



## MERRY CHRISTMAS, IT REALLY CAN BE

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By Linda Ranson Jacobs

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*“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’” Luke 2:8-11 (NIV)*

For those of us that work in children’s ministries we know the above scripture is the beginning narrative for the shepherds to begin their journey to look for the baby who would be the Messiah. We understand that there must have been great excitement and joy for the shepherds. We want to carry that excitement about the news of baby Jesus to the children in our ministries. Most of the time their parents join in the excitement and jubilation, and we count on the parents continuing the story of Christmas at home.



We might go around saying “Merry Christmas” to all who can hear. The Sunday before Christmas the phrase, “Merry Christmas” is usually heard all over the children’s area as leaders and teachers wish the kids and parents this saying as everyone is leaving. While most smile and give you a similar wish, the single parent may only nod or appear to be in another world. Some may mumble a “Merry Christmas” back, but for many “Merry Christmas” is a dreaded wish many divorced parents hate to hear.

Being reminded of Christmas might bring up memories of happier times. For some single parents they may slightly turn their heads away from you. Inwardly, they are turning their hearts away from you. They are shutting off their minds to the thought of Christmas. Maybe it hurts too much to think about Christmas.

The first Christmas after my divorce, I was in a stupor and numb. I honestly don’t remember much of what happened. I can’t even remember what happened at church that year. I don’t know if my children made cards or had parties at church. I don’t know if people even said, “Merry Christmas” to me. I’m sure the kids’ teachers did but I doubt if I acknowledged them.

The next year I could hardly get through Christmas simply because I became overwhelmed each time I thought about what Christmas meant. I didn’t feel deserving of the gift of Christmas. For me, I was an emotional wreck



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when I realized that the infinite God sent His son as a tiny baby to the earth to face the cross for me. I was constantly choking back tears. These weren't tears of sadness but tears of joy that I could be loved that much.

The second year is the year that people at church put actions to their words. One of my children's teachers heard my daughter say that I had told them to only expect one present under the tree that year because money was very tight. That teacher got busy and asked other teachers to help her. They put the word out and several church members of our small church purchased gifts for our little family. On Christmas Eve after the kids had gone to bed two leaders took time away from their own families and brought over many wrapped presents for my kids.

On Christmas morning my kids woke to find bunches of presents under our little what had been a lonely Christmas tree. At first my kids were overwhelmed. Then they were embarrassed. After much conversation and talking about God's love and how He had put the love of Christmas in the hearts of church members they were able to accept the gifts with thankfulness. That year "Merry Christmas" meant so much to our single parent family. To this day, we don't know who purchased all those presents for our family.

This year, think about the kids in your church that live in divorced single parent homes. Find ways you can reach out to make Christmas a little easier for them.

For more understanding on celebrating Christmas in single parent homes read, "Surviving the Holidays: Celebrating Christmas in Single Parent Homes" [www.divorcecare.org/holidays/articles/celebratingchristmas](http://www.divorcecare.org/holidays/articles/celebratingchristmas).

*Linda Ranson Jacobs is one of the forefront leaders in the area of children and divorce. She developed and created the DivorceCare for Kids programs. DC4K is an international program for churches to use to help children of divorced parents find healing within the arms of a loving church family. As a speaker, author, trainer, program developer and child care center owner, Linda has assisted countless families by modeling and acting on the healing love she has found in Jesus Christ. Linda offers support, encouragement and suggestions to help those working with the child of divorce. She serves as DC4K Ambassador (<http://www.dc4k.org>) and can be reached via email at [ljacobs@dc4k.org](mailto:ljacobs@dc4k.org).*

Free articles and devotions for single parent families in your church can be found at Linda's website Healthy Loving Partnerships for Our Kids (<http://www.hlp4.com>).