

MERRY MINISTRY

How to Experience Christmas Joy While
Managing the Demands of Ministry



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COACHING

Hi, I'm Jeannette! I'm a pastor and leadership coach and I know the hustle and bustle of creating magical Christmas experiences at church.



But I've also learned the hard way that we need to keep some of that Christmas magic for ourselves and our families. I mean, who wants to end up feeling like a holiday zombie, right? We can get so busy helping others celebrate Christmas that we lose any sense of celebration ourselves. I know because I've been there.

In 23 years of ministry I've discovered how to stop the chaos and create holiday harmony. I've learned the secrets to embracing self-care and carving out time for my loved ones, so I no longer feel burned out and exhausted by Christmas day.

This guide offers 13 strategies to help you celebrate Christmas personally and with your family while leading in ministry.

Here's to making Christmas a joy-filled season for everyone, including you!

- Jeannette Cochran

1. Set Your Intention

Proclaiming your intention to personally experience the joy of Advent in this busy season is the first step to making it happen. It's so easy to drown in the endless to-dos and forget why Advent is so special. But setting your intentions is like putting up road signs saying, "Hey, let's not miss the good stuff!" These intentions are a nudge to make room for reflection, joy, and real connections, making sure we don't let the Christmas spirit get lost in the chaos of ministry.

What specific moments, traditions, or experiences bring you and your family the most joy and meaning during the Christmas season? Reflect on what truly lights up your heart and makes this time special for you.

2. Make a Plan

As a leader in ministry, helping others navigate through advent can be quite demanding, but it's crucial to make sure the holiday spirit reaches your own family too. Planning ahead becomes your compass, directing you towards a harmonious balance between bringing joy to others and nurturing the celebrations within your own home.

Pull out your calendar now and schedule your priorities. Be sure to schedule time for self-care, rest, and those festive experiences that you enjoy

3. Set Your Boundaries

Clearly communicate your boundaries and limits during the holiday season. Be realistic about what you can and cannot take on, and don't hesitate to say no to additional commitments. Keep it real—acknowledge that time and energy have their limits and find freedom in saying "no" to stuff that's not essential. Each "no" is a sacred "yes" to your family's Christmas joy and to the sacred work you undertake in your ministry. Reclaim control of your calendar, shaping it into a tool that works for both your church peeps and your loved ones.



4. Delegate and Empower Others

Identify tasks that can be delegated or shared with others. It could be household chores, meal preparation, or aspects of event planning. Invite congregants to volunteer with any task that doesn't have to be done by you. Delegating can lighten your load and be a gift to others because volunteering fosters a sense of community and fellowship within the church. It encourages members to work together, build relationships, and support one another, strengthening the bonds of the congregation.

5. Schedule "Me Time"

Prioritize and schedule specific time blocks solely for personal relaxation and enjoyment. Whether it's a quiet evening with a book, a bubble bath, or a favorite Christmas tradition, make it a non-negotiable part of your calendar. Plan a few treats for yourself throughout the season too. Whether it's a favorite dessert, coffee with a special friend, or a small luxury item, acknowledging and rewarding yourself is an important aspect of self-care.

What are some small treats you would enjoy this holiday season?

When will you create time for personal relaxation and enjoyment on your calendar?

6. Mindful Breathing and Meditation

Incorporate short mindfulness or breathing exercises into your daily routine.

Meditation is a powerful avenue for stress relief and embracing the present moment.

Grounding yourself in the present moment will help you see and experience the beauty and joy of the season. When chaos and overwhelm threaten to rob your joy, taking a few minutes for deep breaths or meditation can help manage stress and restore a sense of calm.



7. Create a Relaxing Atmosphere

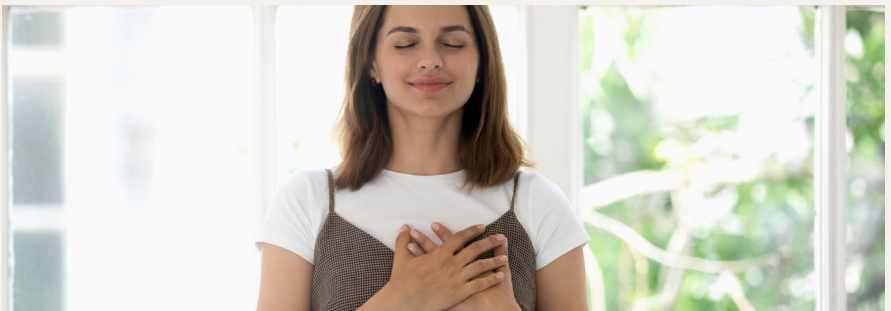
At the end of a hectic day, setting a relaxing ambiance at home can help you reset and recover your Christmas joy. Set the mood with soft, calming music that can help you unwind. Combine this with aromatherapy by using essential oils or scented candles that promote relaxation, such as lavender, chamomile, or eucalyptus. Slip into cozy clothes and sip a warm cup of hot chocolate or tea. Sit by the fire and engage in a quiet conversation with someone your love, in person or on facetime. Creating a serene environment can positively impact your mood and contribute to a sense of well-being.

8. Digital Detox

Consider taking short breaks from your devices. Whether it's a social media detox or limiting screen time, disconnecting for a while can reduce stress and help you focus on the present moment. Stepping away from the constant barrage of social media during the Christmas season can be a game-changer for enjoying this festive time to the fullest. It allows us to be present in the moment, connect more deeply with loved ones, and savor the real-life experiences that make the season special. By taking a break, we escape the pressure to constantly compare our celebrations to others and, instead, can relish the authenticity of our own unique holiday traditions. It's a chance to appreciate the simple joys of the season, without the distraction of the digital world, and make lasting memories that truly warm our hearts.

9. Express Gratitude

Practicing gratitude during the Christmas season is like adding an extra sprinkle of magic to the festivities. It's all about stopping for a moment, looking around, and going, "Wow, I'm so blessed!" Gratitude reminds us that it's the laughter, the warmth, and the love shared with family and friends that makes this season special. So, take a breather from the gift-buying frenzy and remember that the real present of Christmas is Jesus. Take a moment each day to reflect on the positive aspects of your life and all that Christ has done for you. Making it a practice to express gratitude every day of the season either in a journal or to loved ones, can shift your focus to what truly matters



10. Creative Outlets

Engage in a creative outlet that brings you joy. Whether it's painting, writing, or crafting, expressing yourself creatively can be a fulfilling and rejuvenating experience. If you enjoy baking then schedule time to get creative in the kitchen but if cookie making feels like just another chore then by all means don't do it. Buy cookies instead. Put your artistic skills to work by designing your own Christmas cards or gift tags. Host a dance party in your living room and choreograph a Christmas dance routine. Music and movement can be a joyful way to express your creativity and create fun memories with kids.

11. Physical Activity

Prioritize physical activity, even if it's just a short walk or stretching exercises. Exercise releases endorphins, which can boost your mood and energy levels in this season when you need it most. Engage in an exercise or activity that you genuinely enjoy. Text a friend and plan a meet up at the gym or a walk in the park. Incorporating exercise in this busy season can be challenging but it's essential for your physical and mental well-being.

12. Rest and Recovery

Refuse to overwork during this season. Leave the office on time and don't bring work home. Plan and protect your sabbath. Develop a calming pre-sleep routine to signal to your body that it's time to wind down. This may include activities like reading a book, taking a warm bath, practicing relaxation techniques, or gentle stretching. Avoid stimulating activities, like using electronic devices with bright screens, before bedtime.

13. Connect With Jesus

Amidst the holiday hustle, prioritize time to hang out with Jesus. Engage in simple but soul-soothing practices. Set up a Nativity scene in your home and use it as a focal point for reflection. Spend time contemplating the figures, reading the corresponding Bible passages, and meditating on the symbolism of the scene. Listen and meditate on the words of a Christmas song. Grab a journal and let your thoughts flow. Make time for spiritual practices that help you center your thoughts on the Christ and His role in your life.

“ Taking care of yourself doesn't mean me first; it means me too. L.R. Knost ”

As you can see, none of these strategies is revolutionary, but having them all in one place where you can see that they are actually achievable might be just the motivation you need.

Choose the ideas that fit your preferences and circumstances, and if you get off track just course correct and keep going. Self-care is a continuous practice, especially during busy seasons.

For more leadership inspiration check out the Empowered Christian Woman Podcast.

