

My Christmas Card to You

By Maria Houston

Today I got my first Christmas card of the season. It was, as I suspected, a photograph of a family, with the words Merry Christmas underneath their happy faces. I find the professional family photo



Christmas card trend to be quite peculiar. Gone are the Christmas cards with Santa Claus, snowmen, Mary and Jesus, or The Three Wise Men following a star. These days my doorway is plastered with photographs of brides, new babies, and smiling families in well-coordinated outfits. While I enjoy getting pictures from my friends, I can't help but wonder if these new Christmas cards are an attempt to promote our own lives instead of focusing on the holiday.

But what if this Christmas you have nothing to promote? For many individuals Christmas is not a holly jolly time. It is not a time to celebrate a new marriage, announce a pregnancy, or share a photo of the new home you just bought. Instead, it is a holiday overshadowed by grief. Perhaps it's the first Christmas since your spouse passed away. Maybe it is not your turn to have the kids this year. Perhaps the pressure to be happy on Christmas highlights the loneliness you feel inside your marriage. Whatever your situation, it would be inappropriate to put it on a Christmas card. Instead, your heart aches.

I urge you to remember that Christmas is all about heartaches. It is the time in history where God's heartache for His people and our heartache for the life we were created for came together. God's heart ached so much for us to return to Him that He sent His Son to earth as a baby. This baby was born, not to a gorgeous upper-middle-class happily-married couple with 2.5 children in coordinating clothes posed in front of a barn for a photo op, but was instead born to an unmarried teenage mother in a barn. This baby was not like the babies on Christmas cards declaring how great life is, but instead was a foreshadowing of how great our eternal life will be when this baby grows up, is nailed to a cross, dies for our sins, and rises again.

When Jesus was born the sand timer was flipped over, counting the days till His death and our freedom. The freedom that would silence the pain in God's heart and bring about a joy and fulfillment in our heart that we could never imagine. We would now be able to be who we were created to be: God's children. In short, Jesus' birth means the heartache is now over.

As you are tempted this Christmas season to look to earthly things to soothe your heartache, remember that only the Baby who lay in a manger over 2000 years ago can do that. Put your Christmas cards, wrapping paper, ribbons, tinsel aside and remind yourself again of what Christmas is about: a baby born in a manger.