

# Home for the Holidays

*Passing on an intimacy heritage*



**Holiday hype and hoopla seem to break onto the scene earlier each year. Once upon a time, the trees, tinsel and trim waited until after Thanksgiving to make their grand entrance. Now, the “Christmas in July” sale signs appear before the last of the fireworks sputter to earth.**

As our senses are assaulted with messages of what we “must do” or “must have” to make our holidays complete, we risk losing focus on what the holidays are all about — relationships.

The essence of the holidays is to reconnect us with the truly important things: family, friends, faith and a spirit of giving. These are lasting gifts and the kind of legacy we ultimately want to leave behind.

It's not too late to give these lasting gifts! Webster defines heritage as, *what has been, or can be, inherited*. This definition should give us hope. For some, home for the holidays conjures up pleasant memories and special moments during family gatherings.

For others, the holidays are a painful reminder of harsh confrontations and bitter disappointments. If these more painful memories describe your holiday heritage, the good news is this: You can change your heritage! You can change what you leave behind!

## Some Assembly Required

There are three words that strike fear into the heart of the mechanically challenged parent on holiday mornings: “Some assembly required!” We’ve all been there. Remember that moment when you carefully assembled a toy or a piece of furniture and to your horror, you discover that there are pieces missing or even worse, parts left over!

As you seek to pass on a relational heritage to your family, there will be “some assembly required.” But just like the joy it brings your heart to see the face of a child on Christmas morning, leaving a relational heritage will be worth the effort.

## A Need for Focus on Relationships

Decorations, delicious meals and special events are a means to an end; they’re not the end itself. Special holiday events can certainly be incorporated into the life of your family, but only as a back drop to facilitate the building and nurturing of intimate relationships. Too often, we allow the distractions of holidays to deplete our energies so that we have little left to give our family. We become so involved in projects or to-do lists, we have little time left for people.

A relational heritage goes unaddressed in order to make way for the urgencies of the season.

## Aim for Balance

Schedules are jam-packed during the holidays. Office parties, school programs, shopping and baking leave the family calendar crammed too full. Everyone can be prone for stress and short-tempers. Small children can particularly struggle when their normal routines are disrupted. Too much stimulation affects their ability to handle stress, which in turn, produces more stress for them and the rest of the family. Aim for balance and be willing to say, "No, thank you!" For the sake of relationships, some holiday invitations may need to be declined. Some "special" events may need to be shortened, so that everyone experiences the "get to" of the holidays, rather than the "got to."

## Keep it Simple

Entertaining has become synonymous with the holidays, but what is our true motive? Is it to build relationships or impress our friends? Decide not to compete with others this year. Keep things simple. Involve the kids and let them back holiday cookies — even if it's messy! Take photos, but make them silly and fun and impromptu.



Play games that silly and designed to bring relationships closer. Take walks, enjoy the outdoors. Display those fragile, "look but don't touch" decorations, but have some things that the kids can handle too.

This holiday season, remember that the essence of gift giving is giving of yourself. The toys and presents will likely be broken or forgotten by next year, but the memories of a special touch, word of appreciation, letter of approval, and moments spent together will last a lifetime.

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