



un-peace on earth

broken relationships

family friction

tension

broken friendships

pain

# broken at christmas

not-so-merry-christmas

by  
**Ron Hutchcraft**



# Broken at Christmas

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It wasn't the Christmas I planned. Oh, our sons loved the high-quality football they got for Christmas that year. Of course, a football's not for admiring – it's for playing! So we went out in the street on that 60-degree Christmas and started fantasizing that we were the New York Giants. Then, bam – I caught a pass on the end of my finger instead of in my hands. So I got to spend most of Christmas at the hospital. Because that finger was broken.

There's no doubt about it – it stinks to have something broken at Christmastime. Especially if it's a relationship that's broken.

The song says "it's the most wonderful time of the year." But for many folks, it's also the most wounded time of the year. Because all the "merry" of Christmas just aggravates and amplifies the tension and pain of a troubled relationship – with a family member, a friend, someone at church or at work, someone you used to be close to. While the Christmas angels proclaimed "peace on earth," there's plenty of "un-peace" between people who are estranged or wounded.

If there's a breaking or broken relationship in your life this Christmas season, you have two

choices. You can leave it broken. Or you can decide you're going to do everything in your power to try to heal it. Which is what Jesus wants. He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). And "as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).

Our son broke his arm in several places when he was 12. The process of fixing it at the hospital was excruciating. My son could have avoided that pain by just leaving it broken. But that would have meant that arm would be dysfunctional and limiting the rest of his life. So he went through the short-term pain of the repair process, in order to avoid a lifetime of pain caused by leaving it broken. Good choice. For a boy with a broken arm. For you with a broken relationship.

Healing begins with a decision that leaving that relationship broken is not an option. You decide to at least do all that's within your power to try to fix it. And there's no better time than Christmas to reach out to reconcile a broken relationship. Hearts are softer at Christmas than any other time of the year.

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This Christmas season, if there's a relationship that's strained or cold or broken, it's a good time to live out "blessed are the peacemakers."

Whether or not the other person responds, you are at least guaranteed the blessing of God.

Here are some steps to help Christmas be a time for healing - the letter...the prayer...the gift...the love.

### **Write the Letter That Builds a Bridge**

That letter should contain the four building blocks of reconciling a relationship.

#### **I love you...**

It's important to reaffirm in writing that you have loved them in the past and that you love them now, no matter what's happened. (This isn't about your love – you may not be feeling a lot of love toward that person right now. It's about you being a channel for Jesus' love for that person. "Jesus, I'm having a hard time feeling much love for old Ralph right now. But I know You love Him unconditionally. So I'm making myself available to be your "UPS" person to deliver Your love to Ralph.")

It may have been a long time since this person has heard "I love you" from you – even if it's a one-way love right now. Isn't that how Jesus has loved you? "Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us..." (Ephesians 5:1).

#### **Thank you for...**

What are things that you appreciate – or have appreciated in the past – about this person? When a relationship is hurting, we tend to focus on what we don't like about someone. Part of healing is for them to hear the good about who they are or what they have done for which you're thankful. What they've taught you, how they helped you, sacrifices they made for you, times they were there for you, personality traits that you've appreciated, gifts they've given you, memorable experiences you've had with them.

God says to "let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building one another up, according to their needs" (Eph. 4:29). When the focus of a relationship has been on the ugly stuff, someone's "thank you" can go a long way in breaking the ice.

#### **I'm sorry for...**

These may be both the most difficult but most important words a "peacemaker" needs to say. "Confess your faults to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed" (James 5:16). Sure, it's natural to focus on all the things that person should be saying "I'm sorry" for. But God only holds you responsible for your end of the relationship.

In every broken or breaking relationship, there's wrong on both sides. What are the things you should have done more of? Less of? How have you hurt them, disappointed them, failed them?

Ask God to help you see this relationship through His eyes – including the parts you need to fix. Don't bring up what they've done wrong. This is all about you making right your end of it.

This part of the letter also provides a wonderful opportunity for you to talk about your Jesus. You've been to Him to tell Him you're sorry for a lifetime of things that have hurt Him – and found in Him the freedom of being forgiven. Now you're reaching out to them to forgive you, as well.

### **I wish we could...**

This is where you tell them how you wish your relationship could be from now on...how you'd like to try for a new beginning. No longer basing your relationship on the hurting times and hard times. You're declaring that you're not accepting the status quo as the way it's going to be. God doesn't want it that way and neither do you.

End this "bridge letter" by letting them know it would mean a lot to you if you could get together and talk personally.

Why a letter? Because you'll say it better (without being detoured by their response), they'll hear it better, and it's in a form they will likely save. Above all, pray before you write it. Pray before you send it. Pray as they receive it.

### **Pray the "Change Our Hearts" Prayer**

If God were a doctor, He'd probably be a cardiologist – because He does hearts. You need to daily pray for the "heart transplant" promised

by God – for both of you. "I will give you a new heart, and will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Jesus told us to "love your enemies...pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:28). As you pray regularly for the person you're estranged from, it may or may not change their heart. But it will change yours. Because you'll start seeing them through God's eyes, not just your wounds.

### **Reach Out With a Gift**

That gift may be an offer to help them in some way you know would be meaningful to them at this point in their life. Or it may be a physical gift that you know would mean something to them. "Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you" (Luke 6:27, 28)

### **Decide You're Going to Treat Them as Jesus Treated You**

Don't treat them as they have treated you. "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:13). However they treat you, you're going to give them the kind of love Jesus has given you. From now on, with God's resources flowing through you, you will treat this person with gentleness, compassion and grace, attempting to minister to the needs behind their deeds.

Doing all you can to bring peace at Christmas may or may not change the other person – but it will change you. A burden will be lifted...you will plant healing seed that may not come up now but

may blossom later...and you will be right with God on this issue. And whether or not you have Christmas peace between you, you'll have a lot more inside you.

*Above all, Christmas is a wonderful time to do something about the most expensive broken relationship of all.*

That's a broken relationship with the God who made you. The God you'll meet as soon as you've taken your last breath. The Bible says, "Your sins have separated you from your God" (Isaiah 59:2). All our "me first" choices have hurt people we love and left us with guilt and shame and disappointment. But above all, they have cut us off from the God whose love we were never meant to live without. And if we die with this wall between us and God, it will be there forever. And that's an unthinkable eternity.

But that first Christmas, God announced that "I bring you good news...to you is born a SAVIOR!" To you. Jesus is God's Rescuer, sent on Christmas to ultimately die on Good Friday for you. The

Bible tells us that "He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God" (I Peter 3:18). This season that Jesus came to our world would be a wonderful time for Him to come into your life. And He will. At the point where you say, "Jesus, this life is no longer mine to run. I'm putting all my trust in You and your death on the cross as the payment for my sins. And beginning today, Jesus, I'm Yours."

When we're reaching out for a person we've been away from, we're often afraid of how they'll respond. But when you reach for Jesus' hand, there's a guaranteed response. Arms wide open, waiting to welcome you. "Whoever comes to Me, I will never drive away" (John 6:37)

For some of the U.S. troops overseas, this will be a very special Christmas. They'll leave the battlefield and truly be "home for Christmas." It's a wonderful time to be coming home. Especially if you're coming home to God. Let this Christmas be the time you come home to the One who loves you like no one else. Because "to you is born a Savior."

## **About Ron Hutchcraft**

Ron Hutchcraft is committed to communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost in their language and to motivating and equipping believers to communicate Christ to the lost in their world. In all he does, he seeks to reach the lost and the young with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.

A veteran of over 43 years of youth and family work, Mr. Hutchcraft has presented the Gospel across North America and around the world. Ron presents Christ to various people groups through parenting seminars, singles' events, youth outreaches, and business/professional dinners. Mr. Hutchcraft is also involved in ongoing ministry outreach to and with Native Americans, and is founder of the "On Eagles' Wings" Native ministry. He has also spoken at NFL and Major League Baseball chapels.

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To find out how you can begin a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, please visit [www.YoursForLife.net](http://www.YoursForLife.net) or call 1-888-966-7325.

## **Online Resources**

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