

Help • Hope • Growth

ACCFS
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Helping the hurting. Nurturing hope. Encouraging growth.



Navigating Holiday Emotions

Holidays and emotions seem to go together. There can be great joy in the holiday season as time is made to pause, reflect, and gather as families. Yet for many, the holidays can bring a new level of anxiety, loneliness, stress, and mixed emotions as expectations and reality do not line up. As we approach the holiday season, let's be mindful of three principles from Scripture:

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."
(Rom. 12:15)

Many times in our lives our emotions can be very strong and very raw. The holiday season can amplify a disconnect where everything around us seems to emphasize perfect memories and perfect families and yet our experience seems different. Scripture calls us to "rejoice

with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep". In order to connect with others in this way, we need to recognize the emotions we are feeling are very normal and real, and there are others most likely feeling similar emotions. Prayerfully acknowledge your emotions and then turn them over to God. Find ways to enter into the emotions of others and see how God is working in them and in the situations around us. Be willing to share with others the emotions you are feeling while listening and caring for the emotions they are feeling.

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus..."
(1Th. 5:18)

Practicing thankfulness while experiencing difficult emotions is hard. Yet thankfulness is commanded in Scripture and the holidays can be an opportunity to emphasize this discipline in ourselves and our families. A pattern of thankfulness can be a first step in grounding ourselves in the midst of difficult emotions. A thankful person does not deny things might not be as

they would like them to be, but they also are able to name the blessings that do exist. This behavior is foundational in Scripture and can be implemented in simple ways such as a Thankfulness Journal or a Family Sharing time which highlights God's provisions.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..." (Phil. 2:5)

The final principle to consider is near to the heart of the holiday season. Phil. 2 encourages us to consider Jesus. We are told of His giving over of Himself to us as He humbly became obedient to entering this life, to living this life, and to dying in this life for us. We are challenged to live humbly and sacrifice for one another in the light of these Truths. As we meditate on Jesus, it should ground us through our own difficulties with the hope He offers. Our holiday events begin to take on a new purpose, and in His life, we find our life. May this "mind of Christ" reorient us into the joy and the encouragement needed to navigate the emotions of this holiday season.

Parenting Principles: *Parenting & Our Identity*



The parenting journey can feel like a roller coaster. One minute it is exhilarating and the next you wonder if you are going to survive. There are times when you see God working out amazing things in young hearts and times when it is scary. Amid the uncertainties of parenting one of grounding truths we must remember is that the Lord has given us the privilege to engage in the role of parenting. We have not been given this privilege because of some skills we possess but by a merciful God who faithfully equips us for tasks far beyond our ability.

While we are to take parenting seriously and faithfully engage, we must guard against making our role of parenting into our sole identity. Identity is what defines a person. It is what gives

an individual worth, value and purpose. Most of us quickly agree our worth and purpose are found through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Yet this truth is hard to hold onto when challenges, failures and disappointments arise. Our natural tendency is to define ourselves by the roles we engage in and how well those roles seem to be going.

When our view of ourselves lies in our accomplishments, our children's behavior, or what others think about our decisions, we find ourselves continually discouraged. Like Paul, we must try to forget those things which are behind (accomplishments and failures) and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:14) We are to learn from both successes and failures, but we ought to pursue the kind of faith which believes the Lord can bring about fruit and life in our child's heart in spite of us. Be willing to acknowledge both the joys and sorrows you experience while fighting to remember that you are not defined by your mistakes or successes. Model to your children what it looks like to live as a Child of God who has embraced the identity we have been given in Christ.



The Compelling Community

The early church found its new community to be quite compelling. Acts 2:42, 45 states “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*” The same compelling elements that existed 2000 years ago exist in the church today. Consider the following five elements of the church:

“*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine*”

Every person has a fundamental need for **teaching**. The church is a community where we are taught. Sermons, Bible studies, Sunday school and discipleship are just a few of the many ways instruction occurs. The church, from its inception, has embodied both the humility of “I don’t know, teach me” as well as the authority of “Thus saith the Lord.” Do I maintain a teachable spirit?

“*and fellowship,*”

Every person has a fundamental need for **fellowship**. The church is a community where we are valued. The fellowship experienced in the church is unlike many other communities in our world, such as work or school. In these communities, the value of participants lies in their purpose. In contrast, the

value of church members lies in their presence. God, having fulfilled all-purpose, places His value on us. Thus, from the youngest to the oldest, richest to the poorest, healthy to the infirmed our value does not lie in our contributions but instead in our presence in Him and with each other. Do I celebrate the value of my fellow members?

“*and in breaking of bread,*”

Every person has a fundamental need for **identity**. The church is a community that views members according to their identity in Christ. The communion service helps us shed our worldly identities and realize our vertical identity as God’s son or daughter and our horizontal identity as brethren. Do I recognize this common identity in Jesus Christ?

“*and in prayers,*”

Every person has a fundamental need to **participate**. The church is a community where we participate with each other. Together we pray. Together we serve. Together we exhort. Together we endure hardship. Together we rejoice. Together we contend for truth. Can I step into a place of greater service within my church?

“*and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*”

Every person has a fundamental need for **love**. The church is a community where members are loved. Denying ourselves for our brother’s gain is the currency of Christ’s love to us and therefore the currency of our love for each other. Is there a way to further love your brethren?

Hope in Season

This time of year is a pronounced marker in the passage of time. The anticipated yearly activities are nearly over. Memories have been made. Some opportunities were seized. Some were lost. Transition is upon us. “*To every thing there is a season...*” the author of *Ecclesiastics* writes.

To be human is to be in season. Herein we see the wisdom and kindness of our Father in Heaven. Though we would like time to stand still, it cannot because it must not. Our seasons are too precious and are held and determined by the One who knows no season nor needs one. James writes “*With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*” (James 1:17b). Take heart and be encouraged by our Creator as another year ends and a new one begins. Emotions will range and feelings will flux, but God’s constancy will provide an ever-present anchor. Be thankful for the memories of the past, purpose to take advantage of the present, and lean upon the One who has even the future in His hands.



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