

## **The Empty Chair this Christmas**

**By: Angela Mills**

If you've lost someone close, it's normal to feel a tension rise within you this time of year... should I be celebrating or should I be grieving? Your smiles are dimmed because of the hole you feel in your heart. Many of us don't know how to navigate through holiday grief as so many traditions bring a fresh sense of loss in our minds and hearts. Here are some practical ways to be intentional about your grief while at the same time allowing yourself to experience a fresh, new celebration of our great King and Savior.

1. Be honest ... do you need a change? Begin new traditions and let others go. If you're not up for hosting Christmas Eve, ask someone else. If you dread the idea of cooking a huge meal, go out to eat. Be realistic about what you can enjoy and what is over-commitment.
2. As you decorate for the holiday, place something out in remembrance of your loved ones such as a candle in their favorite color, a bouquet of their favorite flowers, or place their picture in a keepsake ornament.
3. Keep them alive in your hearts and in your homes by talking about memories or just simply sharing how thankful you are to have shared part of your life with them. It is freeing to show your tears... allow yourself to be authentic with those you love.
4. Give a gift in honor of your loved one... you might donate to a charity in their memory.
5. Remember the anticipation of having Christmas without your loved one is often more painful than the actual holiday. Show up to holiday events... don't retreat... being with others can redirect your attention from sorrow to rejoicing. God knows you're hurting and as you choose to celebrate the season, He can give you reasons to rejoice in the midst of the pain.

May you find comfort and strength during this Holiday season.