

A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER OR FORGET—WHICH WILL IT BE?

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We are embarking on the season when many of us spend a great deal of time with other family members—ones who live both near and far. As we encounter a variety of “extras” that demand our attention, it could serve us well to prioritize what is truly needed.

Because I have plenty of experience doing things wrong, I'll share a short list of a few ways to sabotage your holiday:

1. **Do not eliminate anything from your usual weekly schedule.** Everything is absolutely necessary. Although lots of additional activities are planned for the holiday season, simply add as many extras as possible without adjusting your normal routine.
2. **Do not ask for help.** Keep telling yourself that you can do it all—just work harder and arise each day at least one hour earlier than usual. If possible, stay up one

hour later than usual.

3. **Avoid adhering to any type of budget.** Spend whatever you want to get that perfect gift.
4. **Expose your children to lots of advertisements geared at creating desire.** Encourage them to make an exhaustive Christmas wish list for themselves.
5. **Plan all family gatherings without getting input from others.** Let every family member know what you have planned. If you have adult children, treat them like children and tell them when and where they should be at all times. If they have spouses, **make sure they know who is in charge.** Also, ignore the needs of little children and their sleep schedules. In other words, make it all about YOU.

So . . . are you cringing yet? Do any of these sound familiar, even if a wee bit exaggerated? Anyone want to do better? Maybe there's a way...

You can always apply everything listed above, but in reverse. But perhaps you can add your own ideas on how to make the season others-centered instead of self-centered. When our children were young, my husband and I started one of my favorite family traditions. At the beginning of the month, we let the kids draw names to get their "secret pal" for the Christmas season. The name of this person would not be revealed until the end of the month. But, until then, their mission was to do nice things for their pal while trying to remain incognito. They did things like making up the person's bed, doing one of their pal's chores (like poop-scooping!), or letting the other person go first in a game—nothing that cost any money. On Christmas Eve, they would take turns around the dinner table and try to guess who their secret pal had been. At this point in time, it was actually a good thing if people guessed correctly! That meant your kindnesses had been noticed!

You can come up with your own ideas. But, above all, let's remember to talk about the real meaning of Christmas more than we talk about what we want. In truth, we celebrate Christmas only because we have already received the greatest gift of all. **In John 3:16 we are told "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son..."**