

How the End of Christmas Can Mark Your Powerful New Beginning

Christmas is my favorite holiday. Even this year, as I adjust to missing a piece of my heart, I still love Christmas.

Sappy movies with happy-ever-after endings.

Hectic schedules punctuated by peaceful moments listening to Christmas carols in the subdued light of the Christmas tree.

Receiving cards from people I haven't talked to all year and reconnecting as I read their Christmas notes and updates.

Most of all, celebrating the reason for the season—the miracle of God becoming human to enable humans to become sons and daughters of God.

So the days after Dec. 25 had traditionally been a letdown for me. Christmas trees dumped on the curb, shreds of tinsel still clinging precariously to their branches. Bright lights unplugged. Traditional carols of yesteryear pushed aside in favor of contemporary songs.

Worst of all, the change of perspective fueled the letdown. From the heaven-sent Christ child to earthbound cares. From music and lights to bills and worries. And from silent nights to discordant days.

In many ways, the week after Christmas signifies the end. The end of the Christmas season. The imminent end of the year. And for me, this year, the end of a year marking my greatest loss.

But it's not the end. The day after Christmas is a beginning.

The beginning of the time God stepped into His creation. A

cradle leading to a cross. The beginning of our salvation, when a life was born for the purpose of death. A death that means life for you and me if we choose to receive it.

Strip the tinsel and needles from the Christmas tree, and we're left with a different kind of tree. Bare wood, just as the cross Jesus hung on was bare wood. Several New Testament verses speak of Jesus on the cross. In these verses the word for "cross" actually comes from the Greek word for "wood." Some translations use the word "tree" (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal. 3:13; I Peter 2:24).

No, Dec. 26 is not the end of Christmas. It's the beginning of *Immanuel*, "God with us." It's the beginning of the opportunity for an intimate relationship with the one who not only created us, but sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. It's the beginning of a chance to be and have all God intended for us.

Christmas letdown? Not anymore! {eo}

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