

# 8 Ways to Stay Spiritually Strong Through Thanksgiving's Trials

The satirical Babylon Bee has a hilarious holiday video worth viewing.

Let's be honest, your upcoming holiday get-togethers have potential for wonderful memory-making or some weird occurrences that'll make you wonder how you ever got into such a mess! God may have some surprises ahead with a cantankerous uncle, curmudgeon senior or an unexpected boyfriend or girlfriend with uber-liberal political views.

Scripture tells us, "A prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished" (Prov. 22:3). Pressure reveals the person so this may be your providential "heads up" so you're prepared.

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My earliest memories as a child of our extended family gatherings during the holidays remain indelibly etched on the photographic plates of my mind. The annual celebrations were the highlight of the year!

God's will is that we experience happiness and unity in our times together. Our unseen adversary plots to undermine this goal so here are some time-tested tips that can help you.

## **Having Holiday Harmony**

The Bible instructs us, "Be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 2:7). Let's not give too much

credit to the enemy of our soul but let's face the fact that he has clever schemes ready to undermine God's beautiful plans.

To be forewarned is to be for forearmed!

### **1. Start with prayer**

This may seem obvious but it's often overlooked! Prior to the upcoming family get together, pray for God's favor and discernment so He can "deliver you from the evil one" when you come together.

### **2. Serve**

Be intentional to embrace the heart of a servant rather than a spectator and mere consumer. When Jesus gathered for His Last Supper with His friends, He washed their feet and reminded us, "I have given you an example" and "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (,17). Invest in those present by possibly helping with the dishes, clean up or engaging a fussy, hyperactive child.

### **3. Ask Questions**

Scripture teaches that "the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out" (Prov. 20:5). Accept people as they are and take a genuine interest in their lives. Imitate Jesus who would be in the temple among teachers "listening to them and asking them questions" (Lk. 2:46).

### **4. Be Comfortable with Silence**

No need to keep the motor running when there are pauses in conversations. "Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise; and he who shuts his lips is esteemed a man of

understanding" ().

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## **5. Avoid Arguments**

"The servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but must be gentle towards all people..."

(2 Tim. 2:24). Stimulating conversations can quickly take a wrong turn necessitating someone skillfully redirect the flow. "The beginning of strife is as when one lets out water; therefore, abandon contention before a quarrel starts" (Prov. 17:14).

## **6. Reach Out**

In getting ready for our bountiful feasts, do we do as Jesus instructed? When a man prepared a supper and some invited guests didn't come, Jesus said he should include the less fortunate and "bring in the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind" ().

A while ago we invited a grieving man whose wife had died a year before to watch a ballgame with us. On a somewhat regular basis, we've reached out to invite people who would be alone for holiday events. These can also be wonderful opportunities for evangelism.

## **7. Show Understanding**

For those of us who are used to simply plopping down for lavish gourmet offerings during the holidays, we may not be aware of how much time and effort goes into the culinary spread. Moms can literally invest days in planning and preparation for the special occasion.

It sure doesn't honor mom or help her maintain composure when

hungry participants add stress with annoying inquiries or failure to come when called due to a “2-Minute Warning” in football games elongated to 20!

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## **8. Focus on Family (and Friends) First**

“Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

Ninety-nine percent of our stress-inducers can vanish by putting this verse into practice. Be proactive and meditate upon this verse before you attend.

Have a tremendous Thanksgiving and happy holiday season!

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