

# The Pride In Our Holiday Stress

by Stacy Reaach

Decorating our house for Christmas is a day our whole family looks forward to. We bring up boxes from our basement and delight over the sentimental treasures that dress our home. Christmas music fills the room as lights are being strung on the branches of the freshly cut tree.

But this year, a damper was put on the fun of the morning. I walked into the living room to find our two-year-old unwrapping a box of expensive and delicate ornaments from a special family vacation. I quickly admonished him and put them in a spot I thought he couldn't reach. But just minutes later, I walked into the room to find the same box of ornaments on the floor, again. And he was about to pull off the arm of my son's beloved Captain Hook, while my seven-year-old daughter stood by watching.

I wish I could say I responded calmly. Sadly, my annoyance and impatience gave rise to anger as my voice yelled out, "Who gave him the ornaments?!" I grabbed the box from the floor and thrust them again on a higher shelf, indignant at the apparent irresponsibility of my four children. It was like the joyful Christmas music stopped, as my kids looked at me with tear-filled eyes, startled and ashamed by Mom's angry response.

Immediate remorse filled my heart. I realized how I'd let the possibility of Captain Hook's arm breaking off threaten all the fun and joy that normally filled our time decorating together. Within minutes I knew I needed to apologize to all my children, some who had been innocently standing by as Mom freaked out. It can be hard to say I'm sorry and ask for forgiveness, especially when something wrong was done. But sin was still sin, and swallowing my pride, I asked the kids to forgive me for my outburst. Captain Hook looked on. His arm still attached. "This is why Mom needs Jesus."

## Four Ways to Show Humility

Acknowledging our sin has a way of drawing us to our Savior unlike anything else. When we humble ourselves by seeking Christ's forgiveness, as well as others', we're recognizing our own imperfection as we look to the only perfect person who can remedy our sin-saturated souls.

Jesus also demonstrated the trait of humility, although in a different manner, by not insisting on his own rights as God, but taking the form of a servant and laying down his life for the sake of ours (Philippians 2:5-8).

As we deal with the Christmas chaos of the season — long lines at the stores, bumper-to-bumper traffic, kids sugared up on one-too-many candy canes, and our own propensity to stress ourselves out trying to have the perfect Christmas, think about how we can display humility to those around us, and in that way, point our friends and neighbors to the cross.

### 1. Be kind to those who aggravate you.

All of our clocks seem to be wound a little tighter around the holidays. It can be easy to lash out at those who get in the way of what we want. This may be the clerk who has been standing at the register all day and is short with you when you ask for gift boxes. Or it may be your own children asking for a snack when you're in the middle of something.

Whatever it may be, pushing back against our natural tendency to repay smart remarks with smart

remarks, or to be selfishly wrapped up in our own desires, demonstrates the kindness of our Savior to those in our path.

## **2. Honoring others' preferences over your own.**

This could be as simple as deferring to the way your husband wants to hang the tree lights, or being okay with the way Aunt Milly wants to do the family gift exchange, instead of insisting on your method that seems much more efficient.

When we're willing to lay down our own rights as a way to honor others, we're emulating Jesus.

## **3. Remember those who are often forgotten.**

It's easy to think of those we naturally love around the holidays, finding just the right gifts for our family members and good friends. But it takes a bit more thought and effort to find ways to bless and serve others who are often overlooked. Take your children to a nursing home for a time of caroling. Bring a plate of cookies to the widower next door.

We shine the light of Christ and become less self-focused when we seek ways to bless and serve the forgotten.

## **4. Extend grace and mercy to those who have hurt you.**

The person who cut you off on the highway, the friend who offended you with sharp words, the husband who doesn't seem to notice all your efforts to serve your family this holiday season. Just as Jesus freely forgave us of our sins on the cross, so we too should be quick to extend his grace to others.

Humility is highlighted when we let go of our grudges, and freely grant the forgiveness that Jesus has lavished on us.

Finally, when your heart is convicted, cry out to the only one who can free you from the bondage and guilt of sin. The essence of humility was expressed as God came to earth as a helpless baby, lived a perfect life, yet suffered and died an excruciating death so we might be free from sin. This Christmas think of how we can demonstrate humility to a watching world, as we point others to the glorious Savior, the very reason we are celebrating in the first place.

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