

Holiday  
STRESS

# A Matter of Choice

You recognize that familiar queasy feeling in the pit of your stomach, brought on by those three repetitive thoughts; “Who do we visit first?” “How much are we going to spend?” and “Oh great, not another party!”

Never fear! Hope for a stress free holiday is on its way! Family festivities can now be embraced with a new sense of positive anticipation when you choose to apply these stress-free principals.

## Principle I – **Minimize Commitments to Maximize Family Fun.**

Stress creeps in when we over commit ourselves, over expect what family members should do, and over indulge our selfish side. Plan your next "family" Thanksgiving or Christmas the Saturday before. It cuts down on traffic jams and allows married children to start traditions of their own. Limit the parties you attend to one per week max for each family member. Let everyone choose one party they want to attend not five or six. Block out *down time* on the calendar and have a family game day, video day or even a baking day. Over crowded calendars ignite family frustration. Instead, put family first to keep the peace and maximize fun during the holidays.

## Principle II – **Minimize Spending for Family to Maximize Kingdom Impact.**

Every Christmas, spending seems more out of control. Try something new: *give family gifts* not individual ones; *homemade gifts* are a great option; limit spending to *immediate family* only; and maybe *write a poem* in place of a gift. Save money during the year and let your kids buy new toys for homeless or needy children. Wrap them as a family and deliver them on Christmas Eve. We exchange handmade cards for all of the holidays; I'd rather have scribbled heartfelt thoughts in crayon than any store bought card. Choose to give your child three gifts: Jesus was given --Frankincense, Myrrh, and Gold. Consider one *expensive/desired* gift (within your budget), and two other items for less. Perhaps, you only fill a stocking this year, or go on a trip. Do not let the world dictate your spending; it certainly doesn't pay your bills.

## Principle III – **Minimize Eating Out to Maximize Your Bank Account.**

Now is the perfect time to plan slow-cooker meals. Set aside one day each week to gather and plan meals as a family. Let everyone choose a weekly dinner. Once you have your 6-day menu, go grocery shopping. Let everyone know, you're only shopping once each week. Prepare any of the meals ahead of time if possible and freeze. Set out your slow-cooker the night before. Load it in the morning and enjoy that evening. Then treat yourselves to one night out. You'll be amazed at the money you save.

Negative moments and frustrating situations are easy to find especially during November and December. It takes personal effort and good choices, to make positive memories.

Choose wisely and start enjoying family, friends, and fun this year!