

Happy Holidays! November begins what we often call “The Holiday Season.” For many, that means the religious holy days of Christmas or Chanukah. For most, it means doing something involving food, family, (and often football) on Thanksgiving. It means a party, or at least watching TV together, on New Year’s Eve. In the time between Thanksgiving and New Years, there will be lots of parties, lots of feasting, lots of gift-giving . . . and also lots of decorating, cooking, shopping, and driving around. Regardless of our religion or spiritual perspective, “The Holiday Season” can be downright fatiguing.

I suspect the root of this stress lies in our desire to live up to false expectations. We want to continue a certain family or faith tradition in exactly the same way as every other year. We want to give gifts that are perfect. We want the food we serve to be perfect. We even want it to snow at just the right time – but not too much. When it comes to this season, our striving towards perfection can lead to a heart attack, or at least a broken heart. We can’t be all things to all people. We can’t be perfect as God is perfect.

So, as we approach the holidays, here’s a simple remedy so we don’t end up singing “Tis the season to be stressed out.” If we give space, God will do any perfecting that needs to be done. If we treat all of the events of the busy “Holiday Season” as truly holy days, we might find God’s grace already at work in our lives. If we view the office party or the neighborhood party not as obligations, but as holy and set-apart time that is reserved for deepening relationships with others, people we know, and people we haven’t yet met, we might find ourselves less pressured by seasonal expectations. Perhaps this Thanksgiving, we can start to give thanks for the spaces of grace that are going to open up in the coming season. May this holiday season contain holy spaces for you, your family, our community, and our world.

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