

## **A FEW PRACTICAL POINTS – Handling My Family and Feelings (Lesson 3)**

*\*Disclaimer: These points are presented with the assumption that abuse is not present among family members. Physical and/or verbal abuse is not acceptable.*

### **HANDLING MY FAMILY**

#### **Identify What You Dread**

- Unhappy memories.
- Toxic relatives.
- Changes to the family dynamic (divorce, death, children that no longer live at home); these may be more obvious during the holidays.
- Monotony: same faces, same food, same jokes, etc.
- Lowered defenses: stress, cold and flu season, gets dark earlier, eating worse, sleeping less, etc.
- Obligations/Expectations: eat food you don't like, go to someone's house that you wouldn't otherwise visit, etc.

#### **Let Things Go for the Time Being**

- Forgotten birthday, unpaid debt, longstanding feuds.
- Forgive (or at least smile and focus on other things).

#### **Be an Adult**

- Don't revert to your childhood self: whine at Mom, pick on siblings, argue with Dad.
- Don't say things that aren't nice.
- If everyone waited two seconds before emitting toxic emotions into the environment, we might have world peace. We must *think* and *pause* before speaking when emotions are high.
- Be fair to both sides of the family.
- Recognize that elders may have wisdom that will benefit you.

#### **Worry About Your Own Actions – Be Your Best Self!**

- Don't try to change people (only God can do that).
- Not everything is about you (some people act out because of their own issues).

#### **Decide Ahead of Time How to Deal With...**

- Uncomfortable questions (have an answer ready, "I'm not comfortable discussing that," then change the subject).
- Uncomfortable comments (ignoring things does help).
- Uncomfortable situations (take a walk, help with chores).

#### **If You Are the Host**

- Make sure food is respectful of people's dietary needs.
- Set up play area for kids.
- Keep the mood light.
- Organize activities (puzzles, board games, etc.).

#### **Go with The Flow – Relax, Breathe and Laugh!**

- Terri Orbuch, relationship expert and sociology professor at Oakland University, has said, "The events themselves aren't inherently stressful – it's our perception of them that stresses us out."
- Sometimes we react to situations in ways that escalate the stress. To prevent this, we must ask ourselves, "Could I possibly be making things worse by my actions?"

#### **See the Bigger Picture**

- Give thanks.
- Think on good things (even good occasions can be soured in your mind, if you maintain a critical mind).
- Don't take things for granted (a lot can change before the next Christmas).

- Focus on what is going right.
- Practice gratitude
- Remember and practice the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering/patience, gentleness/kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance/self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

## **HANDLING MY FEELINGS**

### **Risk Factors of Depression**

- Unrealistic expectations.
- Comparing your reality to someone else's perceived perfection (social media is escalating this).
- Not taking care of yourself.
- Winter blues (changes in season, increased darkness, staying inside more often).
- Thyroid disease.
- Poor sleep habits.
- Facebook overload. According to a 2014 article in *Healthy Living*, increased amounts of social media cause difficulty with real-life human interaction, a lack of companionship, and an unrealistic view of the world.
- Certain medications.

*Gregoire, Carolyn. "Why We Get Depressed At The Holiday, And How To Deal." Healthy Living, 17 Dec. 2014, huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/17/holiday-depression\_n\_6326906.html. Accessed 27 /Dec. 2016.*

### **Remember These Are Holy-Days**

- Lean on and into Jesus as an anchor.
- Find a devotion book to study the month of December.
- Keep spiritual practices of prayer and worship that bring you strength.

### **Think of Others**

- Instead of wallowing in loneliness, reach out and help others.
- Volunteer, serve, bring cheer to someone else.

### **Make New Memories and Start Traditions**

- One day, they will be the "good old days."
- In times of bereavement, celebrate the one you lost: Bake their favorite food; Buy yourself something they would have given you; Create a new ritual that honors them (special ornaments, etc.)

### **Keep Moving Forward**

- Get help from professionals if moving forward seems impossible (Grief counselors, divorce counselors, and/or support groups).
- Just because someone has been lost doesn't mean there aren't others to love or receive love from.