

## WHEN THE HOLIDAYS HURT

*I had no idea that grieving involved so many "firsts." There was my first night alone; the first meal alone; the first time I attended church alone; my first anniversary alone. And just when I didn't think things could get worse, I find myself facing the holidays alone—without my beloved husband, Gerry. This year, I would give anything if I could boycott the holidays.*

*—Barbara, widowed eight months earlier*

For many people, the holidays are a traditional time of happiness and festivity. However, for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, the holidays are a time of mixed emotions. There can be pleasure, but there is also much pain, because the season magnifies the sense of loss.

There are no quick fixes to getting rid of the hurt. Thankfully, God does use the loving support of our friends and family and the passage of time to heal our broken hearts. But here are 10 ways to manage in the meantime.

1. Plan ahead-don't wait until the last minute to make your preparations.
2. Let your church help-take advantage of times for worship and fellowship.
3. Claim the promises of scripture-"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18).
4. Keep expectations reasonable-your celebrations will never be the same.
5. Network with other grievers-share holidays with people who know how you feel.
6. Remember your loved one who died-don't try to leave them out of your holidays.
7. Expand your family-invite others to avoid the empty chair.
8. Take care of yourself physically-exhaustion isn't the goal.
9. Don't feel like you have to do it all-let family and friends help you shop, etc.
10. Protect your boundaries-say no to invitations when you need to.