

How to Have Hope When Holidays Make You Miserable

Maybe you find yourself having to dig deep after a year of living in a world where death and violence abound; where families and churches are rife with emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual abuse; and where one in 3.5 households is comprised of someone living alone.

This is not what we were made for, is it?

How do we tune our hearts for gratitude? I found inspiration in the story of Katherine and Jay Wolf, authors of *Hope Heals* (). Katherine was a model and young mother living her best life when she suffered a massive, debilitating stroke just six months after the birth of her first son. In a moment of understandable despair over her circumstance, God spoke to her heart Ephesians 4:1b: "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called."

Today she and her husband minister to many in powerful ways that would not be possible without the road of suffering and hope they have journeyed together. The simple truth is that we cannot follow Jesus without suffering. The question the Wolfs asked themselves, and now challenge others to hear is this one:

Do you want the gifts or the giver, the healing or the healer?

It's a question that has penetrated my heart, and one I return to whenever I find myself emptied of gratitude. I'm reminded that God is more interested in changing and sanctifying us than in changing our circumstances. The apostle Paul learned this when he asked God three times to remove the thorn in his side only to hear God's reply:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made

perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

As we approach the holidays where so much is expected, let’s recommit to focus our attention on who God is. He is a worthy source of our worship and gratitude. And as we turn our eyes and hearts, toward Him, we will be filled with His Spirit and away from the circumstances that rob us of joy and gratitude.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4: 6-7).

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