

This Holiday Season, Take Time to Reflect

A few years ago, we relocated my mother from a home several hundred miles away, where she had lived for more than 50 years. She made the transition very well to a small duplex near us, but the move was not without its challenges. Mom's heart sometimes longed for the more familiar past when family gathered for the holidays, and she cooked our favorite dishes—while lavishing loads of love on her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Yet her life's companion of more than 61 years had relocated to his new home in heaven, the house was emptied of all its furnishings and a new owner had moved in.

Reflecting on sweet memories of warm embraces, children's laughter echoing from the rooms and the delicious aromas wafting through our old home stir mixed emotions for me too this time of year. However, Mom is now enjoying being reunited with Daddy and celebrating God's amazing blessings in her heavenly home. Her passionate faith has become sight!

This spring, my husband and I transitioned from a home, where we had lived for almost 39 years, to a condominium, minus a whole lot of stuff! This will be our first holiday season in a new house since our children were babies, and we've been discussing where we should put the Christmas tree. Although it's been a very liberating experience to be rid of some of the trappings of the past, I'm sure we'll be a bit emotional when we reflect on fun times like reading *Mr. Toy Man* and *The Gift of the Magi* in front of the fireplace or having scavenger hunts to locate our presents. Yet this is not the biggest transition I've ever made.

My most significant transition in life was when my spiritual house was emptied of its unnecessary furnishings, and a new owner took possession of my heart, soul and spirit.

Paul asked the Corinthians, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19). Although I sometimes act a bit bossy and think I still "rule the roost," the true owner reminds me that He is the one in authority because I am now His dwelling place.

Believe me, He is a much better proprietor than the previous one. Like the HGTV extreme home makeovers, my renovation process is taking a bit of time, but oh what a beautiful difference the new owner is making! I understand that the Father's house in Scripture may have several different applications or meanings, but what should typically be some of the most appealing features about the Father's house?

–It is to be called a house of prayer (Isa. 56:7, Mark 11:15-17).

–It has many "rooms" or dwelling places (John 14:2-3, Eph. 2:4-6).

–It has a loving atmosphere (John 14:23).

–It is a place of miracles (Matt. 21:14, Luke 13:12-13).

As you enter this holiday season, you may be so busy with church and family activities that you feel you don't have time to think, much less reflect on sweet memories of home and Christmases past. Life transitions might have been different for you this year, and some may still be in progress.

You may find yourself living in a room or dwelling place of:

–Loneliness, grieving broken relationships.

–Disappointment, weeping for prodigal children.

–Rest in His presence, following a long season of active ministry.

- Amazement at His wisdom, absorbing His grace and understanding.
- Waiting for release, longing for healing and deliverance.
- Fasting, praying and anticipating the prophetic fulfillment of His Word.
- You fill in the blank.

Ironically, although we're the temple of His Holy Spirit, He's also at the Father's right hand in a place prepared for us to join Him. Yes, the Father's house is to be called a house of prayer, and it has many rooms. As we persevere in whatever place we find ourselves, surely, we can have hope because according to Paul, the love of God is continually being "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5, ESV). We can't afford to be so preoccupied during the holidays that we fail to go "home" to the Father's house.

Although I may miss the familiar sights, sounds and smells of my childhood home, I'm super thrilled that I don't have to travel to be home for the holidays. Children and grandchildren will now gather around the Thanksgiving table and Christmas tree at our new house. That's also the exciting thing about being invited to go to the Father's house. We don't have to drive, fly on an airplane or hop a train to be "home" for the holidays! {eo}

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