



A little boy and a little girl were singing their favorite Christmas carol in church the Sunday before Christmas. The boy concluded “Silent Night” with the words, “sleep in heavenly beans.” His sister elbowed him, and said, “No. Not beans, peas!”

The way many of us feel by the time we are ready for Christmas, the song might just as well end with beans or peas instead of peace. Because sometimes in the panic rush to get everything done the peace of the season seems to avoid us.

Does Christ have anything to say to us in the midst of this season of hurry and rush? I believe He does. After all, it’s His birthday party, so what does He think about all of this? There’s a humorous little story in the Gospel of Luke that shows how busyness and stress gets in the way of what matters most. It wasn’t Christ’s birthday, but it was a party, and Jesus was the honored guest.

Luke 10:38-42 - “³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” ⁴¹ “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”” (NIV)

Understanding what Jesus said to Martha about Mary, it’s easy to see that: We will enjoy the season much more when we simply focus on what is “needed.”

WHAT IS STRESS?

Luke 10:40 - “But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”” (NIV)

Stress is your body’s alarm system. But let’s face the fact: No one can live without experiencing some degree of stress. You may think that only serious disease or intensive physical or mental injury can cause stress. This is false. Crossing a busy intersection and thinking of the things that you have to do for the month of December are enough to activate the body’s stress mechanism to some extent. Stress is not even necessarily bad for you; it is also the spice of life. Let me show you a video by Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski On Responding To Stress.

Stress can be caused by anything that creates a state of alarm in our systems - by anything that mobilizes our bodies defenses against hostile, threatening or even challenging events in our environment. Stress can result from anything that: Annoys you; Threatens you; Excites you; Scares you; Worries you; Hurries you; Angers you; Frustrates you; Challenges you; Criticizes you; or by anything that reduces your self-esteem.

Stress can be caused by almost anything pleasant or unpleasant.

WHAT IS THE HOLIDAY STRESS CURE?

I love this verse: Luke 10:40a - “But Martha was **distracted** by all the preparations that had to be made...”” (NIV)

Doesn’t that sound like us sometimes? Like Martha, we can get so distracted by all the seemingly necessary things...that we miss the point. Peter Drucker in The Effective Executive says, “For most of us the problem is not “priorities” as much as it is ‘POSTERIORITIES.’” By this he means what we choose to “leave out.” Isn’t that the real problem? Some of the things that we make priorities aren’t really the priorities. By focusing on these things of lesser importance we miss what’s most important.

Here are my TIPS for you this Holiday Season:

Lay out a plan.

State your expectations up front (What is the main thing that needs to happen this Christmas? Plan ahead. Share the load with others (other family members can help). Lighten the calendar (Which events are optional?) Respect your budget (Have you determined how much you will spend before you go shopping?)

Put your most significant relationships first.

Christ – spending personal time with Him and worshipping Him at church. Spouse – make a date night in December. Family – Don’t neglect them for what seem like other obligations. You’ll regret it later in life, and you honor Christ by honoring your family. Closest friends who feel like family

Look for the spiritual dimension in everything

(house cleaning is like preparing our hearts for Christ to welcome Him, gift-giving is like the wise men giving to Christ, the colors of the holiday season, etc.)

Focus on those who are in need.

The holidays don’t have to be the most stressful time of the year when, like Mary, we only focus on what is needed.

On the night Jesus was born, angels from heaven announced, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” (Luke 2:14 NIV)

Don’t let the celebration of the most peace filled night in earth’s history turn into the most stressful time of the year.

*Silent Night, Holy Night
All is calm, All is bright
Round yon virgin, Mother and child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly PEACE
SLEEP in heavenly peace*



1. Is your Christmas season always so stressful, why??
2. Share or identify what and why it stresses you?
3. What are you planning to do to make this season the most wonderful time of the year?