Ep 245 When the Holidays Don’t Look Like You Hoped

Introduction to the Fight for Your Marriage Podcast and Holiday Season Outlook

Lori Lassen: Foreign.

Lori Lassen: Foreign. Thanks M for joining us for the Fight for your marriage podcast with Charlene and Lori. This is a place where you can find hope for your marriage through Jesus Christ. Hello, friends. Welcome to this episode of the fight for your marriage podcast. Lori. It's Lori. And I am thrilled that you are with us today. I hope that your fall is off to a great start. And listen, I've got some reality for you. We are just a few weeks away from celebrating Thanksgiving here in the United States, and Christmas is, like, seven weeks away if you're listening to this at the time it releases. So. So this year is wrapping up so quickly, and we're going to talk about that a little bit today and talk about the holidays.

Navigating Holiday Expectations and Making Plans Amidst Changing Circumstances

I want to first do a little bit of housekeeping. I want to thank those of you who have been praying for my mom. She is doing amazing. She was in and out of the hospital this summer, with a couple different problems, and in and out of a rehab where she had to go just to get her strength back. But she is home, she's doing wonderful. And, hopefully

you'll be hearing from her soon on the podcast. But thank you to those of you who prayed for her. I know that I shared with our connect group members, what's been going on, and they've been praying. So I just appreciate all of you praying for her. And she, Well, I'll share with you in a few minutes, what she was doing while she was in rehab, because I think it's gonna line up with what we're talking about today. But today I want to talk to you about the holidays. I know the holidays might look different this year than they have. It might look different than you've hoped. But I want to talk to you about how to make a plan for the holidays and how to kind of set your expectations, but also leave room for God to do what he wants to do, even if it may not be what you, you know, usually do or anticipate, or think should happen.

Addressing Anxiety and Loneliness During the Holidays with Faith and Scripture

I want to just ask you to be open to what the Lord is going to do. I've already heard from people recently who are feeling anxious about holiday plans. They are starting to have plans put in place for their children, or they are, getting requests from their spouse to say, we're not going to do what we've done in the past. relatives are making different arrangements, and so you might be wondering, like, am I going to be home alone for the holidays? Or what's going to happen with the kids if they're not with me for the holidays, or how am I going to handle all these traditions that are changing? And I just want to first reassure you that you don't have to pretend that this season. Season feels easy. And I hope you know and understand that we get that it's not an easy season. my dad wrote the book the twelve Days of Thoughts on Being Alone, Yet Loved during the Holidays. And I'm going to reference that book a couple times because he just shared the words and the sentiments that you, are probably feeling that he was feeling alone

and unloved. And the same time my mom was not with him and was feeling alone and unloved. And it doesn't matter whether you're the person that started the separation or divorce or you're the person that's the victim of it, you can still have those feelings of isolation and those feelings of, loneliness overtake you. And so, let me just share. In this book, my dad comments and says I had shared common interests combined with shared common problems, and that made slippery groundwork for the relationship I was in. Although I wouldn't be alone for Christmas, somehow I knew that I wouldn't be where God wanted me either.

Finding Peace Through Prayer and Petition Amidst Holiday Challenges

And, one Christmas that he was with a girlfriend, technically he wasn't alone, but he knew that's not where God wanted him. And so he was still struggling with the feelings overwhelming him of, this is not where I'm supposed to be, who I'm supposed to be with, and what I'm supposed to be doing. My mom had no idea those were the thoughts that were going in his mind at that time. So don't pretend to understand exactly what your spouse is

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experiencing, but I want to challenge you to just have open hands with these holidays. Let me share a verse with you from Philippians 4, 6, and 7. Do not be anxious about anything. But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. And that's going to be our basis for how

we're going to make it through the holidays. That I hope that you will be able to walk into it, not anxious, but through prayer and petition and thanksgiving, ask the Lord to help you have a peace about what's going to happen for these holidays. I want to remind you you can be honest with God about the pain you're going through, about the disappointment, about the weariness you may be feeling, the loneliness that you may be feeling. You don't have to pretend that everything is okay. You don't have to pretend that this is exactly the way you wish it would happen. He can appreciate and understand, and he wants to hear those laments from you. So take it to the Lord.

Overcoming Feelings of Abandonment and Embracing Hope During the Holidays

There's no better person to take it to. take your pain to Him. He doesn't want you to pretend it's an easy season, but he invites you to pour out your heart and to give it to Him. I shared about feelings of being unloved and alone at the holidays. I wanted to share something else my dad wrote. He said, during those confusing and often overwhelming days of separation and divorce, I had felt abandoned and unloved, by everyone. At times I felt that God was even far away and that even he had stopped loving me. After our remarriage, I made an interesting discovery. During those earlier dark days, people still loved me. Many were even praying for our family every day. But somehow I just had not been able to grasp the concept of their love. And I want you to know that even if you're feeling unloved, and alone, or you're looking at the holidays and thinking, I'm unloved because I'm going to be by myself, that is not true. The enemy is trying to make you believe something that's not true. But there are people that love you and are praying for you. So what can you do? You've got to get through the holidays. What can you do? And how can you get through it? First of all, I want to tell

you that you can make room for both grief and hope, for sadness and joy. It's okay to feel sad about what is different. I said already, bring those feelings to God. Take one season at a time. Rather than trying to solve every holiday decision. Today, you don't need to figure out Christmas and Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve and all of that. Just figure out one holiday at a time. You don't need to do it all at once. I also want to challenge you to make a plan. What feels manageable for you this year? Is there a friend or a family member that you can talk to and try to come up with a plan? How can you continue the traditions that you have once done with your family this year?

Continuing Traditions and Creating New Ones Through Acts of Generosity

And it may look different, but how could you continue that? Is there some new tradition that you would like to begin? Maybe this is the year that you finally have time to bake, eight dozen cookies for the homeless shelter that's in your community. Maybe this year you finally have the resources to invite the widows group from your church to come and enjoy a meal with you. I want to challenge you to not just think about the holidays as actually Thanksgiving day or actually December 24th or December 25th. What can you do in this holiday season to be a blessing to somebody else? And you hear us say that often, but how can you bless someone else? There is no better way and no quicker way and no easier way to get out of the funk that you might be in by pouring yourself into somebody else. So look for somebody that you can create a meaningful moment for and be the person who does that. Is there a young single mother in your church that needs two hours by herself to go Christmas shopping, have her kids come over and bake cookies with you? Is there a ministry in your community that you could volunteer for? I know that at Christmas time, our local children's hospitals are full

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of people trying to give back. And so maybe in your area, you can find a way to give back to somebody else. I mentioned at the top of the show that my mom was in a rehab for a few weeks this summer, and it's not where she wanted to be. She wanted to be at home, but her doctor said, this will be a great way for you to get your strengths back and go back home.

Finding Purpose and Being a Blessing Even in Difficult Holiday Situations

And so she went to this rehab facility, and it was fantastic. Every time I would go visit her, I would have the people who work there come up to me and comment how loving and sweet she was and that she was the most joyful person and she was making an impact, even though the situation wasn't exactly the way she had hoped it would be. She called me, one afternoon and asked me to buy a Bible. And I was so confused because she said, you got to send a Bible to my friend Marilyn. And she has a friend Marilyn that she's done Bible studies with. So I could not understand how Marilyn from Bible study did not have a Bible. But I got to the bottom of it, and it was a woman that she had met at the rehab facility who. Who had never owned a Bible. This woman in her 80s, had never owned a Bible. So we got a Bible up to her immediately, and mom was able to give it to her, and she was so touched. Another person, was a cleaning woman that my mom led to the Lord. So this situation may not look how you want it to look, but how can God use you? My mom could have sat and complained and just crossed her arms and said, not really happy that I have to be here and do physical therapy. All throughout the day. But instead she said, lord, this is where you have me. This is what

you have allowed. How do you want to use me? So I challenge you to make that your prayer. Lord, how do you want to use me during these holidays? How can I be a blessing to somebody else?

Giving Tuesday and Partnering with Rejoice Marriage Ministries for Support

Ask that question and then see what God does, because I guarantee he's going to open doors for you to be able to be a blessing to other people. Hey, friends, Giving Tuesday is December 1st. It's just about a month away, and I have got some very exciting news. This year, we have a matching gift challenge coming to Rejoice Marriage Ministries. And that means through the generosity of several of our friends, this Giving Tuesday, your gift can go even further to help us share biblical hope with people who are hurting and facing separation and divorce and uncertainty in their marriages. So here's what I'm asking you to do today. Will you start praying about how God might lead you to get involved? That may be through giving, and it may be through supporting this season, in prayer. But I'm asking you if you would start praying today. This ministry might have encouraged you on a day when you were not sure that you could keep going. And your generosity will help make that same encouragement available to someone else. So ask the Lord, how do you want me to be part of this? You can pray for the families that we serve. You can share the ministry with someone who needs help. You can share this podcast with someone who could use some encouragement and prayerfully consider if he wants you to partner with us with a financial gift. As Giving Tuesday approaches, we'll share more about the matching challenge. But for now, thank you for praying boldly for what God's going to do in this season.

Combating Holiday Fears with Scripture Prayer and Truth

You know, the enemy is going to ramp up his attacks around the holidays. You're going to be filled with doubts, fears, feelings, like my dad said, isolation, feeling unloved. And so now more than ever, is a great time to really practice how you're going to combat those thoughts. And we love sharing. Pray the armor of God on yourself every day. You can go to our website and under resources, you can find an Armor of God prayer that you could pray straight out of Ephesians. we'll put a link to it at the bottom of this episode. But that's a great thing to do every day just to ready your mind and your heart for what you're going to face. And Kyle Idleman's book, Every Thought Captive, he shares that you can use scripture, prayer and truth, and that be the. The triangle that you use to combat the enemy. So scripture, remember something that is true from God's word. So I already read a scripture that would fit perfectly when you're trying to combat those thoughts from the enemy. Philippians 4, 6, and 7. Do not be anxious about anything. But in every

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situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your heart and your minds. And Christians, Christ Jesus. That's a perfect scripture to use to just remind yourself of the truth. Then you can use prayer. So take a moment. I already said the Lord wants to hear from you. He wants to hear the truth of what's happening in your heart. So take a minute to pray. Lord, I am, feeling overwhelmed at the thought of the holidays looking different this year. I'm giving this to you, Lord. Please give me a peace in this area. I ask you to go before me, work out the details of what my holidays will look like. Pray a prayer. Ask the Lord to just take that anxiousness and that worry off of you.

Then, truth.

Lowering Expectations and Embracing God's Plan for the Holidays

Remind yourself of the facts. Because, boy, I'll tell you, the enemy really likes to play with things. That's a little tiny ounce of truth and a big weight of lies. And so remind yourself of the truth. Even if this holiday looks different, it's okay. This doesn't change anything about who God is. Even if this holiday does not turn out the way you expected, it's okay. God is still in control. And so remind yourself of the truth. You are loved. You are cared for, and tell the enemy what that truth is. And then leave it in God's hands. He has got a plan for you, so leave it in his hands. I really want to challenge you to start now. You're just a few weeks away from Thanksgiving. Make a list, now of what you can do to bless somebody else, to include somebody else, and also to not have your expectations set so high that there's no way any person could meet those expectations. You know, sometimes we want our kids to do a certain something at the holidays, or we want our spouse to perform a certain way, or, you know, we're. We want a Hallmark commercial or a, In our area, one of our major grocery stores does these lavish holiday commercials. And, I mean, they will bring you to tears every single commercial, but it's not reality. And I think my dad talks about it in this book. It's one of his books where he says, we never presented our turkey to the table with the entire family just standing around in awe. I mean, that bird got cut up in the kitchen, and when it got to the table, it was getting scoured down. But these commercials and these movies we watch make us have our expectations on something that may not be reality. So ask the Lord if you need to lower your expectations about this particular season.

Seeking God's Will and Encouraging Others This Holiday Season

And it's one year. You don't need to worry about the next five years. You need to worry about 20, 26, and that's it. So ask, God when you're praying as well. Lord, help me to just look at this, season and not worry about the whole rest of the future. I'm just gonna look at this season and see what you want from me. This time of year is the perfect time for you to step aside and for you to allow the Lord to present you with ideas and options and ways that you can encourage somebody else. And. And so as you are seeking his will for what you're going to do for the holidays, I would ask you to pray about the person that needs that encouragement from you, the person that needs to hear from you, and the person that needs the invite. Maybe there's somebody else that's looking for an invitation because they're feeling lonely as well this season. And don't worry about the response or the outcome. Just last night, I was driving home from my mom's house, and it was raining. And as I was turning the corner, I noticed there was a car kind of parked funny in the lane, and her hazards were on. And as I'm passing her, I see a woman getting out of the driver's seat with a gas can in her hand. So I'm, I'm no, you know, mechanic. But I put together that obviously she must have run out of gas. So I had to go quite a ways down the road to make a U turn. But as I drove, I thought, oh, bless her heart, she ran out of gas. It's raining. There's not a gas station anywhere close to where we were.

Being a Willing Solution and Extending Invitations During the Holidays

And I, just was feeling pity for her.

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The further I drove down the road, I thought, okay, Lord, I think you're prompting me that I need to go be the solution to her problem. So let me call. Call my husband real quick and let him know what I'm doing and just tell him I'm gonna go pick up her gas can and go get gas for her and then take it back to her. That seemed like the safest situation. So I called him, and he said, I have a gas can in the garage. It's got a couple gallons in it. You're close to the house. Come pick me up and we'll go take that back. So I was like, perfect, we'll go back. So we went back, trying to find her and see what was happening in the rain. And by the time we got back to her car, she was gone. Her car was still there. So I assume somebody picked her up and took her because we didn't even see her walking, when we looked for her. And so as we were heading back home, I was like, well, sorry, I didn't mean to, like, you know, do this whole fuss. And then we didn't need to do it. My husband said, maybe God wanted you to be willing to, to be the help and the solution of that problem, and you didn't have to be the one to do it, but you were willing to put yourself out there and do that. And I thought, always. That's a good point. It took 10 minutes out of my evening. It wasn't a big deal at all. But you know what? You might invite somebody that says, no, I'm, I'm okay. I've got other plans. And instead of walking away feeling foolish like I should have never invited them, I should have never ask them if they wanted to come for the holiday. I guarantee that they feel so special because you took the time to reach out to them and to invite them. You took the time to reach out and inquire, are you okay for the holidays? Or is there some way that I can help be a blessing to you. So you might get some rejections if you invite people to do things. And I don't want you to let that discourage you.

Practicing Gratitude and Making Holidays a Time of Prayer and

Worship

Just asking. I'm sure I just said this to my daughter this week when she was talking about a situation with one of her college, dorm mates that she was sick and she was trying to figure out what to do to help her. And I said she would never feel like you're imposing on her by asking, can I go get you some food? Can I pick up any medicine for you? And I'm sure the people you're going to reach out to would feel the same, same way. So don't ever let the enemy trick you into feeling foolish because somebody rejected your invitation. This is such a special time of year. This is such a precious time that you can have with the Lord. You can spend Thanksgiving reflecting on all you really have to be thankful for. November just started it. It's not too late. Do a 30 days of gratitude and write down one or two things each day that you're thankful for. If you're finding that you will be alone on Thanksgiving, make it a day of prayer and worship. Silence. All of the noise around you. The world is going to be shut down. The grocery stores are going to be closed. The restaurants are mostly going to be closed. Make it a day where you can just be the person who spends that time praising God for what he's done in your life, praying to him, thanking him for who he is, for the price that he paid when he sacrificed his son for us. What a beautiful day it could turn out to be.

Extending God's Love and Surrendering Will for a Redeemed Holiday Season

If you had a day to do prayer and praise and thanksgiving to the Lord at Christmas time, you might be the only person that can work on Christmas Day because somebody else has little kids at home. And you can say, hey, I can be a blessing to you because I

can work. I don't know what the Lord has in mind for you, but I know that he has a plan and I know that he loves you. And I know this holiday season may look different, but you can still experience God's presence and extend his love to other people. So I'm challenging you to do that this holiday season. I know it may look a little different, but I know that the Lord can redeem it. So that is my challenge to you. I cannot wait to hear your ideas of what you're going to do. I cannot wait to read the testimony of how the Lord used these holidays for you to be a blessing to somebody else. And, let me tell you, when you're thinking of people to bless, people to show love, to start with your spouse, that might seem logical, but I don't care if you haven't talked to your spouse in three years, invite them to come over, make a ham, cook a

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turkey, see what they say. You might be surprised at the response that you get, but, regardless of what happens, the Lord is still in control. He is still on the throne, and he will redeem this holiday for you. And he will make it a beautiful season if you will surrender your will to his and say, lord, you show me what I should be doing this holiday season. As always, we love praying for you, so. So if you know that this is a season that's approaching that's going to be filled with stress that you know you've got some difficult decisions to make about things with your family, we would love to pray with you.

Prayer for Holiday Stress and Seeking God's Plan for Relationships and Salvation

So I'll add a, link to the show notes of where you can submit a prayer request. But I, You can go to our website@refoiceministries.org and you can leave a prayer request there.

And we would love to be praying for you as we approach the holidays. And as we close right now, let me just pray for you, before we close out this podcast. Jesus, thank you for the holidays. Thank you for time that we can set aside to, be thankful for time that we could set aside to reflect on. On your birth and. And what you've done for us. Lord, I pray for those who are listening to this episode, and I know that there may be stress already built up in a listener because they're worried about the holidays. They know that it's going to look different than it usually has. They know those traditions that have been carried on in their family are not going to happen the way they did this year. And, Lord, I pray that you would just comfort those who are struggling. Jesus, I ask you to present opportunities for them to be a blessing to other people. Lord, I pray that you would just give them ideas that you would give them, people right in front of them who need to be loved so that they can show your love to so many people through their hurt. Lord, there's no better way to get through hurt other than loving another person. So I pray that through the holiday season that you would just allow each of us to be a blessing to other people. Father, thank you for who you are. I thank you for caring so much about us, that even when we carry hurts and anxiety about things like schedules and traditions, that you care and that you love us enough to guide each and every day. Jesus, thank you for the holidays. And I pray that you would, produce more than each person can ask or imagine through their relationships with other people. And, Father, most importantly, we pray for the prodigals that are represented by the men and women listening to this episode. Lord, we pray that this would be a season where those prodigals will turn to you, that they will understand that they've walked away from you or that they've never even known you as Savior and Lord of their life. Jesus, I pray that this would be the season where they can commit their life to you, they can repent of their sin, and they can start fresh by coming to you and by going home to their spouse that's praying and fighting for them. Thank you, Jesus, in advance for what you're going to do. We love you. Amen. I can't wait to hear your testimonies of the holidays. I hope you

have a wonderful Thanksgiving. Until next time, keep fighting for your marriage.

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