6-9) he wrote, "***Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [8] Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. [9] The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.***"

While the holiday season can be hectic, exciting, unpredictable, and even funny, it does not have to be stressful, depressive, guilt-inducing or anxiety-producing. Keep your heart and mind fixed on the Reason for the Season, not just the season, and the God of Peace will be with you all.

Merry Christmas!

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