



The Outer Leaf

Live Oaks
Community Church

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"Leading edge news and views of the ministries of Live Oaks Community Church"

The Big "Evaluation!"

Did you plan ahead for Christmas and celebrate it better this year? Back in September I wrote an article and preached a series of sermon's with the over arching theme, "Planning Ahead For Christmas." Some thought I was ridiculous. They exclaimed, "It is way too early to think about Christmas let alone prepare for it!" Yet, I begged to differ... Scripture contains several people who prepared months in advance to celebrate that first historic event. On top of this, the harried, stress-filled experience of many at Christmas, our family included, shouted for us to approach our worship and celebration of Christmas in a different way. Standing here in February and looking back – I am glad we planned ahead like we did!

Now that Christmas is over, how did you do? Were you more successful in planning and preparing ahead? Did you go through Christmas with less stress and more worship? What did you learn about God, yourself, and the celebration of Christmas that you can apply to keep Christmas even better next year? I am pleased to say that I and my family made progress – and enjoyed worship and the celebrating of Christmas with more peace and success than the year before! Yet, we still found room to grow and learned a thing or two about preparation for the holiday and Christmas season. These are the insights that have stood out once the dust settled...

Start September 1st and do everything possible by November 1st. Fulfilling the expectations and participating in the activities and events of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years are challenging enough all by themselves. Most of us live busy and full lives without all these extras. It is no wonder we struggle when trying to add home repair projects in preparations for guests, decorating for Christmas, planning event schedules and dinner menus, determining who to give gifts to and shopping for those gifts, and sending Christmas letters or cards to our already heavy schedule? Without preparing ahead the natural result is to experience tremendous stress and a violation of our expectations when we can't do everything we hoped... I can't tell you how much it helped to get our gift lists together, clean the yard and put up Christmas lights, plan family devotional activities, determine menus, get some shopping done, and finish home projects (at least the ones we planned to finish) before Thanksgiving! It really makes a positive difference to get as much done as possible by November 1st. We hope to do even better

next year.

Never rest on your laurels! Janette Dillon and I were talking in the final weeks before Christmas and came to a similar conclusion. "You plan, prepare and work ahead for Christmas, and yet if you slow down and take a break for a couple days all of a sudden you are behind!" The Tortoise and the Hare have something to teach us about being prepared for Christmas! The race does not go to the swift but to those who keep on running. If we keep pace with His Spirit we will accomplish the work He deems as important – that is all that matters in the end. We must intentionally and faithfully take the steps to the goals that Lord has placed before us – this is the only path to reaching them! We can never sit down and rest on our past accomplishments, but must stay at it daily to accomplish the work God has given.



Keep tweaking your expectations. My expectations, your expectations, and the expectations of others are not always God's expectations for anyone of us individually...

Jesus said, "Follow Me." We must do this through every day, circumstance or decision we face, especially at Christmas. Joseph and Mary had to tweak their expectations as they received God's message through Gabriel, had their first child in a barn, and moved their young family to Egypt. The Magi had to tweak their expectations for their life when the Star first appeared, when they left their homes and businesses for a foreign country, and went home by a different route to avoid a ruthless, wicked king. You and I will also have to tweak our expectations as we discern from the Lord how to celebrate Christmas well though we don't have a talent prepared for the All Church Christmas Dinner, we are facing a work slow down and possible lay off, a loved one may not be with us, and... you fill in the blank. Following the Lord and fulfilling His expectations is a moment by moment relationship with Him that can change directions like the wind. We must stay flexible enough to change our traditions, locations, and schedule if necessary to keep in step with Him.

Until next Christmas - it is only ten months away... Do you need to take any steps to be prepared?

Lord bless,

Pastor Kelley

Cell phone vs. The Bible

Ever wonder what would happen if we treated our Bible like we treat our cell phone?

What if we carried it around in our purses or pockets?

What if we flipped through it several times a day?

What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?

What if we used it to receive messages from the text?

What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?

What if we gave it to Kids as gifts?

What if we used it when we traveled?

What if we used it in case of emergency?

This is something to make you go....hmm...where is my Bible?

Oh, and one more thing. Unlike our cell phone, we don't have to worry about our Bible being disconnected because Jesus already paid the bill.

Makes you stop and think, where are my priorities? And no dropped calls!

Trust in the Lord and ASAP (Always Say A Prayer)

For God so lo**V**ed the world,
That He g**A**ve
His on**L**y
Begott**E**n
So**N**
That whoever
Believeth **I**n Him
Should **N**ot perish,
But have **E**verlasting life."
John 3:16

