

3 Simple Statements That Will Increase Your Joy in God's Presence

The Christmas season is officially here. I'm not going to lie—I'm loving the Hallmark Christmas movies. While this time of year is wonderful, it can also bring a bit of internal hurry and angst. Shopping, partying, cooking and trying to satisfy the expectations of others can leave us feeling exhausted and joy-deficient. Anxiety and tension can easily increase. What's the answer?

The psalmist wrote, "in Your presence is fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11b). As I've been thinking about joy, I realize that the key to joy is God's presence. It's in His presence that we are fully loved, satisfied and fulfilled. As I've been focusing on experiencing His presence during the holidays, a few thoughts have come to mind. I've been seeking to live in a continual state of prayer. I've been enjoying treasured moments with family and friends but keeping my central focus on Jesus. One method that has been extremely helpful for me personally is to make the following three statements at the beginning of my day and often throughout my day:

1. I rest in Your love today. I want to be so relaxed in God's presence that I have complete rest in my soul. When I hold my new granddaughter, Melody (3 weeks old), she is at complete rest. That's how relaxed Jesus wants us to feel in His presence. He doesn't want us to feel anxious or alarmed. I find with the churning of inward angst and pressure that I need to remind myself often that in God's presence there is complete rest. When I feel tension rising, I whisper in the quiet of my soul, "Lord Jesus, I rest in Your love today." His love is enough.

During your holiday season—when the expectations of others begin to put pressure on you and the schedule is filling up faster than you can imagine—stop. Breathe. Whisper: “Lord, I rest in Your presence today. I may not accomplish all that I would like, but it’s OK because I am at rest in Your love.”

2. I trust in Your provision. Christmas puts extraordinary pressure not only on our time, but also on our budgets. Predetermine how much you will spend and stick to your budget. In addition to budgeting, set priorities for yourself that will keep you emotionally healthy through the holiday season. Understand your limits. How much sleep do you need? How much quiet do you need? Whether you are introverted or extroverted, whisper often throughout the day this silent prayer: “Lord, I trust your provision.” By whispering that prayer, you embrace your limits and keep your heart focused on Him. He is our provider. Bring your heart into alignment with His and practice trusting what He provides: financially, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Friend, the truth is, it takes practice to trust God fully. The practice of recognizing His presence as you go through your day will help you learn to trust.

3. I surrender to Your will. Disappointment is a part of our spiritual journey. The most basic call of Jesus is for us to lay down our lives. When He invites us to follow Him the call is to give up our will in favor of His. Here in Western culture, it’s so easy to forget. We get wrapped up in our Western culture variety of Christianity, and I fear we forget that the call of Jesus is to die to our own life and instead receive His. If you doubt this, take a few moments and consider the following Scriptures: Matthew 16:24-26, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23 and Galatians 2:20. Ask the Lord this holiday season to remind you often that true joy is found in Him. His ways are perfect. I don’t always understand His ways—in fact, often I don’t—but in those moments I must remind myself that my job is not to understand. My job is to trust and follow.

Friend, practice staying in His presence this holiday season. Declare these three statements often throughout your day in the quietness of your own soul. Enjoy Emmanuel this Christmas season. He is "God with us." {eoa}