

Why Christmas Is Still Christmas—Even for the Broken Hearted

Christmas is the most joyous time of the year. In this season, our privilege is to share with others the true spirit of Christmas, the spirit of God's great love for all humankind. In this pandemic year, for millions of people suffering unemployment or grief, Christmas will not be as much a celebration as a marker that separates a former life from a future life.

For them, our sacred holiday will be the first year of being without a job, without gifts or without a loved one.

Jesus' birth brings hope—and we must carry that hope to others.

As ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we start sharing the spirit of God's love by understanding how people around us are experiencing this Christmas. All emotional suffering starts in the heart. The Lord says, out of the heart "come the issues of life" (see Prov. 4:23). When we have understanding, we can pray for God to give us an opportunity to be instruments of Christ's healing power.

To be healed and delivered by Jesus, we must first acknowledge what is damaging our souls. The emotional agony of unacknowledged pain that has not had time to heal can drive people to pain relievers that numb the feelings and shove down the torment. Disappointment is the single common denominator for people falling prey to mind-numbing activities. In such a state, will power decreases, and people give permission to addictions and compulsions. They must withdraw that permission to be liberated.

Those who suffer this Christmas are not confined only to those who have experienced the death of a loved one or their finances. Disappointment can happen to anyone. The word "disappointment" includes dissatisfaction, distress, discontentment, frustration, regret, opposition, disillusionment, failure, disenchantment, displeasure, resistance and injustice.

Disappointment is compounded by seeing cheery social media or negative media headlines. Our world is a climate primed for disappointment and, ultimately, for soul destruction.

The first step to overcoming disappointment is to acknowledge it. What has broken your heart or the hearts of those around you? Who or what has stifled hopes? Who or what has abruptly let you down or left them with no recourse? Getting to the root of disappointments helps slow or halt the pathway that leads to the crushing of the soul.

Disappointments are, in essence, failed expectations. Abandonment, neglect, rejection, alienation and loneliness all stem from failed expectations. What burdens people and increases their disappointment is a lack of people to care, a lack of relief from emotional pain, a lack of protection, a lack of defense, a lack of provision or a lack of rescue. Each of these further fuels the disappointment, and each of these fuses with abandonment, neglect and aloneness.

When these disappointments lodge in the heart, they manacle the soul to rejection and bind it to alienation and despair. We must engage and involve ourselves actively to remove disappointment from our hearts and dislodge any spirit that would attack us. And we must be sensitive and ready to minister to others who are experiencing the kind of heartache that would bind their souls, making a temporary grief or setback into a permanent blight on the soul.

I encourage you to take the first step yourself. Take a hard

look at what has disappointed you. People. Circumstances. Abandonment. Injustice. Take that disappointment to Christ in prayer.

That's why He came. As you are healed, you can heal others. Make yourself a mentor or coach—or at least a good listener. Whatever else you may do as we close out this year, I implore you to be aware of the people around you who feel loss and displacement this season.

Jesus said, "And if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32). This statement cannot be narrowed down only to evangelism or getting people to church. Jesus' power is greater than this. His power is to save, heal and deliver. The "new birth" of a Christ-follower is often imperceptible at first and often treated insignificantly. But the risen Lord Jesus Christ, the Almighty, constantly acts on the souls he indwells. His work in a surrendered heart is never-ending.

The true Christmas spirit is to take this message and ministry of Christ to a lost and hurting world. Pray this Christmas that God will help you minister to others, to unearth what keeps them from moving forward in God. By ministering to others, we are ministered to ourselves. As you give what you've been given, the joy of the season will burn even brighter for you. {eoa}

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