



The Wind Chime That Changed Christmas

For this single parent family it was the first Christmas without the other parent. How could a wind chime make a difference? Read about how it changed this family's time together.

Our first Christmas as a single parent family was fast approaching. Since my children's father had left last year right after Christmas, we were beginning to get used to being without his presence in our home. However, here were the holidays looming before us, and me with no money. I thought about just skipping Christmas altogether, but decided that wouldn't be fair to the kids. Then I decided we would continue with Christmas just as before. We would select a night to put up the tree, the lights and all the decorations. I would buy some special snacks, and we would celebrate like we always had. However, my kids were not very enthusiastic about this idea.

On a pre-designated Friday night the kids and I pulled out all of our Christmas decorations. They were mumbling and grumbling about putting up the tree. I heard things like, "Why do we have to do this? It's not Christmas without Dad here!" and "Some Christmas this is going to be because we don't have any money to buy any presents." I was not to be deterred, no siree! We were going to celebrate Christmas, and they were going to be happy about it! Sure, right.

The family wind chime

We were doing better at the single parent family thing, but getting through the holidays was a different matter. I was trying to be joyful and happy, but my heart really wasn't into it. In the midst of pulling out all of the decorations, my son unwrapped our family wind chime. It was a tradition to hang this wind chime on our front door each Christmas. Years ago a friend had made us a ceramic door chime with cute little people all decked out in their caroling outfits. Under each character was written the appropriate name. Their father's name was written under the father; my name was under the mother, and each child's name was written under the appropriate-age child. This had always been such a special decoration to hang on the front door.

As Brian stood there holding it, we all froze. We must have stood there for several seconds staring at it. Brian finally ventured out with, "Uh, Mom, what about this? What are we going to do?" It was certainly a defining moment in our little family. I just stood there with my eyes focused on the name of their now-departed father. All of a sudden my daughter ran out of the room yelling, "Hold on, I've got an idea." She came running back with the scissors and handed them to me. Immediately I knew what to do. I simply reached up, grabbed the string and snipped that cute little father character right off as I said, "Well, it's just the three of us now. Might as well make the most of it."

With a dramatic sweep of my arm, I opened the front door and hung up the now very crooked and unbalanced wind chime. As we looked at it, we all began to laugh. Brian said, "Mom, that looks stupid." Julie said, "Nah, it's okay. It adds a little character to it." All I could do was laugh at how silly it looked. Brian added a few more comments, and we laughed all the more. Julie screeched out another silly comment, and we laughed even more. By the time I could get control of myself, I had tears in my eyes. We couldn't stop laughing.

As I looked at that silly, crooked wind chime, I knew that things were beginning to change. I realized it was okay to make changes and that we couldn't do things the way we always had. I got busy, and we moved the Christmas tree to a different spot. We changed the way we had always put out the nativity scenes. The kids got a little wild with their ideas, but hey, it was their ideas.

We stayed up very late that night. We spent a lot of time in laughter and silliness. We draped the silver tinsel over our shoulders. We put lights in weird places. I hung Christmas bulbs on my ears like big earrings. I remember my



son even putting decorations on our dog. Snickers the dog only tolerated our silliness.

Toward the end of the evening my son was a little concerned about the father figure that had been snipped off the wind chime. I always advocated that my children respect their father. Hmmm, how could I still encourage respect in this situation? I suggested that my son could either keep it himself and hang it in his room, or he could give it to his father.

Making new traditions

Every Christmas for years that crooked wind chime hung on our front door. Every year when I would look at it, I would smile. We were okay.

Another tradition that I started that year was to buy each child a two-liter bottle of his or her favorite soft drink along with a bag of his or her favorite chips. Our budget was tight, and your own soft drink and your own bag of chips were indeed wonderful. The children could take their drinks and chips to their bedrooms and eat and drink when and as they saw fit. This became a much-treasured item to look forward to. Even after our budget improved, I continued that tradition.

Look at your own situation, and think about ways to begin some new traditions. Keep some of the familiar traditions, but develop some new ones also. Above all, don't forget the reason for the season—Christ's birth.

Think about Jesus' birth and the fact that God knew when His Son was born what His Son was going to have to go through. God, the Father, knew when this little baby was born that in just a few short years He would face the cross. God allowed His Son to face the cross for you and your children. For our sins, Christ paid it all. Give the joy of Christmas to your children this year, as you have never done before.

"And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7

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by Linda Ranson Jacobs

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