



Preparing for Christmas ... after Separation or Divorce

Take care of yourself physically

You must allow yourself to get rest. If your body is weary, take an hour to sit or lie down. Separation and divorce can drain the body of energy and strength. Don't try to do what you have done at previous Christmases. If you want baking and decorating to be done, ask someone to help you. Don't be afraid to admit your physical weakness. Remember, at holiday times your emotions will play a large part of your everyday schedule. Take time to sit down and weep if necessary. Let the tears come; they are important. Remember, it is okay to do things differently this year.

Celebrate Christmas in a simple manner

Christmas had its beginnings in the simple and lowly surroundings of a stable. This may not be the year to put up all the "extra" decorations and lights—perhaps just a tree and some trimmings, with family or friends joining in to help. A simple nativity scene on a table can help bring your attention to the meaning of the holiday. You might choose not to send Christmas cards this Christmas. It's okay not to send cards! You might choose not to do all the time-consuming Christmas baking you usually do at the holidays. That is okay, too! Treat yourself to cookies from the bakery (even though they cost more) and just have eggnog and cookies for dessert. Christmas dinner can be special. You might choose to have dinner at another person's home, such as a relative or a close friend. Or, go out to a restaurant with a same-sex friend who might be alone this Christmas. If you would like to have the dinner at home, then do a simple buffet with items from the deli, paper plates, etc. Put some candles and a pretty tablecloth on the table! Consider inviting a single parent family from your church or neighborhood.

Serve others in need

Volunteer to help others in need on that special day, for instance, working in a soup kitchen, at the Salvation Army or at a local shelter. Sometimes a community organization will serve dinner at a local fire department or rescue squad for the rescue workers on duty that day and for other community members. Your church pastor may have suggestions of other places to volunteer. Taking the focus off yourself and focusing instead on helping others is what God is calling each of us to do. First Peter 4:10 says, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others;" and Galatians 5:13 reads, "Serve one another in love."

Next year will be better

Always keep in mind through the holiday that this season will soon be past, and with the New Year, things will get better. Also remember that there are many people like you who are walking through this season just as you are doing. Jesus will walk through the days with you, and things will get better. You may think that most families are having a wonderful holiday season, but that is not always the real story. You are not alone in your emotions, fears and loneliness.

Connect with a DivorceCare group

At a DivorceCare group you will meet people who are facing similar emotions and struggles this holiday season. DivorceCare groups provide a safe place where you can learn how to move.

by Judy Hawk

To find a DivorceCare group near you, visit www.divorcecare.org or call 800-489-7778