



NOVEMBER 23/24

CHIP UHRMACHER

CEDAR FALLS CAMPUS PASTOR

INTRODUCTION

Clark Griswold made a plan for the upcoming holiday season, but somehow it went terribly wrong. As told in the classic movie *Christmas Vacation*, Clark's dream of Christmas trees and holiday lights turned into bickering family, exploding sewers and a visit from the police SWAT team. In this week's message, Pastor Chip guides us through how to make the right plans for the holiday season. How can we make sure we'll embrace the season and fulfill our purpose? We can do this by making plans to invite others to Christ, spending our time and money wisely and praising instead of complaining. This year, will you take these steps to make your holiday season a "win" for yourself and those around you?

DISCUSSION

1. **Read Philippians 2:3-4.** What does it look like to value others above yourself? How does this apply in family situations you expect to encounter this holiday season? What do you fear most about practicing humility in this setting? How does replacing *selfishness* with *selflessness* open doors to share Christ with others?
2. **Read Philippians 2:14-15.** We are encouraged to do everything without grumbling and complaining. What strategies can we use to give praise whenever our first impulse is to grumble? What effect does it have on us and others when we complain? How does praise affect our attitude? How can we seek God's help when we're too exhausted or angry to say the right thing?
3. **Read Mark 1:35-36.** This passage describes a time when Jesus separated Himself from the crowds and took time to pray. At that moment, what did Simon and the other disciples think was most important? How did Jesus' actions illustrate the importance of seeking God when others had a different priority? In this Christmas season, what is the best way for you to find the margin to seek God amongst the busyness of the holidays?

DO SOMETHING

1. As you enter the holiday season on Thanksgiving Day, write down ten things for which you're grateful. If you will be with family, encourage others to do the same and share around the dinner table. Look for an opportunity to reach out to someone who is without family at this time.
2. Create a plan to complete shopping before Christmas Eve. If necessary, look for ways to downsize your to-do list by using gift cards, e-card greetings and other shortcuts. Invite a friend or loved one to join you for Christmas Eve service.
3. If you're able, take an outdoor stroll on New Year's Eve and reflect on God's goodness over the past year. Ask God to show you how He wants to use you in 2020 and make a plan to follow up with step-by-step actions.

RESOURCES

1. *Surviving the Holidays Without You* by Gary Roe
2. "5 Gratitude Practices" [blog post by Audrey Monke]
3. "The Art of Energy Management" [podcast by Craig Groeschel]
4. "6 Times When Jesus Chose Solitude Over People" [blog post by Ward Cushman]