

# CHRISTMAS IN THE SADNESS

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MATTHEW 2:11

My mom absolutely loved Christmas. For her, it was the best time of the year because it was when she knew that her kids and her grandkids were happy. Even though she lived in a different state, just the knowledge that her family were opening those presents on Christmas morning brought her so much joy.

Mom passed away a couple of months ago. Soon after she went to be with the Lord, I drove the eight hours to her apartment where my sisters and I began the task of cleaning out all of the things she held dear. Among the photographs, dishes, mementos, and more, there were Christmas decorations.

Seeing those prized decorations—some of them the ones we grew up with—brought back so many amazing memories of Christmases growing up. My sisters and I, now in our 40s and 50s, spent time poring over pictures of ourselves as kids where we were opening presents around the Christmas tree. It didn't take long to notice that our mom wasn't in any of the pictures—that's because she was always the one taking them. She wanted to hold onto those memories so much.

And even though she's gone now, I suspect she would have loved to have known that we had that sacred moment together, remembering the good gifts that she gave us. In fact, it wasn't only the presents wrapped in gaudy paper that she gave us. The best gifts of all were the family she built, the faith in Jesus

that she passed on to the three of us, and the love that endures, even though we are all around different trees on Christmas mornings these days.

Christmas will be hard this year. Not because we'll all be opening a few less presents, but because her memory will always be tied to this season. As the years go on, I know that the feeling of sadness at her absence will turn into sweetness as we remember her.

The three of us (my two older sisters and I) have done our best to pass all of those things onto our families. We may not be three wise men, and we may not have gold, frankincense, and myrrh, but the gifts we bring this year will be the legacy of our mom's faith, the family unity that she fought so hard for, and the commitment to praying for all of us that she held so dear.

I suspect that Christmas is hard for many of you as well. If it is, it's okay. Jesus sees you in your sadness and he's with you in it. As for me, it will be a Christmas of telling stories about my mom, eating her favorite foods, and probably shedding many tears. Christmas is a time of joy, but that enduring sense of hope that we feel as believers doesn't always mean happiness. Jesus sees you and he knows how you feel because he feels it too. May your Christmas be full of life and light, even in the midst of your sadness.

## PRAYER

*Father, thank you that you see us. In a time that is so focused on being merry, merriment is in short supply for many of us. Be with us even in our sadness. Thank you for the ways that you love us when we're hurting, and thank you for the knowledge that you hurt alongside us. Help us to find joy this season, even among the sadness. In Jesus's name. Amen.*



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