

Christmas: A Reason for Hope

This holiday season, as Christmas lights and trees go up all around you, it's likely that the only thing going "up" in your life is your stress level—with bittersweet memories flooding in, children looking to you expectantly and a calendar filled with events where you'll have to explain your marital status, yet again. With all of these things pressing in on you, it's easy to see why the holidays are stressful and why you may be anticipating them with dread.

The trouble is, when people give you advice for dealing with holiday stress, they often say things like, "Just focus on the true meaning of Christmas!" But to most people, that simply means focusing on family and friends as opposed to the familiar Christmas frenzy. If you're going through a separation or divorce, that strategy probably isn't helpful. Your family is falling apart, and your friends may act like you're the plague, so those are the last things you want to think about.

What's the best advice for making it through the holidays? While this may sound strange, the answer is to *focus on the true meaning of Christmas*.

You see, that answer isn't wrong, it's just that when most people give it, they don't know what the actual "reason for the season" is. So their advice is shallow. Thankfully, when we focus on what Christmas means, it leads to hope and healing. Let's look at four reasons why.

Four Reasons Why Focusing on the Meaning of Christmas Leads to Hope and Healing

Reason #1 At Christmas, Jesus came to end all suffering

God sees all the problems in the world, including yours. And He has promised to fix them. To do this, He sent Jesus to carry out a plan to end all suffering. At Christmas, we celebrate Christ's entrance into the world to do that. Because of what Jesus came to do, the Bible tells us that one day there will be no more tears.

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, '...There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" (Revelation 21:3–5b)

One day, there will be no more divorces, no more affairs, no more heartbreak—no more pain. That's a reason for hope and celebration!

Reason #2 At Christmas, Jesus came to deal with the source of our suffering

As part of God's plan to fix what's wrong with the world, He's going to do more than stop death, disease, famines, natural disasters and broken marriages; He's also going to renew people. Yes, we all need to be renewed. Why? Because the same thing that causes all the world's problems is the same thing that causes us to be selfish, bitter, unforgiving, unfaithful and unreasonable.

The Bible calls it sin. The Bible also teaches us that sin affects everything: our thinking, our health and our environment; to some degree it's even had a negative effect on your marriage.

In addition to creating problems in your life, your own sin is a barrier to having a relationship with God. It also prevents you from experiencing the comfort and healing that He offers you. But, at Christmas, Jesus came to offer a way to remove that barrier. Here's how He did it.

God says sin is such a serious offense that it must be punished by eternal separation from Him. But since God loved us so much, He sent Jesus to earth to live a sinless life and to take the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross. Three days later, He rose from the dead. This was the only way to defeat sin and death and to pave the way for the tear-free world God has promised in the future. But knowing what Jesus came to do is not enough to experience the benefits of it.

Reason #3 This Christmas the gift of Christ is available for you

Just as a Christmas present only becomes yours as you receive it, the gifts of forgiveness and a new life in Christ Jesus only become yours as you receive *Him*, by faith. God offers you this gift of a relationship with Him, a relationship that allows you to experience the healing and comfort that you desperately need, and a relationship that guarantees an eternity spent with Him in the perfect, tear-free reality that He's designing for you.

You may have worries that you do not deserve to be forgiven by God, that your sin is too "bad." No matter what you've done, you can be forgiven! His love goes beyond anything you've ever experienced. He loves you without conditions. And if you enter into a relationship with Him, He accepts you because of what Christ did for you, not because of anything you've done or ever will do. As the Bible says,

"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."
(Titus 3:5a)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."
(Ephesians 2:8-9)

So how do you receive this amazing gift?

First, admit that you are a sinner who needs a relationship with God. Second, believe that Jesus died in your place, paying your sin debt, and deeply desire that God will help you walk in obedience to Him.

That's all there is to it.

If you believe those two things, and are willing to obey God's leading in your life, the sin-barrier is gone. You have a relationship with God. If that's true of you, take a moment to thank God for allowing you to have a relationship with Him and beginning the process of changing your life. Here's a simple prayer you can pray to express your thanks.

Dear Lord,

I know I have done things that are wrong. Thank you for forgiving me and giving me the gift of eternal life with You. I give You control of my life. And I'm looking forward to the changes You're going to make in it. When I get down during the holidays, help me to remember that someday there will be no more tears or mourning or pain because death has been defeated through You. Please allow that to give me hope to face the days ahead. And help me heal from the pain of my divorce.

In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen

Hopefully, now you can see why focusing on the true meaning of Christmas can be so comforting. At Christmas, we celebrate the gift of Jesus. His birth marks a new chapter in God's plan to end our suffering and save us from our sin. So if you're discouraged during the holidays, remind yourself that the baby Jesus came to heal your heart, and this world. Because of Him, one day there will be no more suffering.

Be sure you'll experience this new tear-free reality Jesus will one day unveil. If you haven't done so already—admit your need, believe Christ died for you and receive the amazing gift of Christ.

Believing that Jesus died for you is only the first step in an exciting relationship with God. You'll want to get to know Him better and learn His plan for your life. A good way to learn more about Jesus Christ is to read the book of John, found in the New Testament of the Bible. We suggest you commit to reading a chapter of this book each day. As you read, pray that you will gain an even better understanding of how Jesus is changing your life.

Reason #4 Your life is different now

If you believed that Jesus died for you, many things have changed. Look at what has happened.

Christ is in your life:

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

Christ's power is in your life:

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13 NASB)

Your sins were forgiven:

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." (Ephesians 1:7)

You have a permanent relationship with God:

Jesus says, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:27–29)

You received the gift of eternal life:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

You can find abundant life now:

Jesus says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10 NASB)

You can find God’s peace:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6–7)

What’s next?

If you trusted in Christ for the first time, let your pastor, DivorceCare leader or a mature Christian friend know. He or she can help you grow even closer to God.

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