

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Holiday Gatherings

This Holiday season (Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year Celebration), a great number of families and friends will gather together. Some celebrating for secular reasons others for religious. Some of the greatest joys and disappointments are experienced this time of the year. Here are three suggestions to aid your holiday experience, so the entire celebratory package may be opened with joy. Remember your gathering is not a courthouse, a tennis court, or Golgotha.

Courthouse Leave your judicial robes in the closet. A holiday gathering is not the time for judgment and conviction. You have all gathered together at your own will. This is a

time for patience and peace. The scriptures use the word "longsuffering", which may be more appropriate in your case. Yes, your relatives may do or say things that drive you crazy. You are different people and different people have different lifestyles. However, you have not gathered together to ruin someone's special day by telling them what is wrong with their life. There are other times to have those discussions. Realize these are people who are in the same crazy life that you are. They want the same thing you do, to have joy, which the world tries to steal away as often as possible.

Hebrews 12:14 - Follow after

peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord:

Tennis Court There are going to be comments made during the gathering that may be an irritant or even hurtful. Yes, you want to bring out your backhand... don't do it. Do not engage in a volley of words. At first, it seems as if these things are subtle barbs, a little poke in the ribs. Perhaps no one notices, but you do. So you launch another comment back. Before you know it a full scale match of words is going on. You are each serving up one mouthful of pain after another. Is that why you are gathering? Is that going to make the others around you feel good? You don't get set, point, match by seeing who you can hurt the most at a holiday gathering. The issue is one of humility. No one likes to be put down. To counter it, our conceit, or ego swings back. Instead, let us swallow our pride and take up the matter at a more private time and in a mature fashion.

Galatians 5:26 - *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Golgotha Golgotha is the

place to where Jesus carried His cross and died. First, you are not going to die at your holiday gathering. You may pass out from food consumption or get salmonella eating Aunt Hilga's deviled eggs, but the chances of you dying are extremely small. Second, carrying your cross of burden and suffering can create a lot of damage around the house (think of the small amount of space in the kitchen!). Seriously, there are many folks each holiday season that act as if it is the biggest burden they have every engaged in by gathering together. The house is too full, the turkey kept them up 9 hour last night, there is dirt on the front door rug, there aren't enough pickled beets for everyone, where are all the pies going to go, and oh, the dirty dishes – and they have to take care of it all! “Woe is me! Look how much I have to put up with to make this all happen.” Yes, someone out there is carrying an awful big cross. In the midst of a party, they are working hard to fill everyone up with a big, hot, steaming plate of guilt. Don't let this be you. Remember, serving others is something we do out of kindness

and love. Can you imagine Christ carrying his cross to Golgotha and complaining all the way? Christ did indeed suffer, but was silent as a lamb led to the slaughter. What he did, he did out of love. Perhaps, you can remember His Words if you really feel you are suffering by serving:

Luke 23:34 - *And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

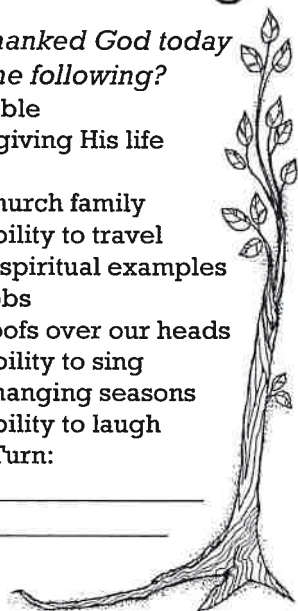
Friends, if you gather during this time of year, remember this is a time you can lead by example. Make your example one of peace, humility, and love. You are not at a courthouse, tennis court, or Golgotha. There is a connection to those with whom you are gathering together. These are family and friends who want to have the best of the day for themselves, you, and the rest of those gathered. In the best of all worlds, your example allows you to influence hopeful future heirs to the kingdom of God (**Revelation 21:7**). In the least, you make it through your gathering and don't leave with mash potatoes thrown into your hair.

Travis Main

dear God,
thanks for this
beautiful life
and forgive me if
i dont love it
enough.

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The ability to travel
- Good spiritual examples
- Our jobs
- The roofs over our heads
- The ability to sing
- The changing seasons
- The ability to laugh
- Your Turn:



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WELLSBURG CHURCH OF CHRIST

92 Rose Cottage Lane
Wellsburg, WV 26070
304-737-1422

<http://www.truthandright.org>



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Christian Q&A

Kathy Shane is the subject of our interview this month. She is one of several who moved their membership from Toronto to here not too long ago.

What is your favorite hymn that we sing? Why?

"An Evening Prayer," because it makes me think of forgiveness, "The Ninety & Nine," because it gives hope when feeling lost, and "I'm the One," because it is a reminder of my part in Christ's death.

What is your favorite Bible verse? Why?

Psalm 23, because it is comforting & calming, 1 Cor. 13, because it is a reminder of love for which I am striving, & 1 Cor. 10:13, because it says I can overcome anything with God's help.

What individual from the Bible do you most look up to? Why?

David and Peter – They seem more human than some. They made mistakes & sinned, yet God considered them faithful. This gives me hope and security in God.

What do you want others to know about your religion?

After a lifetime of mistakes & sins, I have prevailed due to God's love, mercy, forgiveness, & His strengthening me. I try to live by-treat people the way I would want to be treated. It's not always easy.

What makes you a strong believer in your faith?

I have been a Christian for 56 years. I have had my doubts & strengths in faith. But it comes down to God's love & help. Reading His word, prayer, & being around other Christians is what has always pulled me through. Trying to always remember that I am just a sojourner in this world.

How long have you attended the Wellsburg church of Christ?

Why did you start attending?

I came from Toronto about 1 ½ years ago. Due to people moving, deaths, & unfaithfulness, we had to close our doors. I enjoy being here & feel very welcomed. Thank you.

What advice would you give someone who is new to the Church?

Read your Bible, study with an older Christian, & be around Christians as much as possible. Remember that God is on your side.