

# Keeping the Grinch Out of Your Christmas

There is a lot of Christmas cheer happening all around, but right now I'm trying to survive. I might not be the Grinch, but I am not spreading great joy either, maybe I need to figure out where I fall on the Grinch scale.

At my house, the Christmas tree and decorations come up the weekend after Thanksgiving. That's when we get ready for Christmas, then come the presents—one of my favorite parts about Christmas—and then we wait for Christmas Day. That's it! No Advent, no cookies, no baking, no sweet memories of Christmas joy. This year I'm trying to get Christmas cards sent out (which makes me a Christmas card hypocrite because I love getting Christmas cards and look forward to opening my mail during this time of the year).

It's not that I don't want to go all out, or maybe I do, I don't know, I might be a Grinch, but I just don't have the energy to do it. Winter season is also sick season, so we've already gone through plenty of rounds of antibiotics, whooping cough, sinus infections and the stomach bug. My youngest daughter was out of school for almost 5 weeks; because she has Down syndrome her immune system struggles during winter, and anything that's out there, she gets it.

My middle daughter is going through some tough times, and we have had very little sleep around here. Trauma affects everyone in the family, and you never know what will trigger a set back. My husband was watching a basketball game and Bethany Hamilton (the surfer who lost an arm) was on TV. She was happy and smiling, but this triggered something in my daughter and she is beyond terrified, of Bethany? Of losing an arm? Of the shark? We don't know, and neither does she. There is no way to reason over trauma. This is hard. Her trauma

brain is in full swing and we are all feeling it. We are all living with trauma right now.

And in the midst of this there is Christmas and the pressure to have great joy.

I think right now I definitely fall within the Grinch scale.

I do believe Advent is a great way to remember why we celebrate Christmas, but I also know that God knows my heart, and He wants me to love Him now and in January, February, March and every month of the year. And especially now in the midst of life, not in the midst of the "Christmas season" but in the midst of the messy and the hard.

So while my friends post about the adventures of the Elf on the Shelf; while others bake cookies, make fudge and other delicious Christmas treats; while creative geniuses find meaningful ways to count down to Christmas; while there are crafts and stories to remind children about the birth of Christ; I am struggling to keep my house picked up, the laundry caught up so everyone can have clean underwear, and I cannot remember the last time I changed the sheets in the girls' rooms.

And let's hope I do get those Christmas cards in the mail before the 25th.

Instead, I sit down by the soft glow of the lights on the Christmas tree sipping hot cider, enjoying this last week as the kids are in school and I get a little respite. And it's good. And I feel blessed. And I think about the miracle of God becoming flesh, coming to this earth so that He could save me.

Soon, we will visit with extended family and rejoice in the fact that we love each other and we get to do life together.

Maybe there is hope for this Grinch after all.

*Adapted from **Ellen Stumbo's** blog at . Ellen is a pastor's wife*

*and she writes about finding beauty in brokenness with gritty honesty and openness. She is passionate about sharing the real—sometimes beautiful and sometimes ugly—aspects of faith, parenting, special needs and adoption. She has been published in Focus on the Family, LifeWay, MomSense, Not Alone and Mamapedia, among others.*