

Chronicles of November  
(Thanksgiving, Football, and God)

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Holidays bring about a lot of memories to inmates while they are doing time, especially the major holidays, like Thanksgiving. It can be painful enough to just be in prison while your family and friends celebrate the holidays, but it can be even more painful when you're going through a number of other issues, such as I was going through.

The purpose in what I write is to hopefully shed light that while we are inmates, we still have some value, and are still human beings. We still have families, feelings and emotions, and these are affected when the holidays come around.

The following is from my journal, dated November 22nd of 2017. I will share as much as I can, and as I usually do, I will "Pause" between parts to kinda color in what I can. Let's begin:

November 22nd, 2017: Thanksgiving Eve, about 11am, as I sit outside my cell, listening to Christmas music on 94.9, I think that's right. Mix FM, 94.9, yeah, that's it. They're playing Christmas music, and have been since Nov. 1st. I didn't find out until Sunday. They're playing "Silver Bells", by a person I don't know.

("PAUSE": Most inmates don't listen to Christmas music, but I personally love it. I can listen to it for hours, because it gets me in the holiday mood. And at this juncture of life, I needed it, because I was going through some difficult times in my life. I think there's a 24-hr Christmas station everywhere, when one station plays all Christmas music for the duration of the holidays. Even in prison, guys need to find that holiday spirit. Let's continue...)

I'm writing from my NEW cell, 122. Idiots here have forced us to switch cells, for a reason that makes absolutely no sense, but I don't want to get into that right now...Stevie Wonder's "Someday At Christmas" is on.

("PAUSE": I mentioned the switching of cells. To me, this is a foolish move by a prison that has no idea what they're doing. We were told that because some officials think we need to move around to prevent negative behavior, they thought it a brilliant idea to uproot inmates that have been in the cell for more than a year to a different locale.

Sounds logical? Not at all. This kinda psychological behavior applies to inmates in segregation or violent prisons, NEITHER of which applies to inmates here at USP Tucson. Being in the same cell does not have a detrimental effect on you if you still have movement. Any inmate here can go outside, go to the library, to the gym, recreation and have open movement several hours a day. Nobody's confined to a cell for any length of time longer than overnight. So this doesn't make any sense to anyone except for the prison to make life a little more difficult for us, just before Thanksgiving, when morale is already low. All they



managed to do was frustrate the inmates. Typical. Ok, let's continue...)

Lots of stuff going on, and the holidays compound on it. We'll go eat soon, then rec. So much to think about, but too much going on right now. I got to finish my 63 college football games; on #39; Penn State at Maryland. Oh, "Simply Having A Wonderful Christmas Time", by Wings, I think. I love this song.

("PAUSE": One of the things I do to keep myself busy is write. But about 6 months ago, the prison took our copy machine and refused to give us another until just recently. Because of this, my writing was hampered because I couldn't make copies of my works, thus slowing down my work, and sapping my will to write.

But I had to write something, so I focused on sports. I used to write for a college paper as a Sports Editor, and worked for 5 radio stations, as well as doing radio broadcasts for football and basketball- and I loved to write, so I focused on sports writing. I would break down all the FBS college games each week, writing a short paragraph on each, and predict a score and spread. It kept me busy, but took days to do. Fine by me, I enjoyed it, and it helped me sharpen my skills in analyzing subjects and situations... and oh, Penn State CRUSHED Maryland. Let's continue...)

Gotta get back to work. I need to get as much done as possible. I love listening to Christmas music. Talked to Mike last night; he's depressed, losing faith in God... I know the feeling. I understand his attitude; you try to do the right thing, things fall apart, and you wonder where the heck God is. Unbelievers curse God and do what they want and get blessed... last song here, "Noel, Noel" by Nat King Cole. Great song... doing all I can to stay positive.

End of journal entry.

As I mentioned, I love Christmas music, I wish more inmates would listen to it and get some holiday spirit in them, but life in prison can be quite difficult.

I mentioned one of my friends, Mike. I've known him for about 5 years, and he's a good guy, but he was frustrated in how things were going for him. I actually talked to him outside on the yard at night, and he was going through some difficult times. I know exactly how he felt, because I was feeling the same way. I didn't let it show to anyone, but I felt pretty down and out.

His faith in God was being tested, because he said that praying just doesn't seem to work. It's easy for people to say that it works, when your needs are met, or you have support, but when you're alone, wondering if God cares about you, and nothing happens, even after much prayer, it can be frustrating. Been there, know the feeling.

The answers don't seem to come when you need it, but somehow, you've simply got to believe they will come. This requires true faith, having confidence that God is merciful and will answer prayer. Mike had to trust in God in difficult situations, as I also had to as well.



And this situation goes deeper than many think, because depression goes into great depth in inmates in prison. Staff and officers really have no idea how to diagnose it, because to do so properly they would have to genuinely CARE about the inmate.

That's the problem here at USP Tucson; they don't really care about the general welfare of an inmate. All their work is based only to document what is wrong with the inmate, never how to fix it. Even suspect ideas can be wrongly diagnosed by staff simply to make your inmate file look worse than it is.

For this reason, it is impossible to diagnose depression in prison, which is why they usually try to advise inmates to diagnose it themselves... and tell staff. Not that staff will do anything except put the person in isolation, and document it in the file.

And if this is the case with normal means, it certainly applies in the spiritual. Many inmates struggle in finding a loving, caring God, and seem to find a wrathful one instead. Who wants to follow THAT kind of God? When inmates don't get letters from family and friends, or money to buy needed items, they start to wonder if anyone truly cares for them... including God. It becomes a very lonely place when you think even God doesn't want to be around you.

This is how Mike... and myself, felt during Thanksgiving. Time would tell if this changed for us, and actually it did, but that is another entry.

Until next time....

Feel free to write me concerning any issues, or ask for other writings I have completed. I have over 1000 pages to share

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