

# CHRISTMAS AND HURTING KIDS

## *A Guide to Navigating the Holidays*

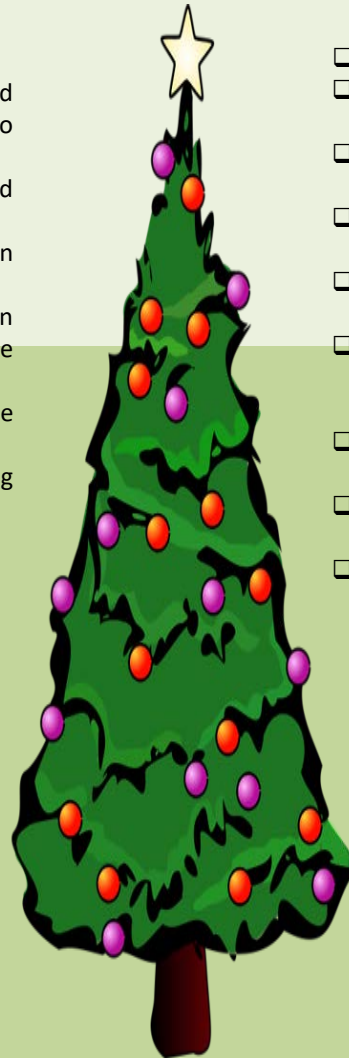
### Christmas is Not Always

#### "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year"

- Christmas is a time of memories of how things used to be, and children from disrupted families are likely to feel a desire to "recapture" those moments.
- Children from modern and disrupted families are often shuffled around without regard to how it impacts them.
- Many children don't get to see one parent or the other at all on Christmas leading to a sense of loneliness or longing.
- Christmas tends to be a stressful time for most people. Children from disrupted families feel the stress of two families during the holidays -sometimes even more when stepfamilies are involved.
- Children often feel forced to choose between parents for the holidays which can cause feelings of guilt or anger.
- Sadness and/or depression are often heightened as children long for the way "things used to be" or "should have been."

### KEEPING THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING!!!

Ofentimes, we are tempted to make Christmas all about family and presents and shared memories. These are great things, but to the child who is hurting or suffering, focusing on these aspects of Christmas may only serve to intensify the pain. Christmas is ultimately about the birth of Jesus Christ – sent by God the Father to live a perfect life, die on the cross in our place and rise again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day so that by believing and trusting in Him, we can have eternal life and be reconciled to God. It is a relationship with Jesus that will ultimately bring true lasting healing and joy.



### What Parents Can Do to Help!

- ❑ Put your children first.
- ❑ Don't change what doesn't need changed. Kids like traditions and routine. Ask your kids what they want to keep.
- ❑ Create new rituals and routines, but don't try to cram too much into one day.
- ❑ Plan ahead, and be very specific with your kids about holiday plans and schedules. Be willing to change those plans if needed.
- ❑ Help kids buy/make gifts for other family members (even if you don't care for them).
- ❑ Don't try to make up for your own feelings of guilt or sadness with expensive gifts. Consider coordinating gifts with other family members. Keep extended family involved.
- ❑ Keep yourself healthy. Try to be upbeat and optimistic about Christmas. Your kids will likely reflect your attitude.
- ❑ Think about what your kids are going through and try to imagine how they will remember this Christmas years from now.
- ❑ Give your child the gift of permission to love both parents.

### What You Can Do to Help!

- ✓ Let kids know that you are there to listen and help.
- ✓ Show kids that you understand their feelings.
- ✓ Offer encouraging words.
- ✓ Be a source of stability.
- ✓ Encourage kids to be kids. Give them some "down time" from the stress of the holiday.
- ✓ Participate in some sort of charity with the child. Seeing others in need will often help them to put their own situation in perspective.
- ✓ Pray
- ✓ Point to Jesus

