**HOW TO NAVIGATE THE HOLIDAYS AS A SINGLE ADULT by Kris Swiatocho and Pastor Tom Worstell**

Whether you are single again, single never married, single by divorce, single parent or a young adult who is single, the holidays can be tough depending on your situation. Most holidays are designed for the traditional family. We often see images of families in matching red pajamas sitting around the tree on Christmas morning, feverishly opening up presents from Santa. Sometimes the images are grandparents with their arms open wide as they welcome their families home for the holidays. Then there are images of couples cuddling next to a fire with their cute Christmas socks as they exchange gifts. And then there is you, alone. OK, so you are not 100% alone. You are a single parent but this year, your kids are going to your former spouse. You find yourself sitting in front of your tree, just finishing off a half-gallon of rocky road ice cream as you stare off in space. Maybe you have your grown kids but this year your wonderful wife of 40 years passed away and no amount of family calling your or inviting you to dinner will fill that emptiness. Maybe you have your nieces and nephews to help celebrate this year but again, as the “single” you get seated at the kiddie table. You often get gifts from the “As seen on TV” section of the local drug store. And maybe, you are really alone because all your family has passed or moved away, and all your friends have their own families. So, what do you do? How do you get through it? How do you keep from eating everything you see? How do keep from binging on holiday movies, buying stuff off of Amazon that you don’t need, or crying yourself to sleep?

***Pastor Tom Worstell, Minister of Engagement and Singles Pastor from Blue Springs Christian Church in Blue Springs, MO came up with a list of things that may help you this year.***

* **Prepare Yourself for The Holidays; Set Realistic Expectations** – the ambush of emotions can happen at any time – prepare beforehand and choose to embrace those emotions appropriately – what will really happen this season? – what is reasonable for you to expect his season? Note: A great resource is a video by Church Initiative called “Surviving the Holidays”.
* **Accept** **the Difficulty of This Time of Year** – remind yourself that this is a season, and it will pass – choose to participate rather than avoid – you might exert more effort avoiding cheer rather than if you’d just embrace it – so go ahead and decorate! – light a fire in the fireplace (or look one up on YouTube) – hang a wreath – bake cookies – buy gifts! – accepting that the holidays are here mentally and emotionally can help you find your path towards embracing and enjoying it!
* **Socialize with Other Humans** – don’t hibernate – you may be tempted to isolate yourself, but force yourself to go to some appropriate things – get together with other singles or marrieds – go to family gatherings – attend the holiday party – go to the Christmas Eve service – choose to spend time with people who lift your spirits.
Note: It’s a great time to also contact friends on social media (near and far) and see what they are doing for the holidays. You could even do a zoom gathering for those who don’t live locally. Yes, we know Zoom doesn’t replaced physical contact but it’s better than nothing.
* **Don’t Numb Your Pain** – with unhealthy things like drugs, alcohol, overeating, or too much Hallmark Channel – give yourself freedom to experience and process any emotions you may feel. You may think about journaling what you are feeling. Talk to God about those feelings.
* **Get Up and Move** – take care of your physical well-being – eating healthy foods and exercising will help you feel better also – get outside and get some sunshine. Endorphins are great medicine to help with depression.
* **Set Boundaries** – determine ahead of time what you are willing to do and stick with it – don’t let others guilt you into doing things you aren’t comfortable doing.
* **Invite A Plus One** – there is no shame in bringing a friend or family member to an office party or holiday get together. Also, ask friends what they are doing and ask if you can come along to their parties or gatherings.
* **Start A New Tradition** – have your own Christmas party or meal and invite others, especially other singles who may also be alone – volunteer at a local shelter or food bank – plan a vacation or trip – help a single parent family with Christmas expenses-make a decision to call or contact other singles and check to see if they are OK—ask if you can pray for them.
* **Buy Yourself A Gift** – splurge a little on yourself because you deserve it! – wrap it up and wait to open it until Christmas morning. Or buy gifts (or fix a meal) for those in need and personally take it to their home on Christmas day.
* **Plan A Sabbath Day** – take one day (or more) to get alone with God – focus on your spiritual relationship with God by reading books, getting in nature, praying, etc.
* **Celebrate Happy Moments** – rather than focusing on something you don’t have, view each milestone, story, or expression of love as a reminder of what is possible – view it as a beautiful reminder of what can happen. Start a thank you or blessing journal.
* **If You Have Kids** – do talk with your former spouse about plans, visits, and gifts (cost and what you’re getting each one) – include your kids in your holiday plans and discuss them ahead of time – acknowledge any fears or frustrations they may have – ask what traditions you’ll continue and which ones your former spouse will continue – encourage your kids to enjoy their time with their other parent and not feel guilty if they do.

Remember, while it can be a tough season, the enemies goal is to get you alone without hope or any joy. Don’t allow the enemy to do this. Ask God what he would want from you this season. Make it about Jesus and how you can help others. How you can help others remember the real reason for the season.

***John 10: 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.***