

How the Morning Star Healed This Woman's Christmas Grief

Like fog in the morning, the spirit of Christmas was gone that year. Still, I shuffled in the garage. One by one, I pulled off the shelves the bins I'd stored the previous Christmas.

While the aroma of sugar cookies wafted through the air and "Silent Night" played in the background, I began the decorating.

By then, the task was challenging because all I had left of my eyesight was the ability to see lights.

With the nativity scene at the center, I placed the items I had memorized through the years—red and green candles, musical boxes with winter scenes and bright red poinsettias with green garland.

Next, I lifted three stockings from a box and hung them on marked places above the fireplace. Each was embroidered with the name of one of our sons. I ran my fingers over the letters. One read "Jason," the other, "Jeff," and the least number of letters spelled "Joe."

Once Jason's and Jeff's were hung, with tears burning my eyes, I clutched Joe's against my chest.

The empty stocking seared my heart. It had been five years since the Lord called Joe home. Five years that Joe's absence had left an emptiness we could almost touch. And five years that God's grace wiped away portions of the grief that ached in our broken hearts.

But the healing came like the warm steam from mint tea—soft and sweet.

It came in a memory: Years ago, when our three sons, including

Joe, were still young, I rushed around, getting everything ready; I fretted until I became crabby. As a result, little things tended to make me crazy.

One night, while everyone was in bed, I stayed up with important stuff like trying to fix a light strand that refused to shine. One burned-out bulb was the culprit. Annoyed at the glitch, I fussed. I rearranged, and then plugged and unplugged until I was so frustrated, I plopped on the couch. I looked up and glanced at the star atop the tree, shining, glowing, lighting the room.

I sighed with slight shame. I'd done the same with light bulbs that burned out in my life—from broken relationships, disappointments, setbacks, failed plans and even deep heartache. But in all that mess, I missed the one who lights the way through the darkest moments.

Trying to fix the strands of my life's issues, I missed the star—Christ the Lord, who gave significance to my life and joy for my days.

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star'" (Rev. 22:16).

When that void in our heart aches to be filled, it's the star of comfort that makes it whole. When bitter sorrow robs the spirit of Christmas, it's the star of love that whispers joy. When a health diagnosis shakes our world, it's the star of reassurance that shines the certainty of new tomorrows. It's the same star that never loses the brilliance of hope, one we can only embrace when all strands of life burn out.

I embraced it as I, with eyes focused on the star, hung Joe's stocking along with his brothers'. It's not empty anymore. Rather, it's filled with sweet memories—his wit and laughter, his hugs and kisses.

The star changed all that. Jesus, the Morning Star, dispels our darkness, dries our tears and repairs strands we cannot fix. {eoa}

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