The Saltshaker



Pastor's Heart

December 2025

It's the most wonderful time of the year, or is it?

We have heard people say, "It's the most wonderful time of the year." This season that we have entered, I refer to as the **Holy** days, instead of the holidays, and I try to find ways to walk in the presence of God as I encounter each day, event, and person. I try to remember that for many people this season is also, "One of the most depressing, difficult, challenging, grueling, and complicated times of the year."

Why is this so? Many reasons actually, but for the purpose of this article I will focus on mainly aloneness, experience, and poverty. Let me expand on these issues . . .

Being alone during the holidays doesn't necessarily cause one to be depressed, but a false reality of this time of year is projected in advertising, movies, and activities that happiness is associated with family, friends, and co-worker events. Being invited to social gatherings requires gift giving, festive apparel and motivation to enjoy the crowd. Reports indicate that 27.6% of our population live alone. Another way of saying this is that more than 1 in 4 households are occupied by a single person in the U.S. Some desire this separation while others long to belong to a greater social network. Think about the person who has lost a spouse or a loved one and this is their first Christmas without them? This might help us to "adopt" a single person to join us this year? In our church there are many people living alone that would enjoy joining a family at Christmas or even being invited to a church event that they might not attend after dark or due to the cost. More on that later.

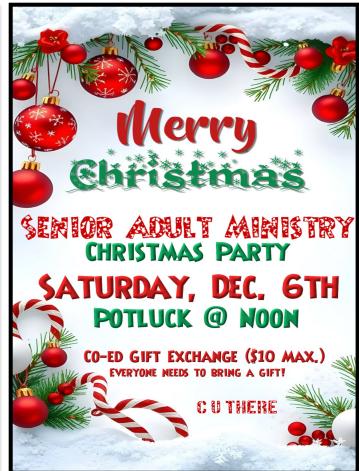
What am I saying about experience? Family dynamics come into play, especially different views of religion, politics, and now more than ever with gender bias intergenerationally. First, don't get suckered into an argument, it's not worth it. Also, don't avoid your family by thinking about what took place in the past. People change right? Give it a chance. Maybe you are avoiding certain family members due to unresolved conflict. Let me be clear, "That's on you." If you have refused family activities based on conflict from years ago, seek to resolve it. Be an agent of transformation in your family. Invite a person of peace in to act as a mediator to work through unresolved issues. Seek counsel to do the right thing. Don't let conflict steal your joy.

Feeling the crunch financially? Join the club. We have by necessity shifted the way we do Christmas at our house. I like to think about the Presence of Christ in our Christmas. We share devotions and find it important to pray together in this season. Little children's attention spans are limited so if you have them in your household don't spend the night away expecting them to listen to ancient readings from the King James Version of the scriptures. Instead, select a story to share with children or your grandchildren that speaks to God's amazing story of Christmas. We have some in the church library that you can borrow and share at home.

In researching for this Pastor's Heart, I found some good teachings for handling the stress of the holidays. First, I would suggest that you remember to "Please God and love people." Skip being a people pleaser. If anyone offers free advice on how you should be living or raising your teenagers, take it for what it is worth, okay? Second, maintain healthy boundaries and remember that "No," is still a part of your vocabulary. We were never meant "to be all" for others. Our energy is limited, our resources are limited, and our time is too.

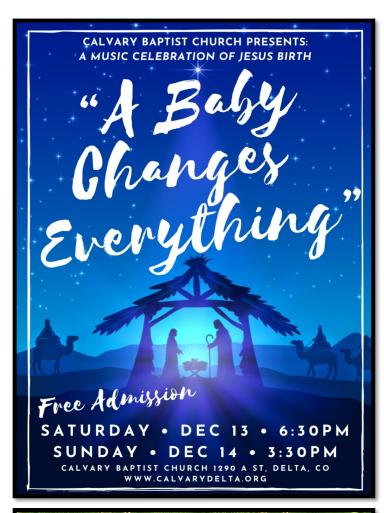
Next, be mindful of keeping Christmas and the holidays simple. Do what you want to do when you want to do it and step back when your energy gives out! People will understand and you will reduce your anxiety. Also, keep an exercise plan. Even a simple walk around the block will work wonders with your mind, body, and spirit. Make small adjustments that energize your being. Keep Christ in Christmas and you might find yourself experiencing joy through the Holy days this year. To God be the glory!

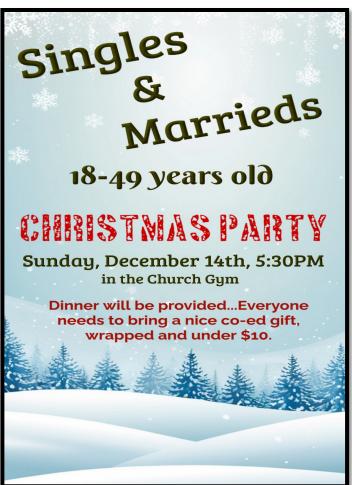


















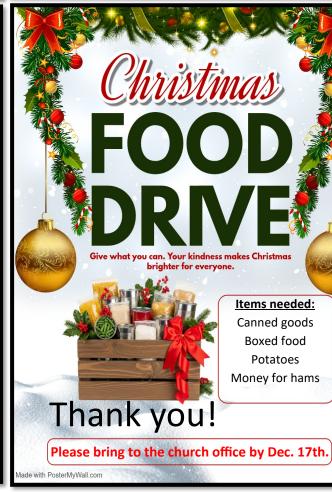


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