



## **Maintaining Balance and Focus during the Holidays**

The holiday season has arrived and for many of us this can mean an abundance of activities and responsibilities. This busyness can become a stress instead of a joy. Instead of feeling grateful for the many blessings and celebrating the birth of Christ, the focus may be on feeling stretched between the many family obligations, complicated family relationships, or not having family to celebrate with. The joy of the holidays can get lost. A few key reminders can help keep our focus on what is truly important during this season.

### **Focusing on the true meaning**

*Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."*

The true meaning of many sacred *holy-days*, such as Christmas, has been diluted due to the influence of our culture and also our own tendency to get wrapped up in various activities and expectations. What better way to deal with the lack of balance during the holidays than to remember their true meaning? The birth of Jesus Christ the Son of God, coming to earth as a baby, fully human and fully divine, is indeed something to celebrate. We must keep the focus on this reason why we celebrate.

Maintaining our personal and intimate relationship with Christ is of utmost importance during busy seasons. Our relationship with Christ should be the core from which all other areas of our life radiate. Sometimes when we most need to be connected with Christ and with a body of believers, we have the most difficulty doing it. We need to make efforts to immerse ourselves in a Christ-centered environment, to look for opportunities that will allow us to encourage others and be encouraged by others. Just as we find ways to ready ourselves for the upcoming holiday season, we also need find ways to keep our Bible devotion time during the holiday season.

### **Engaging in relationships**

*Romans 12:5, "So we, being many, are on body in Christ, and every one members one of another."*

God created us in His image as relational beings. His desire to have a personal relationship with us underscores how important relationships are to God. We may be surrounded by people all the time and yet still feel lonely or isolated, especially in busy and stressful times. Overcoming isolation involves being around people with whom we can reveal our true self, open up, and share. These relationships are characterized by authenticity, accountability, and genuineness. Healthy relationships will keep our hearts and minds balanced and grounded throughout our lives.

### **Giving to others**

*Acts 20:35, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

Giving gifts is common practice during the holidays. This process in itself can be a joy for some and yet a burden for others. Joy can be felt in showing gratitude and love to family and friends. At the same time, giving gifts may

be a financial burden or a time burden. We may accidentally get our focus off track by being so focused on wanting to find (or receive) the “perfect” gift. Having a proper attitude is the key to both giving and receiving gifts.

Also, we may want to consider additional ways to maintain the gift-giving tradition while also remembering the less-fortunate. For instance, we can start a tradition of buying gifts for needy families or choosing a ministry to donate to instead of (or, in addition to) one of our gift-exchanges between friends or family. In such a fashion, we can extend the blessings of the season to others and teach important lessons to our children as well.

### **Maintaining Boundaries**

*Luke 2:19, “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”*

Maintaining balance is a challenge in many of our lives. We should learn from Mary who kept and “pondered” the miracle of the birth of Christ in the midst of what had to be a very busy time. She realized at least a portion of the magnitude of the moment and guarded it. Many of us can become burned out due to having difficulty setting boundaries during busy seasons. A tendency to want to please everyone can exacerbate the problem and lead to unmet expectations. To minimize these possibilities this holiday season, decide and communicate early on how many activities and how much traveling you and your family can participate in. Take time to consider the amount of activities you are engaging in and realize the effect this busyness can likely have upon your family. Protect those all too few quiet and sacred moments which come your way. These moments can be critical in helping us to keep our focus on what is truly important.

The above are just a few strategies and principles to consider during this holiday season. Use them to maintain balance and train our focus on that which is above. Let the blessings of the season be a source of joy in your life and share these blessings with those you love.

*Matthew 1:21, “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: and he shall save his people from their sins.”*

ACCFS thanks you for your continued prayers and support throughout the past year. You all have truly been a blessing to us. We wish you God’s richest blessing during this holiday season. We are available to serve however we can. Please visit our resources at [www.accounseling.org](http://www.accounseling.org) or contact us at 309-263-5536.