

# How the Greatest Commandment Can Help You Handle the Holidays With Grace

Come up with me, to a rooftop cafe (that I've fabricated in my imagination, but it really is lovely.) I'll sip a hot mocha latte, single shot, skinny, half-chocolate, no whip. You may order whatever you would like. My treat.

From this calm, slow, meditative place, let us look down on the hullabaloo that is the American holiday season. See the crowded Costco parking lot? See the mom with hunched shoulders, trying to herd three kids into Target? See the grandmas stocking up on butter, because we all know butter is the taste of Christmas?

Busy, busy, busy. Stress, or as we might say in Spanish, "tension mental." Stretched-thin checking accounts. Cultural expectations.

Oh, and see over there the campfire that just destroyed the California town of Paradise? See all of those dazed, homeless people?

Here we are, pulling away from the world and sipping a warm drink, while we get a kingdom perspective on what holiday really means. Let's talk in low voices together about how we will walk through these days (once we sip to the bottom of our coffee cups).

How will we, the beloved children of Jesus, step into all of this and live vibrant and shining?

How will we maintain an unusual calm that will be a contrast to frantic?

How will we keep a wise eye on suffering and offer compassion

and comfort?

How will we create warm, rich, extravagant traditions with our sweet families but without loving the world and all of the *stuff*?

Jesus says the greatest commandment is this: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30b).

We’re doing it right now. We’re loving God with our minds as we step back and *think* about the holidays before we dive into them. We think Godward thoughts about all of the traditions, money, festivities, presents and suffering. We love God best when we ponder how we can direct all of these elements of our holidays to bring honor to Him.

You know, most people don’t think; they just do. But we are different. Because we are created by God, we have purpose, and we can do Thanksgiving through New Year’s Day with careful intention. Following Christ requires us to stretch our minds toward Him in all of life, so we do the mental work regarding holiday lifestyle.

Hopefully, people around us will see and feel this difference in us, and we can be ready to tell them why we walk calmly through holidays with peace, deep joy and meaning. {eo}

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