

4 Effective Ways to Protect Your Marriage This Christmas

The Christmas season can be hard on relationships. As a pastor, I can't tell you how many times I met with a couple after the holidays because of problems developed—or were exaggerated—between Thanksgiving and New Year's.

How can you protect your marriage this Christmas? Sounds like a good goal, right?

Here are four suggestions to protect your marriage this Christmas:

1. **Plan a budget together.** As a couple, agree upon how much you are going to spend and stick to it. This may require compromise. Often there is one spender and one saver in a relationship. Or two spenders. A good principle is don't spend in December what you're going to regret in January. Be wise on the front end.
2. **Protect your immediate family first.** Even if it means saying no to some extended-family events or time with friends, put your immediate family needs ahead of other obligations. (For years we did this the wrong way, and we regretted it later. It wasn't until our boys were in high school and voiced that they wanted more time with just us that we scaled back our schedule.) As a couple, agree on where you'll spend your time this holiday season.

For parents, remember your children will only be children for a few short years.

3. **Build traditions which actually celebrate Christmas.** We often get distracted by things that matter less. Find a way to celebrate the reason for the season together. It could be reading the Christmas story or serving at a

homeless shelter. A Savior has been born—He is Christ the Lord. Lead your family to celebrate Christmas—the real Christmas—and you’ll enjoy it even more.

4. Don’t allow outside tensions to reign inside your home.

The Christmas season can be stressful. It’s hard to be everywhere we are expected to be. Emotions—good or bad—run abnormally high this time of year. People who don’t see each other often are suddenly in close quarters together. Make a decision together that outside tensions will not distract you from the closeness you have or the joy of Christmas. {eoa}

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