



A Ministry to Bereaved Parents and Their Families

*Inviting Hope to Heal Broken Hearts*

## SEASON OF JOY: BLESSING THE BROKENHEARTED DURING THE HOLIDAYS

**Most parents feel a little stressed during the holidays.**

We used to be able to *enjoy* Thanksgiving before our 24/7 supercharged and super-connected world thrust us into hyper-drive. Now we zoom past the first day of school on a highway toward Christmas at breakneck speed.

*For bereaved parents, the rush toward the “Season of Joy” is doubly frightening.*

***Constant reminders that this is the “most wonderful time of the year” make our broken hearts just that much more out of place. Who cares what you get for Christmas when the one thing your heart desires—your child, alive and whole—is unavailable...***

We want to enjoy the family that gathers, but their presence makes the empty chair more obvious.

*It is so hard to find a way to trudge through the tinsel when what you really want to do is climb into bed and wake up when it’s all over.*

**There are some practical ways family and friends can help grieving parents during the holidays:**

1. *Don’t resist or criticize arrangements a bereaved parent makes to help him or her get through this season.* If they are brave enough to broach the subject, receive their suggestions with grace and encourage them with love. Do your best to accommodate the request.
2. *If the bereaved parent doesn’t approach you—consider thoughtfully, gracefully approaching him or her about what might make the holidays more bearable.* But don’t expect a well-laid plan—I didn’t get a “how-to” book when I buried my child...***this is new to me and very, very painful.*** I am doing the best I can to keep my head above the waves and I cannot be expected to captain the boat through these turbulent waters.
3. *Don’t be surprised if a bereaved parent doesn’t want to exchange gifts (or at least, not receive gifts).* No one can rewind time or restore my family circle to wholeness and ***I just can’t think of anything else that I want or need.***
4. *Don’t assume that the bereaved parent should be relieved of all meal duties around the holiday.* For some of us, doing the routine things like baking and cooking are healing. For others, there just isn’t energy for anything other than the most fundamental daily tasks. ***ASK if they want to contribute.***



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5. *Don't corner surviving children for a private update on their parent's state of mind. **My children are grieving too.*** When you expect them to give an update on me you diminish their pain and put them in a difficult position. ***If you want to know, ask me.***
6. *If there are young children in the family, it might be helpful to offer to take them to some of the parties/gatherings/church services that their parent may not be up to attending. **Ask, but don't be upset if they say "no"***—it might still be too traumatic for either the child or the parent to be separated from one another.

I know that life goes on, the calendar pages keep turning and I can't stop time in its tracks. *I greet each day with as much faith and courage as I can muster. **This season requires a little more-and I will need help to make it through.***