



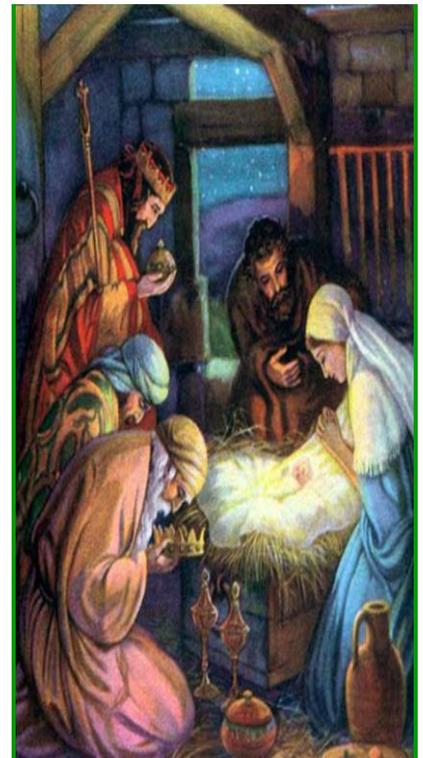
WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM -

Servants of the Most High God – our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ - Greetings! We are actually in the Christmas season signaling the season when Christ was born and the ending of another year. The Secularists have been preparing for this "holiday" right after the last Christmas holiday because it is mostly seen in terms of dollars and cents; that's why the Christmas season is over for them in a few days. For us Christians who commemorated the real reason for Christmas, the season has never left us because we celebrate the birth of Christ with every moment of our lives.

We symbolically acknowledge that He was born, but not that He was born December 25th. While the stores and other business places may celebrate Christmas as if it were about money, presents and parties, Christians know that it's all about Christ. It is because of Him, we have potential for true love, true peace and true joy; and this is something for which to be JOYFUL. I am of the opinion that we expect too much of Christmas Day and so we try to crowd into it the arrears of kindness and humanity of the whole year.

We defend ourselves by compensating for the things we have neglected to do during the year and try to make up for it before the year ends. According to the experts on **Defense Mechanisms Compensation** is a defense mechanism in which people overachieve in one area to compensate for failures in another.

Interestingly, it is a phrase often used by people to suggest that persons are indulging in excesses in one area of their lives in order to hide insecurities about other aspects of their lives or to make up for some things that they neglected to do in the past. This is NOT what Christmas is all about but our 'humanness' oftentimes take us down this road when most times it just simple means that we become "naked and not ashamed", confess/apologize if we have to and set ourselves **free**.



*Now Wise Men Still Seek His Face, as they did in days of old,
To give the Lord their hearts, more precious than silver and gold.
For the King still lives today, and invites men to His side,
To reign with Him in glory....!!! By: Julie Carro*



CHRISTMAS:

HAPPINESS & PEACE VS STRESSFUL & DEPRESSING PERIOD:

I felt the urge once again to repeat this article from last year's Newsletter because I have discovered that this is an area that all people of God, more so Pastors and Minister need to be conscious of because of the impact of the season on many Christians including yourselves.

For most of us it is a time of Joy, happiness and peace but for many it is a stressful and depressing period. Some of the causes of Stress and Depression during Christmas are attributed to: the absence of a beloved person, Family misunderstandings, economic difficulties, Physical tiredness, Loneliness and Seasonal Emotional Disturbance.

I would like to place some emphasis on two reasons mentioned above namely - *Loneliness and Seasonal Emotional Disturbance* because they are more 'real' during the Christmas season and seem to have a greater impact on humans.

Loneliness vs. 'Aloneness'

It is a fact that Pastors/Ministers do get lonely; notice I did not say *Alone*. Loneliness is a feeling of emptiness inside -- a feeling of need to be with others. Being *alone* is merely not being with other people. Just because one is not with other people however, doesn't mean one is feeling empty. Many people actually prefer to be alone and aren't lonely when they are by themselves. On the other hand, if you are with people but you desperately miss someone who is not with you, then you are not alone but you are lonely. Being alone is then associated with a positive state of mind where you are contented, blissful and happy being with just himself.

Being alone is when you can be truly alone and not consider it as a threat, instead see it as an opportunity to catch up with how you have been feeling lately and evaluate your feelings. The alone time is often used to evaluate your feelings, reaffirm emotions, deal with issues and to have an inner conversation. The alone time is said to be the time to truly get to know yourself and what you want. Being alone should leave the person in a calm state of mind.

Pastors and Ministers it is important to note that for many people (especially the elderly), that loneliness is a real issue during the holidays. They may not have someone to sit with them at the dinner table; they may not even have a festive table or even people to speak to. Many old people also have no friends, either because they are ill or because they are no longer seen as alive. **Younger people**, who rely only on friends, can also be found alone, and without invitation during the holidays which can create perfect candidates for depression.



motional Disturbance:

Seasonal Emotional Disturbance is a real psychological problem, which coincides with the period of holidays but unfortunately is not so easily recognized (seasonal emotional disorder). It creates a source of anxiety and worry at a time when the general expectation is that everybody should be joyful. Although it is a mild form of depression it is annoying and affects the person who is suffering from it.

The good thing with the stress of the holidays is that it is predictable. Unlike other types of stress that we encounter in everyday life, we most times know when it will start and when it will finish! Therefore, we can organize ourselves in order to avoid it or at least control it. I will hasten to say that Ministers are not exempt from this experience but knows how to ‘plea the blood’ and allow the spirit to take control. The added challenge for Pastors and Ministers is that they need to do all in their power to ensure that the membership is made aware and conscious of these issues and devise strategies to address some as far as possible.

The experience of the true saints of God must be to recognize and be concerned for all, not just the poorest and neediest but the most emotionally vulnerable at this time of year. This recognition assures us that if we journey with faithfulness in this life, we will-- as the psalmist sings ‘-- be filled with the presence and radiance of God.

The Attachment below is added for your information:

ATTACHMENT

Accept feelings

Though you may feel like you are *supposed* to be merry, don’t force it. "You just can't be where you're not,". "So if you feel down," he continues, "feel down." "When we acknowledge that we are down, it helps us." We ought to give others space to feel whatever they are feeling as well. "Be in with your own anxiety that may surface when you are in the presence of someone who appears to be in distress, so that you are not trying to ‘fix’ them in order to ease your own distress."

Manage expectations

There can be a lot of pressure to make Christmas perfect. But one minister reminds us to, “try to let go of how things have always been or are supposed to be and allow this holiday to reflect your current reality.” If you are feeling blue, the goal of perfection can lead to stress or disappointment. Keep expectations realistic, and receive the season as it comes to you. When supporting a friend though a difficult period, help keep the pressure low. Don’t push the “holiday spirit” upon your loved one. Give space and permission for them to cancel a day of shopping, or to initiate a deep conversation on a day you had planned for celebration.

Be selectively social

While everything in you may want to be alone, fight that urge sometimes. Retired Chaplain, of the United States Air Force, encourages those who are struggling to “get with other people.” When serving those deployed far from family during the holidays, “Chaplains work very hard to provide fellowship opportunities for the troops whenever and wherever they happen to be,”

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ninded the troops not to feel obligated to attend every Christmas event, but to ensure they time to be with other people.

He also recommends others stay connected with those who are feeling blue during the holidays. "I always worry about the person who is alone," he says. "I would stay with that person until relieved by someone close to him or her. I think it's that important." So stick close and remember, not everything you do together needs to be Christmas related. Mundane chores like laundry and grocery shopping can be lonely times. Offer to help.

Care for the body

Physical factors such as fatigue and low blood sugar, can contribute to a sense of sadness. When feeling down, extra attention to your health is helpful. "Take care of yourself. Adequate sleep, exercise, and good nutrition relieve stress, deter depression and improve self-esteem." That doesn't mean you have to avoid *every* Christmas cookie, but take care of your body. Healthy habits are sometimes set aside during the holidays. When supporting one who is struggling, you can help by offering to go for a walk together or by making healthy eating choices. The discipline of diet and exercise always seems a little easier with a friend. Be that friend.

Watch your language

Be mindful of times you talk to yourself in ways you would never speak to another. Thoughts like, "I should be over this by now," or "I'm ruining Christmas for everyone," add guilt, which exacerbates the sadness. Instead, look for things to celebrate. When you get yourself to go to that party, pat yourself on the back. When you turn down that third cup of eggnog, tell yourself how proud you are of your accomplishment. Be your own cheerleader.

Be cognizant of what we say to others. "Avoid these phrases: 'It's Christmas! Catch the spirit!' 'You're just sad because you WANT to be sad!' 'I know just how you feel.' or 'If you really believed in the reason for the season, you wouldn't be sad.'" None of these is helpful. "Giving advice often results in the other person feeling minimized, dismissed, judged, or unheard." *Focus your attention on listening rather than talking during this time.*

Worship

Attending a special worship service can be healing .While typical Christmas worship services and programs may not be appealing to you, many churches offer special Blue Christmas or Longest Night worship gatherings. Churches design these services to offer those in attendance the hope of Christmas even while feeling a sense of sadness. In some churches special services are planned during the season. These services are planned with time of prayer and fellowship and have been valuable to those participating. Services provide opportunities for people to talking to each to linger and relax."

It is unrealistic to expect you or your loved ones to feel better simply because it is the season to be jolly. Be intentional in addressing the sadness. Although it may not feel like the most wonderful time of the year, the event we are celebrating – "The Word became flesh and made his home among us" (John 1:14) – reminds us that Jesus is near, even when we are feeling down.

Step into the New Year with a Sense of Purpose

HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS SEASON & PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR WHEN IT COMES

Yours in His Service

Mavis M. Ferguson