

# MercEmail

A Weekly Devotional by Steve Higginbotham

## Merry Christmas?

by Steve Higginbotham

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For many people, Christmas is the "most wonderful time of the year," but for others, it can be the most painful time of the year. While many will be together laughing, and sharing expressions of love during this holiday season, others will be sitting alone, broken, and forlorn.

It's difficult for those who have not suffered loss to appreciate the pain others feel during the holidays. However, if God allows us to live long enough, we all will experience a Christmas without a loved one for the very first time. Instead of being surrounded by family and gifts, our companions will be loneliness and grief. Even in a room filled with family, one may find himself alone in his thoughts, memories, and grief.

So what can be done? Here are some suggestions

- **To the Joyful...** Surprise someone who is grieving with gifts, cards, letters, and visits. Get the whole family involved in the project, children included. Make it thoughtful, sacrificial, and memorable. Allow it to be a teaching moment of God's love for the recipient, our children, and ourselves.
- **To the Joyful...** Help someone create new memories. Be sensitive to the fact that for some people, Christmas never was a time of joy due to a dysfunctional upbringing. For some people, the mere thought of Christmas drudges up painful memories. While we can't change the past, we can change the present and create pleasant memories to be recalled in the future.
- **To the Joyful...** Don't forget to thank God for what you have. Cherish every joyful moment as his gift to you. We live in a fallen world that sooner or later will affect our lives. God won't exempt us from heartache and pain in this life, but he did promise eternal peace and joy in the life to come. Don't take your present joy for granted.
- **To the Hurting...** Don't give up. Don't wallow in your grief. Fight it. Choose what you want to think about. Work at finding joy. Count your blessings, name them one-by-one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.
- **To the Hurting...** Serve others. Get outside yourself. It's a paradox, but if you want to lighten your load, you need to pick up the load of another. It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Busy yourself in doing good for others and you'll create your own joy and be distracted from your pain. Remember, we were made for good works (Ephesians 2:10). Functioning according to the "Owner's Manual" will always

provide the best results.

- **To the Hurting...**Don't forget to thank God for what you have. I don't mean to downplay your hurt and heartache, but if you are the Lord's, your blessings far exceed your problems. Look beyond your pain and you will see countless reasons to give God thanks

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

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