

4 Wonderful Ways Jesus Can Transform Your Christmas Loneliness

The holidays can be lonely times for those who have suffered losses of loved ones or are missing families, friendships or relationships due to extenuating circumstances. As a single mom, for many years I had to send my daughter across the country to visit her father and family at Christmas. As a little girl, she would ask me to fly with her because she was afraid to fly alone and wanted me close.

Due to the expense and time of travel, it made more sense to stay where she was than to fly back and forth. I spent many Christmases in a hotel room by myself. I never minded taking the trips because it helped my daughter feel safe and secure knowing I was close, but it was very lonely for me. I was still walking out my healing from being divorced, I was missing family and friends back at home and most heart-wrenching, I was missing spending Christmas with my precious daughter.

As I stared at the pop-up Christmas tree I had set up in my hotel room, I cried out to God in my loneliness. The room was filled with His presence, and He began to show me how precious this time could be Him if I changed my perspective. As I started to worship and pray, Jesus began to heal my hurting heart and gave me the rest I needed in body, mind and spirit. He filled me with His love to cover all the empty and hurting places.

The following year, in the same hotel room, I asked Jesus how I could show His love to others. I started making care kits for the homeless, evangelized on the streets and started volunteering at a homeless shelter where I served food, set up

bedding, prayed with people and helped raise funds and donations for the shelter. When I wasn't serving, I was spending precious alone time with Jesus. People started donating toward my trip, and my flights, hotel and supplies were covered! I made lasting friendships with the people at the homeless shelter. The time of loneliness I dreaded the most became a time I looked forward to each year.

The last time I had to spend Christmas alone out there, God gave me an open door to share the gospel with 40 men who were waiting to go inside to sleep at the shelter that night. He gave them prophetic words, and many came to accept Christ that night. God used this season to not only change me, but also to serve others for His kingdom!

That season of our lives is now over, but I will never forget the transformation that took place in my heart. As we approach Christmas, if you are feeling the pain of loss or the longing to be with your friends and loved ones but circumstances will not allow you to, here are four encouraging steps and verses to bring comfort to your hearts.

1. Cry out to God in your pain. It is easy to try and be strong in front of others, but God already knows your hurt and the season you are in. Jesus experienced every pain you are encountering, and He understands. Call to Him for help in your brokenness. "In my distress I called on the Lord, and cried for help to my God" (Ps. 18:6a).
3. In your alone time with Jesus, allow Him to heal all of the empty and broken places. If you have Jesus, you have everything you need to experience wholeness. "He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds" (Ps. 147:3).
4. Approach this season with a new perspective of expectation, joy and thanksgiving for the life Jesus died to give you, trusting Him to help you each step. "O

Lord my God, I cried to you, and You healed me. O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit ... Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me; Lord, be my helper." (Ps. 30:2-3, 10).

4. Ask God to give you opportunities to help others who may be hurting. You can serve at a local soup kitchen, shelter, nursing home, veterans home or orphanage. You can invite people going through similar circumstances over for dinner. Wherever or whomever God calls you to serve, if you go about the business of the Father, He will take care of yours. "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

As we prepare to celebrate the day Jesus entered this world to bring us hope, let this holiday season replace your brokenness, loneliness and sadness with His healing, hope and joy. Jesus will be with you each step of the way, and God can use this time to transform your life and others for His kingdom while bringing you the healing and restoration you need. {eoa}

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