

Preparing for Christmas

Take care of yourself physically

Of utmost importance, you must allow yourself to get rest. If your body is weary, take an hour to sit or lie down. Your body will tell you what you need. Loss drains the body of energy and strength. Don't try to do what you have done at previous Christmases. If you want baking and decorating to be done, ask someone to help you. Don't be afraid to admit your physical weakness. Remember, at holiday time your emotions will play a large part of your everyday schedule. Take time to sit down and weep if necessary. Let the tears come; they are important. You and your family are the most important consideration. Remember, it is okay to put yourself first! It is okay to do things differently this year.

Celebrate Christmas in a simple manner

Christmas had its beginnings in the simple and lowly surroundings of a stable. This may not be the year to put up all the "extra" decorations and lights—perhaps just a tree and some trimmings, with the family joining in to help. A simple nativity scene on a table can help bring your attention to the meaning of the holiday. Don't send Christmas cards this Christmas. It's okay not to send cards! Everyone will understand. Don't do all the time-consuming Christmas baking you usually do at the holidays. Your family will be okay! Allow yourself to buy cookies from the bakery (even though they cost more) and just have eggnog and cookies for dessert. Christmas dinner can be special. It is usually better to have dinner at another person's home. Let a relative or close friend host dinner at his or her home. Don't feel responsible to bring anything. Or, go out to a restaurant for dinner; you might want to invite a same-sex friend who might be alone this Christmas. If you would like to have the dinner at home, then do a simple buffet with items from the deli, paper plates, etc. Put some candles and a pretty tablecloth on the table! Consider inviting friends from your church or neighborhood who might not have family nearby.

Remember your loved one

At Christmastime, you usually want to do something to remember your loved one. Perhaps going to the cemetery and placing new flowers, a small tree or cross will help you. Cemeteries at Christmastime are very pretty. Sometimes it helps to see how others have remembered their loved ones. Some people donate time or money to needy people as a memorial. Others help those who have lost loved ones by contributing money to the family. It seems to help a grieving heart to do something tangible to remember the loved one. Many families can sit around the dinner table or Christmas tree and talk about their loved one. Sharing good memories brings healing to everyone. Remember, though, to let all the family members grieve in their own way.

Serve others in need

Volunteer to help others in need on that special day, for instance, working in a soup kitchen, at the Salvation Army or at a local shelter. Sometimes a community organization will serve dinner at a local fire department or rescue squad for the rescue workers on duty that day and for other community members. Your church pastor may have suggestions of other places to volunteer. Taking the focus off yourself and your grief and focusing instead on helping others is what God is calling each of us to do. Galatians 5:13 reads, "Serve one another in love," and 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."




Next year will be better

Always keep in mind through the holiday that this season will soon be past, and with the New Year, things will get better. Also remember that there are many people like you who are walking through this season just as you are doing. Jesus will walk through the days with you, and things will get better. You may think that most families are having a wonderful holiday season, but that is not always the real story. You are not alone in your grieving. This thought may not comfort you now, but later God will show you opportunities to help others who grieve as you have grieved.

Please consider visiting a GriefShare grief recovery group at a church near you. The other people at GriefShare have an understanding of what you are facing this holiday season since the death of your loved one. They, too, have experienced a loved one's death. At GriefShare you will learn about moving forward through the grief process, what to expect, how to cope, how to help others and how to accept God's comfort.

by Judy Hawk



To find a GriefShare group near you, visit www.griefshare.org or call 800-395-5755.