

Fear Not

“Step away from the refrigerator, Vicki!” “Put your hands down and step away from the refrigerator.” Really? Are we that much out of control during the holidays that we will have to install highly-sensitive security warnings on the appliances? Fear of the holidays is a reality. `Tis the season to be feasting, right? From Thanksgiving to New Year’s Day, it is socially acceptable, even encouraged, to participate in gluttony and abandon all self-restraint. I say, “This year let’s be countercultural and participate in the holidays fearlessly and with great joy, not with dread.”

The Bible is full of principles and precepts to keep us from harm and from sin. We will more than make it through the holidays without shame, guilt or extra pounds. We will thrive through the season if we follow our holy, holiday guide for successful celebration:

Stay on High Alert

I Peter 5:8 (NIV 2011) says, ***Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*** First, he is not a lion; he just roars like one. But he is crafty. He will look for ways to get us in vulnerable positions when our guard is down. This happened to me in Houston this summer. We had finished up our gala celebration for Carole Lewis and our Summit meeting. It was a wonderful success. Needless to say, by Sunday night I was pretty exhausted, but my work was not finished. On Monday morning, our FP4H board meeting was scheduled and I still had a lot of preparation work to do.

My dear friend Becky Turner had left me her car since she was not staying over in Houston. I headed to dinner Sunday afternoon at the only restaurant I really knew—Cafe Express. I drove from the hotel to the restaurant, parked, went in and

enjoyed two hours of study, good food and blessed rest. Finally, I realized I needed to head back to the hotel. I exited the restaurant only to discover that Becky's car was gone! Someone had stolen her car. Now, I am a small town girl and Houston is a big city, but I did not leave the keys in the car. I looked all over the lot thinking I might not have parked right in the front like I remembered. I pushed the panic button on the fob—nothing! I sat down on the curb ready to call the police, when I realized I did not even know what kind of car it was, much less the registration number. I had to call Becky; I dialed her number and I said, "Becky" (with one word she knew something was wrong.) What a friend! We all need friends like that. I told her someone had stolen her car. She did not say a word, just silence. She asked me the standard questions anyone would ask: "Where am I—key in the car—packages in full view? No! No! Then she said the most remarkable thing. "Vicki, you do know that there are two entrances into Cafe Express, right?" No, I did not know that! When I got there, I was so focused on food and rest I forgot to even pay attention! I went back in, saw the other entrance and there was the car! Can you imagine the victory the enemy would have had over me if I had not called Becky for help? All the joy of the Summit meeting would have been stolen, along with my confidence for leading a board meeting. I was not on high alert, but that will not happen again.

Practice the Halt Principle

Don't let yourself become:

- **Too Hungry.** Let's face it! If we get too hungry, we eat too much. We become careless and let down our guard. During the holidays, it is important to make sure we keep hungry pangs at bay with quality calories. Food with benefits needs to be our main choice. There will be room for the "goodies" of the holidays. It's when we become too hungry that we are tempted to make a "not so good" choice and over-feed our bodies.

- **Too Anxious.** The holidays can definitely be a stressor. My plan is to plan. Waiting until the last minute for preparation, shopping and family will only make it more stressful.
- **Too Lonely.** Ugh! The holidays can be very lonely for some. This loneliness can cause us to abandon all hope and “gorge” ourselves for quick comfort. God is the God of all comfort. He will come to the rescue. He can meet our deepest needs if we will allow Him. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God II Cor. 1:3,4.
- **Too Tired.** I’m feeling tired already just thinking about all there is to do for the holidays: shopping, cleaning and cooking are a necessary part of it. We will not abandon our FP4H disciplines of eating well and exercising. These disciplines give us the energy we need to accomplish the task. Also, no late nights for me! “Mom in her kerchief and I in my cap had just settled down for a long winter’s nap”[1] is ancient advice well-heeded.

Prioritize Your Time with God

With a house full of company, you may have to adjust your living space and be flexible with your time. Regardless, we need to stay connected to the Father during this time for strength and peace. I enjoy the holidays so much more when I am in communion with the Lord. Taking time to truly be thankful and celebrating the birth of our Savior is not something you want to forget about because your schedule has been turned upside down. Make plans to get up earlier or take a walk away from the house as an extension of your quiet time. Jesus did it. Mark 1:35 tells us, ***Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house***

and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. I will never forget my first Thanksgiving and Christmas as a believer. The holidays had a whole new meaning for me and God revealed Himself to me. The things God may reveal to you during that special time with Him may be exactly what will get you through the temptation of the food and help you make the best of the relationships.

The Scripture says our enemy is ***like*** a roaring lion. He is a counterfeiter. He wants to be the Lion of Judah, but he is not. Jesus is the Lion of Judah and he has crushed the head of the serpent. I wish you the best beginning of the holiday season. May we practice thankfulness with abandon and experience joy overflowing!