



Facing the holiday season

God is my strength and power, and He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer and sets me on my high places. (2 Samuel 22:33-34).

A few days ago, I stepped into an elevator with a lady who immediately started talking to me; *"I'm on my way to my room now, I am going to sit there until this is over!"* "Why?" I asked. *"Because I have no money. All my friends are buying things and eat and drink; I cannot afford any of that. There is nothing for me to do than just sit at home."* I looked into her eyes and saw that she was a believer. *"I can see you have a different spirit you know, you need not to be discouraged..."* I stayed in the elevator, speaking to her about her position in Christ and by the time she got off on the last floor, she was a different person!

So many of us will be confronted with similar situations this festive season. How do we survive? How do we make a difference? May the following thoughts encourage you in surviving the festive season.

1. Put first things first

First realise that having access to money, possessions and power, does not necessarily make a person happy. As believers, we must guard our hearts. The things we have (possess), or do not have (lack/want), should not define us. We have the Spirit of the Living God inside us. That defines us above all else. It especially defines how we will respond to having or lacking "possessions, riches and wealth".

2. Wake up with purpose

Every morning as you wake up, ask the Holy Spirit for grace and mercy to view today from His perspective and not to be drawn into the whirlwind of circumstances, emotions, challenges and crises the day may bring (Lamentations 3:22-23).

3. Be on the lookout for opportunities

Ask the Holy Spirit to make you sensitive to notice someone in need and then gently minister hope and perspective to them. This may include anyone from the elderly, a lost child who needs someone to hold them, giving up your parking space in the busy parking lot, paying the groceries of the person in front of you at the till, praying for a sick person, helping someone across the street etc. Ask for opportunities to pray for people as the Holy Spirit leads you (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

4. Servanthood will open doors

So perhaps you are shy and not an outgoing type of person. Helping someone carry their groceries to their car, giving up your seat to another person in a busy place, giving up your place in the queue in the Post Office etc. is also serving others. Then, after you have done this, start talking to

those you have helped, trusting the Holy Spirit to make a difference in their lives right there (Galatians 6:10).

5. Don't focus on what you don't have

Just know that more people are unable to make ends meet, than just yourself. Do not focus on what you don't have, or what you want, or even what you are trusting God for, but have not yet received. This is an intentional decision each of us must make daily, not only during the festive season (Philippians 4:11).

6. Give thanks

I remember my parents' reprimand when I was complaining as a child. My mum used to say: "Count your blessings, count them one by one, and you will be surprised what God has done!" The quickest cure for a complaining, self-pitying attitude is deliberately giving thanks. Look around you and start giving thanks for what you do have, especially for knowing and following the Lord Jesus Christ (Psalm 106:1).

7. Do not neglect time with God

If we scale down on spending time with God through the holiday season, it shows that He is just another item on our 'to do list' from which we take a break. Be sure to download and listen to a free audio Bible on YouTube during this time, e.g. NIV Bible, NKJV Bible, dramatised versions of the Bible etc. Also consider worshipping God by listening to Christian music or personal spontaneous songs. Intentionally take time to speak to God every day, especially during those first moments in the morning when you wake up. It does not have to be a formal prayer session. But do not neglect daily sweet communion with the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:12).

8. Discern needs, wants and desires

There is nothing wrong in asking God for what we need e.g., food, home, clothing, water. Boldly pray about that and trust Him whole-heartedly for daily necessities. Do consider your heart though, that you do not blame God for not meeting your wants or desires. Sometimes, what we want or desire would not be to our benefit to receive. Rest in the Lord's provision for your life.

9. Give something of yourself

The holiday attitude in shopping malls is to get more, buy more and not be left behind or left out. The marketing focus is to tell us: you are *worthy* to be spoiled. The Spirit of Christ is different. It is never about us, but about Him. Ask Him how you can demonstrate His love to others in tangible ways. Forget about yourself and pour love on others. Very soon, you will feel much better, because the Holy Spirit loves our obedience to be Christ-like in all we do! (Romans 8:9).

10. Become the answer to someone's prayer

We all have something we can offer another. Be therefore intentional in giving your time, attention and love, also considering things that may physically benefit others; and yes, money, but only as and how the Holy Spirit leads you. *Even in giving, let it not be about yourself.*

May the Holy Spirit encourage and strengthen you to be a light-bearer for His Kingdom, giving Him more glory this season than ever.