

PEARCE CHURCH

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Dear Church Family,

One of the ironic things about the holidays, Christmas especially, is that the day that brought the most peace and love into the world, can often become the source of greatest stress and anxiety. There's pressure to buy gifts, send cards, go to the work Christmas party, attend the kids' school concerts, put up the tree, decorate the house (often to keep up with the neighbor's displays), bake cookies, give to charities, and get together with family. People can become exhausted with all the "cultural" expectations that surround the holiday. (I feel my stress level going up as I write this.) What was meant to be a reason for celebration becomes a cause for frustration. People experience weariness, vulnerability, and irritability, which have a negative effect on relationships.

A recent article by authors, Les and Leslie Parrot, entitled, "Don't Let Christmas Ruin Your Marriage," highlights that January is a month when marriage counselors and divorce attorneys see a significant increase in business. Yikes! I believe one of the ways to counteract this unnecessary slide trend toward anxiety and brokenness, is to build margins into our lives for the weeks leading up to Christmas. Take deliberate time to slow down, contemplate, reflect, and consider the reason for the season, that Jesus is Immanuel, God With Us. The beloved Christmas Carol, "Silent Night, Holy Night," captures the essence of Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God." Frantic busyness, hectic paces, and filling life with activities, even good ones, can rob us of resting in the reality that Jesus came to bring restoration and peace, not only in our relationship with God the Father, but also with one another. I pray the phrase from the carol can apply directly to our lives this season: "Sleep in heavenly peace."

With Faith,

Pastor Todd