

## **Keeping Holidays Special When Families are Separated**

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When a spouse and parent is away, holidays can be tough. You will feel the missing family member's absence no matter what, but that doesn't mean your holidays can't still be special. With a little planning and creativity, you will make new memories worth sharing when you are together again as a family. For your next holiday, try one of the following:

- Recognize you're not the only family with a missing member. Invite other such families over for a potluck meal and games.
- Serve food in the local soup kitchen or shelter. Prepare to be blessed by giving your time and energy to others.
- Consider doing something totally different for a holiday. If you always celebrate at home, consider making a road trip to visit family or friends, or get a hotel somewhere new if finances allow.
- Bring in the absent family member via Skype. Set the laptop at the table where the loved one normally sits. If you send goodies to your loved one ahead of time, you can even eat at the same time together.
- Video tape each of your children singing holiday songs, reciting Bible verses or poems, sharing what they love about the holiday, etc. This will help them feel like they are sharing the holiday with their absent parent, it will prevent the absent parent from missing out on the day completely, and the video will be a treasured keepsake for generations.
- Take lots of photos. Post them on Facebook or a special family blog, put them in a holiday or "while you were away" scrapbook, or let the kids use them in a storybook they create by adding their own narration.
- Have the children prepare and put on a short drama about the meaning of the holiday. Record it so they can enjoy watching their own performance, and so the absent family member can see it too.