



Brightening Christmas for Widows



The holidays can be a very lonely time for those who have lost a spouse and may not be surrounded by family or friends. Over the years, families develop traditions that help them to “feel” like it’s Christmas! Maybe it’s experiencing the first snow of the year. Or if you live where it doesn’t snow, maybe it’s that first time you go to the mall and hear the Christmas music. Perhaps your family tradition centered around putting up the Christmas tree or participating in the neighborhood lighting displays. Whatever those traditions look like, they speak to you that the holidays are coming, bringing with them a sense of excitement and anticipation.

For many widows, finding that spark of joy over the approaching holidays can be a monumental challenge. Doing all the holiday things alone that she used to do with a spouse can be physically and emotionally exhausting. If you’ve ever wondered what you could do to brighten the holidays for your widowed friend or family member, here are some unique suggestions.

1.) Help with her Christmas decorations

This may sound like a small thing but it’s huge to a widow! Help her buy a tree and get it home, or maybe you need to haul it upstairs from the basement storage. She likely will not do it herself, because it just feels overwhelming! Help her get that tree set up and decorated and let her tell you where all those decorations came from. Each one may have a story.

While you’re there, help her with the outdoor lights and decorations. She probably shouldn’t be climbing on a ladder to hang those lights! There’s something about Christmas lights that lifts our spirits. They make us want to celebrate something. If the whole neighborhood is lit up – but not her house – it can be rather depressing. For some of you that may mean shoveling snow first! Indoor decorations are also important. Maybe she has a nativity collection, or other unusual decorations. Help her get them displayed and let her tell you why they are meaningful to her. It can be a wonderful time of remembering and talking about her absent loved one.



2.) Buy her a surprise Christmas present and deliver it in person

How sad is a Christmas tree with no presents? It's even sadder if she has none to open at all! Many widows have no family close by, and maybe they don't have many friends who would think to buy them a gift. Include your children and deliver a special gift to her in person. She will love it, and children always bring a spark of joy to the holidays with their excitement.

You may need to think practical, depending on her circumstances. But most widows get excited about little extravagances that they wouldn't buy for themselves: manicures, pedicures, massages, gift baskets, gift cards for anything and everything. Even coupons for car washes can be a great way to encourage her!

3.) Plan a holiday baking party with her

Many widows stop baking even though it may have been an important holiday ritual. After all, who will eat all those treats? Ask her to join you to bake cookies and treats. If you don't have children to make it fun, consider hosting a cookie exchange party and inviting her. Help her create cookie trays for her friends.

Meet at your house or hers, the point is that you thought to include her in an activity that might be routine for you in your holiday traditions.

4.) Buy tickets and invite her to join you for a Christmas concert or event

Many cities have special orchestra concerts or performances of Handel's Messiah at Christmas time. Sometimes you can catch a ballet performance of the "Nutcracker". If you don't have those professional or community events available, consider asking her to join you for your children's holiday band or choir concerts, or a church cantata. The point is not how extraordinary the performance is, but rather it's truly the thought that counts. During those first few years of being alone, she isn't likely to do this by herself.



5.) Schedule a fun morning out Christmas shopping and having lunch

This is something you would be doing anyway, right? Some widows love shopping alone, but most often, women love to shop together. It gets their creative juices flowing. And having lunch at a favorite special restaurant is the icing on the cake! She may tell you “No”, but chances are she will say “Yes!” Plan to take time to see if there’s somewhere special she wants to go, or a special gift she’s looking for. Otherwise, all the grandchildren will end up with gift cards, or worse yet, cash. She really wants to hunt and forage for extraordinary gifts, but the energy just isn’t there to do it alone. Remember, if the weather is bad or you can’t go out for some reason, there’s always online shopping! Just do it together!

6.) Plan a wrapping party!

After shopping for those unique gifts for her family and friends, someone needs to wrap them. At a time in her life when her creative energy may be flagging, wrapping all those packages may look completely intimidating. It’s simply easier to fall back on gift bags, or gift cards in envelopes! Make sure there’s plenty of paper, ribbons, name tags, scissors, tape, and pens. It’s so much more fun to create beautiful packages when you’re doing it with someone else. It becomes a competition and an adventure rather than one more chore on the list.

7.) Plan a Christmas movie marathon with snacks and hot cocoa

Who can resist an evening or Saturday afternoon of Hallmark Christmas movies? Nothing says holidays quite like snuggling in a warm blanket by the fireplace, eating snacks and watching classic holiday movies. Now, she may do this one by herself, but it will be so much more fun if you take the initiative and invite her over to join you.

When someone loses a spouse, everything about life as they’ve always known it changes. Every. Single. Thing. Grief is exhausting, and it sometimes is just too demanding to try to make things “normal”. The holidays are an opportunity for you to step into the life of a widow and help with that. Widows have a special place in the heart of God, and He will smile as you care for them during this season of the year. Be creative, and you will bring joy both to the widows you know, and to the Father who loves you both.

