

Things to Remember During the Holidays

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It has been called “the most wonderful time of the year” and for good reason. During the holiday season, people are typically nicer than they are throughout the year. While we wish the kind spirit and jovial attitude shown by many near the end of November and throughout December were a year-round ordeal, we appreciate it as long as it lasts nonetheless. The holidays are a time for family, friends, kind gestures, and relaxation. God has given us all things richly to enjoy, and we should be thankful for every good thing that ultimately comes from Him (1 Tim. 6:17; Jas. 1:17). However, in this time of joy and happiness, it is tempting to forget some things that Christians should keep close to heart. As God blessed Old Testament Israel with deliverance from Egyptian bondage, they developed spiritual amnesia and paid a price for it (Psa. 106:13-23). They forgot what they once were—captives to a pagan people. We must not allow the good times we enjoy to get us sidetracked spiritually. One of the most frequent commands in the New Testament for Christians is the command to remember (Luke 17:32; 2 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 13:3). Here are a few things to remember this holiday season.

Giving

Whether people believe in God or not, a lot of people tend to be in a giving mood during the holiday season. While giving to others who are less fortunate is always a good thing, that is not the type of giving I have in mind here. It may be tempting during the holiday season—as we are buying so many gifts and spending on others—to forget our contribution to the Lord. The first century Christians were told to lay aside money to give on the first day of the week as they had been prospered by God (1 Cor. 16:2). Our giving should be in proportion to how we have been prospered by God, and we should not cut back on our offering because we want to spend it on some gadget for ourselves or someone else. The giving we do toward the Lord's cause and the work of the church is a special contribution. There are many agencies and causes that solicit donations during this time of the year, and they must all take a "back seat" to the giving we have committed to the only eternal cause in the world (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28).

Remember this holiday season we will be challenged to demonstrate the proof of our love by remaining consistent in our giving regardless of the extra expenses that come up during this time (2 Cor. 8:24). God still loves a cheerful giver, and we should cheerfully give back to the one who has given us all that we have (2 Cor. 9:6-7). It is just my opinion, but it may be wise to even give a little extra during this time of year to the Lord's work to show our money who is boss and to further commit ourselves to put the kingdom first (Matt. 6:33). Remember your giving this holiday season and do not allow the spending we do for others and on ourselves to cause us to rob God (Mal. 3:8).

God

It seems like a rat race from the time we get up until we pillow our heads at night. During the holidays, stores are open later, many rush from work to get some shopping done. Others wait until the weekend and spend all day Saturday hitting the stores to capitalize on sales and other things. Again, there is nothing wrong with these things, but we must be sure to remember God. You might be thinking, "Of course I will remember God; I am no atheist!" But one does not have to renounce his or her belief in God to forget Him. How is your devotional life during this time of the year? Is all of the decorating, shopping, and running crowding out time for Bible study and prayer? Are we so busy on the weekends that we struggle to push through worship on Sunday?

The Psalmist encourages God's people to be still and know who is in control (Psa. 46:10). Set aside time to search the scriptures and handle the word of truth properly (2 Tim. 2:15). Pray throughout the day and not just when you are about to eat a meal (1 Thess. 5:17).

Consider getting on a reading plan of some sort and committing to holding fast to your Bible study habits and prayer life even in a time that is extremely busy. Anybody who is too busy for God is too busy. You may not always feel like reading the Bible and praying, but there is not a time when you do not need it (Matt. 4:4). It seems that this time of the year it is hard to stay in the Word because of family and traveling, but remember to stick with it. God is not seasonal in His blessings, let's not be seasonal in our devotion to Him (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8).

Grieving

Many people are in different stages of life. For some, this is the first holiday season with their spouse or with a new baby. For others, this is the first Christmas *without* a loved one or potentially the last holiday season with a loved one as the medical prognosis does not look good. Christians are instructed by the Holy Spirit to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15). We can enjoy the blessings of this time of year without forgetting that it is not a happy and jolly time for everyone. This does not mean that we should feel guilty about the good that has come into our lives. Yet, we must be emotionally flexible as we see others are in a different stage of life. Jesus knew He would raise Lazarus from the dead, but He still wept as He saw the hurt in the heart of Lazarus' sisters and the pain that sin caused (John 11:35). Remember that some are grieving, and a card, a hug, or a listening ear goes a long way. May we not be so caught up in our lives that we forget to invest in the lives of others (Phil. 2:4).

Gratitude

Social media has allowed us to peek into everyone's backyard and see how others are doing in many areas of life. It is not a bad thing, but sometimes comparison becomes the thief of joy as we are unable to count our blessings because we are overly concerned with what others have (2 Cor. 10:12). Remember gratitude this holiday season. Be grateful for the measure of health you have and thank the God who gave it. Appreciate the family that you have and the smiles and laughs you can enjoy together because circumstances often change before we know it. In every situation we can give thanks, even when we wish things were better (1 Thess. 5:18). God's goodness causes our hearts to swell with gratitude and is expressed as we give thanks (Eph. 5:20). If someone thinks of you and gets you a present, remember to be grateful even if it was not exactly what you wanted or if you asked for something else. We tell children to be grateful, but many times adults fail to set the right example (Prov. 23:26). In a world of complaining and pouting we can shine our light as we carry gratitude past the Thanksgiving meal and into every season of our lives. Remember to be grateful this holiday season.

Great Opportunities

I know many strong Christians who do not believe in doing anything around the holiday season because of the erroneous connections often made in the religious world concerning the birth of Christ. The truth is no man living today knows when Jesus was born. The New Testament never tells us to remember His birth or to have a special day to honor it. We are told to remember His death as partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Matt. 26:26-28; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-30). While those who are against participating in any holiday activities at all are free to exercise their choice in this matter of judgment, I think we can make the most of this opportunity during this time of the year (Rom. 14:5).

Remember that during this time of the year people are more prepared to hear a word about Jesus and hear things concerning the Bible than they probably are at any other time. This does not mean we should go along with a false narrative in order to capitalize on the moment. Nor does it mean we must arrogantly shout down everyone who is mistaken concerning the birth of Christ every chance we get. We should be ready to discuss religious matters as they come up while we wait in a line or as we check out of a store. What if we had a tract ready to distribute or a card to invite someone to study the Bible with us? Paul wanted to be present for Pentecost, not because he was bound to do so, but because he viewed it as an open door of opportunity (1 Cor. 16:8-9). We should redeem the time and be ready to speak with wisdom as we encounter those who may have questions or be interested in the gospel during this time of the year (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5-6). Remember that we should preach the gospel year-round, but it is wise to make the most of the time when people are inclined to listen to the soul-saving message. It may just be that a seasonal investigator of the Christian faith may become a lifelong disciple because we were ready to plant the seed and trust God to give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6; 1 Pet. 3:15). Pray for open doors and then have the courage to walk through those doors, remember the opportunities that abound this season (Col. 4:2-4).

I hope you enjoy the holidays. I pray that you will use the time given by God to His glory and make the most of it. You may forget a lot of things but remember the eternal things. The holiday season is a time full of potential. We can use this season to deepen our faith and commitment to the Lord. This time of the year is wonderful because the God we serve is infinitely wonderful. May we repeat the words of the Psalmist, "You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us, none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told" (Psa. 40:5).