

Lessons from a Christmas Tree

It was early January last year; we were driving up the mountain from Linda's oncologist. We were still absorbed in the shock of the doctor's pronouncement that Linda had three weeks to live.

Three weeks. How precious each moment. How unimportant, mundane and burdensome some tasks become. As we discussed plans to joyfully share the remaining minutes the Lord allowed, my mind flashed to *that tree*.

Linda loved Christmas. Having a Christmas Eve birthday added to her celebration of God's gift of His own Son, our Savior. As in all other aspects of her life, Linda's exuberance was reflected in the extensive decorating and commitment to celebrate Christmas in every corner of the house. *That tree* exemplified her unreserved joy. It was big. Decorating the tree to Linda's satisfaction required a week. Removing the decorations and packing the ornaments required nearly two days. Two days when my currency was now minutes. While driving up Highway 18, I visualized heaving that tree off the back deck.

Upon arrival home, we were met by loving friends, Mark and Donna, who immediately set to carefully removing the vestments of Christmas. We were joined by other angels whom God placed in our lives, and everything was carefully packed in the multitude of boxes and placed in the attic; nothing was thrown off the deck.



Nearly one year later ...

This year, as Christmas approached, I went to the attic to survey the Christmas treasures. Suddenly it was all just stuff. Except for that tree. The tree, in two boxes that required two men to lift, stirred up a pain and loneliness that seemed overwhelming. I left everything in storage, rationalizing that I would be too busy to decorate anyway. But ... that tree. I knew that tree would never warm my heart with joy. It had to go.

I called the church, offering it to anyone who could use a giant tree. I hadn't really expected a response and was resolved to get rid of it, even if that meant a trip to the dump. Within an hour, to my surprise, Tracy Williams called and excitedly said she'd like to use the tree for the church and arranged to pick it up. I was glad to see it go, but was a little apprehensive about seeing it again.

Wow! When I next saw that tree in the sanctuary, the object of pain and anxiety had been transformed into a majestically beautiful symbol of love that warmed my heart and evoked tears of joy. Tracy, Stacy and other tender women decorated that tree more beautifully than I could remember. I was struck with the similarities of the tree and the juxtaposed cross in the sanctuary. The cross, an instrument of death and pain, through my Savior Jesus Christ brings salvation and life; through His blood the cross becomes a symbol of God's love and His promise. That tree—which had been a symbol of pain and loss—through the loving hands of God's children, and my sisters in Christ, brought peace and healing to me. It is now a symbol of joy!

The Lord is faithful in His love that not only gives us undeserved salvation, but brings us comfort, healing and peace. His children, through fellowship, can share our pain, fears, disappointments, burdens and trials. Not only are we comforted in fellowship, but God is faithful through the community of believers to bring healing and a testimony of His grace, comfort and love that is a glory and praise to Him.




The Holy Spirit blessed me with these lessons from that tree:

1. Allow other believers to share your trials as well as praise.
2. The Lord wants us to be a community. Our brothers and sisters in Christ can help us share our joy, praises and blessings and are equipped to minister to us in the trials of life.
3. Bring the burdens in your life to Christ; offer them on His holy ground. Don't leave your painful and unhealed issues hidden away in a closet or attic, but confess and acknowledge the pain, the shame, the weakness in your life and trust in the Lord to bring you to the peace, joy, love and beauty He has reserved just for you.

James 1:2, "Count it all joy ..."

by Greg Morgon



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