

## YOU CAN MAKE IT THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

From: "All That Grief Publication"

By Sis. Betty Jo Nichols

It is my hearts desire that you may prosper and be in good health during the up coming holiday season. I could not share these truths with you if I had not suffered a great deal of loss and pain in my own life. But I want you to be encouraged during this holiday season because... We Can Make It!

The Bible assures us that nothing can ever separate us from HIS love. Death can't, and life can't, the angels can't and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away.

Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*(Reference: Romans 8:38 & 39 New Living Translation)*

As we enter the holiday season, pain automatically sets in for most of us. The holidays bring forth powerful memories that trigger grief. The month of October is when we usually see the stores getting stocked for Halloween, Thanksgiving and the Christmas holidays. Everything in the city becomes festive. When trying to cope with grief it is important to understand that grief is cumulative. Each loss, be it a death, divorce, loss of a job, or a move away from families and friends, exposes itself during the holidays. We become lonely and find ourselves lashing out verbally or physically, engaging in road rage, substance abuse or low tolerance because grief has not been properly dealt with.

During this holiday season let's use the opportunity to work through our feelings. Don't just shove them back under the rug because you are alone or without what has become familiar during the holidays.

Do expect to have some pain. Allow yourself to feel whatever it is you are feeling. Express your emotions. Search for what works best for you. Don't be afraid to cry. Crying releases pressure inside the pressure cooker. Talk, Write, Read (*especially The Word*), Pray, or listen to music, how ever you choose to express yourself, **JUST DO IT!**

It does not matter how you do it just allow your feelings to move from within you to outside of you. Be gentle with yourself. Take plenty of time to rest.

Make sure to set easy to attain goals and congratulate yourself each time you achieve one of them. Forgive yourself when you forget to remember something *YOU* planned to do. **IT'S OK!**

Accept a few invitations to be close with other families or friends that you would have never spent the holidays with otherwise. Choose those that sound appealing but avoid those that will cause you to reflect on your loss. Let others know you are having a tough time. One secret to handling the holidays is to stay in the present moment as much as possible. Donate something to someone less fortunate in that persons honor.

Volunteer your time to serve at a shelter or a soup kitchen. Adopt a family and buy presents or food for the holiday dinner. Do not hide your feelings because it only sets up false teaching for those that are watching you during this time.

Do not isolate yourself. Get involved in doing something even if you don't have the energy. Don't get too busy as a way of filling your time up so that you won't think about your loss- it will only become hidden stress that will come out later.

For those of you that may not be grieving at this time and have gotten a handle on your current pain be a good listener and a good observer for those that may not be as cheerful during this season and buddy up with them. Don't offer any familiar clichés such as: "At least they are in a better place... I know how you feel... I know you miss them... **JUST LISTEN!!!**

Grieving is difficult at anytime but during the holidays it seems huge. You will need to remain strong in your weakness. There will be times when you will only have enough energy to handle your emotions one minute or one hour at a time. Forgive yourself when you fail and begin again when you can. Accept the rise and fall of your feelings and understand that your emotions will have a life of their own.

In all of this make sure to take some time to look at yourself a little more carefully. Give yourself a self-evaluation. Ask yourself what have I lost? What have I kept? What will I never lose? How am I grown? Before you know it the day will come when The Lord will give you answers to them all, and you will see all that you have gained.

If you can't remember anything else that we have discussed here today, remember to never stop loving The Lord, yourself and others around you. Always remember that the most important thing that can help you cope with the holidays is by giving love and allowing yourself to receive love from others. I believe that you will come to the realization that your life is becoming richer through the experiences you've gained. May you find it within yourself in time to be able to look back and say:

*"I have had many blessings in my life. I have lost, but I have also gained.  
I have hurt, but I have also healed. I have struggled, but I have also loved.  
AND I HAVE BEEN LOVED. I know I still have more experience, more to change,  
More to grow. For all that I have been given in ever so many ways; I know that I am blessed.  
AND I AM THANKFUL"*  
(J. E. Miller)

To my family, friends and Brothers/Sisters in The Lord We Are Going To Make It! Let's Remember Each Other in Prayer.

**I LOVE YOU**

*Betty Jo Nichols*