

December 18, 2011
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Monday

Gen. 23:13 And he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If you will only please listen to me.

The Olympics give awards for the Long Jump, the Triple Jump, and the High Jump, but there are no awards for jumping to conclusions. It is a great temptation and, at times, a greater sin. When you think you know 'why', or 'what', or 'what is' the motivation of another you easily misunderstand, miscommunicate, and misstep. This season, whether with family, friends, or with those in your church *listen carefully*; work hard to genuinely hear and understand. Make it your aim to *assume only the best* motives. Never assume someone meant to offend you, hurt you, or neglect you. Jumping to conclusions can only lead to falling into the pits.

Tuesday

James 1:19 But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

A wise saying suggests that God gave us two ears and one mouth because we are to listen twice as much as we are to speak. I would go further and say, he gave us two ears, two eyes, two hands and only one mouth because we should be twice as careful to listen, twice as careful to see (understand), and twice as careful to serve as we are to speak words of assumption, bitterness, anger, or gossip. In the midst of holiday gatherings, we would do well to hear the full council of God: "Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth..." Indeed, more is lost to the Kingdom of God through our disobedience of the tongue than we can estimate.

Wednesday

James 3:14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

Herod's ambition and jealousy led to the destruction of his family. He not only killed the boys of Bethlehem; he murdered his own sons. Don't kid yourself. The same kind of thing still happens today. Though you will not likely lose a kingdom over your ambition and jealousy (only because you are not a king), you will lose your family, your friends, and everything that is truly important. Jealousy is not easily tamed. It is not even easily recognized when it is our own, but it will destroy you if you do not allow the Holy Spirit to destroy it in your life.

Thursday

James 1:17 Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.

The gifts of God are without number, but that does not mean we should not consciously, verbally, and prayerfully number them. Spending time recounting your blessings in this season will dramatically change your perspective, your attitude, and the outcome of your holidays. Don't wait until you are in a bad mood to do so, either. Start practicing the principle of thankfulness right now and everyday. Think upon all that God has given you spiritually, personally, and materially. Bless yourself and others by practicing thankfulness. Speak thankful words in your prayers to God and to others. Remind yourself of all God has done for you.

Friday

Matt. 2:3 And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

The greatest cause of holiday disharmony and unhappiness, indeed the greatest cause of individual unhappiness at any time, may rest upon your unrealistic expectations. These may arise from overvaluing your own perspective, over emphasizing other's responsibilities, overlooking truth, or over elevating your own supposed 'rights'. Sometimes we expect things to be different from what we should reasonably expect them to be. How about you, are your expectations of the holidays, your spouse or family, of others, even of your life realistic?