

From the Preacher's Desk

"Christmas Blues"



This time of the year can be "THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR" as well as the most depressing. For someone like myself, who LOVES to celebrate, even I experience some degree of seasonal sadness. "How many gifts do we have to purchase? Where will we get the money? How many families do we have to visit?" These are the questions that have kept me up at night and made for some pretty rough mornings. Is there anything wrong with feeling down? Nope, it's quite common. A 2014 survey conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness found that over 50 percent of people feel some strain, stress, or depression during the holidays. These numbers have gone up in the past two years as our world is dealing with covid, lockdowns, and not being able to see our family. With the remainder of my article, I want to share with you practical tips that will help minimize the stress, anxiety, and depression that accompany the holidays. If not, addressed, these feelings can cause physical, mental, and emotional pain on you and those around you. These tips are a combination of my own experiences as well as thoughts from several psychologists, clinics, and behavioral doctors. If they can help just one you have a better December, then this article will have been well worth it.

1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** Christmas lights, gingerbread houses, and giving gifts can be lots of fun when you have someone to share them with. If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for whatever reason, it's normal to feel sadness and grief. Guess what? It's okay to cry at Christmas. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season, and society says you must!
2. **Reach out.** When you do get those feelings of sadness, seek out someone to lean upon. Family and friends are a great place to start but don't forget about your church family. We are here to help you spiritually, but we are also here to help you physically. One thing that I have found is volunteering to help others during the holidays lifts my spirits and helps me as much as it helps others.
3. **Be realistic.** Stop trying to make things perfect! We tell ourselves that things must be done "as we've always done them before." Why? If you don't have time to put up house lights...don't put them up. If you can't visit the family, for whatever reason, then find

new ways to celebrate. Not everything needs to be like a Hallmark Christmas movie!

4. **Stick to a budget.** I can already see Catherine highlighting this part of my article and laying it on my side of the bed. In my defense, my love language is gift-giving, and it's hard to not buy something for someone I care about, especially if I know it'll make them happy. However, I am my worst enemy, as financial stress will also take its toll on the heart and mind. The answer? Find ways to give that don't cost "an arm and a leg!" Homemade gifts are a great alternative!
5. **Plan ahead!** It's not about scheduling every second of your holiday season, but rather eliminating last-minute scrambling that can cause undue stress. Our family, traditionally, has a night where we wrap all our gifts. The week before we make sure we have all our supplies. This planning ahead stops us from doing the last-minute "newspaper" wrapping or using duct tape and then feeling depressed because it looks like a 5-year-old did it.
6. **Learn to say no!** "We can't make it!" is also a valid answer! True friends and family will understand if you can't participate in every project, activity, or party.
7. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Sometimes we use the holidays as an excuse to "let ourselves go!" What we don't realize is that those small moments of bliss as we gorge ourselves only add to our stress and guilt in the end. Eat healthily, get plenty of sleep, and exercise daily.
8. **Seek professional help if you need it.** I am not a professional and even though I have, with the help of many others, have offered several practical tips, it might not be enough to overcome the persistent feeling of sadness, anxiety, or hopelessness that comes with the holiday season. Repeat after me...THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH GETTING HELP! It makes me mad when people refuse to get the help that they need because they are afraid of what others might think, or because they don't want to accept that they're broken. What matters most is your health, not what others think about you. Don't be afraid to talk to a doctor, or mental health professional. If you don't want to do it alone, then I will go with you!

Bottom line. Don't let the holidays control you...you control the holidays. And for those few who don't have the "holidays blues" count yourself lucky, but also ask yourself, how can I help? Sometimes, all a person needs or wants is someone to talk to, and that doesn't cost a thing! God bless!
David Olmos



Our progressive dinner is quickly approaching! We will be leaving from our building at 5:30 p.m. to begin the festivities. Make sure you remember to bring a gift for the white elephant gift exchange-- If it's something you're regifting, bring whatever you'd like; if it is something you are going out and buying, please keep it to about \$10 in value. Also, we will be having an ugly Christmas sweater contest! Whoever we deem to have the wildest Christmas sweater will receive a special prize! We hope you're looking forward to this event, it is a joy to be a part of each and every year.

Upcoming Events:

- Dec. 12 Jointed Devo w/ Westside CoC (@ our building)
- Dec. 13 Build-a-Bike
- Dec. 17 Progressive Dinner
- Dec. 19 Devo @ Ratcliff's
- Jan. 9 JAM w/ 3rd-5th graders



EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

"Thank you'll so much for the great Thanksgiving meal. It was delicious and so thoughtful of you. Loved it! Thanks," Pam & Peggy Hendrick

SYMPATHY

We express our love and sympathy to the Sanford family in the loss of Curtis' brother-in-law, Don Centers, who passed away Friday, December 3rd. The funeral will be December 13th in Belton, Texas.

Reading through the

New Testament

in 2021

Week 49 schedule:

- December 6: Revelation 3
- December 7: Revelation 4
- December 8: Revelation 5
- December 9: Revelation 6
- December 10: Revelation 7

Please Pray

Debbie Armentor is having health concerns...Reid Wilkinson, son of Randy and Kaylyn Wilkinson, had surgery today to have tubes put in his ears...Rosalie Gibson, sister of Nita Fry, remains in a rehab facility, but is getting stronger every day...Howard King, father of Jeff King, is home following hospitalization for a broke his shoulder.