

## **Do Less But More for the Holidays**

How much stress are you currently dealing with? For many of us it is too much. We have good days and bad days, and sometimes really bad days. Then comes the holidays, from Thanksgiving thru New Years, when we add even more stress to our lives.

Many people have expectations of us at the holidays, or we think they do. Often we have expectations of ourselves.

Shopping for or making gifts, giving gifts, deciding how much to spend, card sending, family gatherings, special worship events, parties of friends or coworkers, decorating, etc., all add a lot to our already-full lives. The holidays often become a disappointment rather than a blessing.

I, your pastor, give you permission to make your holidays less stressful this year. If you don't want to decorate, don't decorate. If you don't want to spend a fortune on all the relatives, don't. Maybe you can't spend much. For many of us our financial situation changes as we age. Our giving needs to change too.

If you want to give a gift, as an act of love, spend an afternoon making some especially nice cookies, freeze them until later, and then give out bags of cookies with a bow. Purchase some special cookies, candy, etc. and distribute them as gifts. A nice note expressing your love and appreciation of your friends and family is more than the biggest thing you could buy.

You could make donations to a charity in the name of your loved ones. After all, what do you give people who already have all they need? You can give to needy others in their name.

I know you may not be able to change other's expectations of you. But I give you permission to decide which expectations are justified and which are not, and to calmly, politely, and lovingly tell others their expectations are just too much for you. Tell them their expectations are adding to the stress of your life and are anything but joyous celebrations of your Savior's birth. Jesus, who is the reason for the season, never commands us to celebrate His birth. The ways we celebrate the holidays are up to us.

So take control of your holidays this year. Make them special, enjoyable, and relaxing. I believe this will honor the God who gave us the Sabbath as well as the Savior.

- pastor Robin