

## **Do You Hate Asking for Help? Especially at the holidays when everyone is busy**

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The holidays are hard for me. I don't readily admit it, but **I struggle with my limitations and all the expectations between Thanksgiving and Christmas.** I used to decorate the house, bake Christmas cookies with the girls, shop for hours and then wrap gifts to put under the tree. Now I get exhausted easily.

On Monday morning I woke up feeling sorry for myself, thinking about all the things that I couldn't do. We were hosting a small gathering with friends the coming weekend and our house wasn't decorated at all. It was barely picked up after Thanksgiving and looking around I saw countless things that needed to be done. My sweet husband Joel does everything and is happy to bring boxes down, but decorating is not his forte.

*I wished someone would offer to help, but of course no one knew that I needed anything.* I couldn't figure out who or how to ask, especially because what I wanted was a luxury and not a necessity, so it was easier just to mope. I opened the Bible as I was spiraling into self-pity and asked the Lord to pull me out. My mixed emotions were hard to untangle but I knew I needed to view things differently.

I read 1 John 2:27 (NLT) "But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know..." I asked the Lord to show me truth and to help me stop listening to myself and start listening to the Spirit. I asked God to teach me what I needed to know. I journaled and prayed and then went on with my day.

A friend texted about future lunch plans, and I thought about asking her to help with the Christmas tree, but I immediately dismissed the idea. She was probably busy, and I didn't want to impose. **Asking for help always feels vulnerable and it's hard when people can't do it.** Of course, I understand that people have other commitments – I've often been unable to help others who have asked so I'm not upset at people who say no. I never want to guilt people into helping but knowing I might be turned down makes me hesitant to ask.

**This attitude of not wanting to ask for help stems from pride. I would rather serve than be served.**

Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet, but the Lord knew it was important for him to receive (John 13:8). All these things were swirling in my mind, many of them related to my struggle with asking for help. Then I looked at what I'd posted in my private Facebook group and on social media for Monday. While the copy had been written and scheduled earlier, as I reread it, I realized this was a message for me. It said:

***Is this holiday season overwhelming for you? Do you need help but feel uncomfortable asking?***

***People want to help but often don't know how -- so courageously telling trusted friends how to best support you can be a blessing to everyone.***

I sat there, dumbfounded. The Lord was answering my prayer, showing me what to do. I needed to put pride aside and ask someone for help. I texted my friend about lunch and then asked if she would have

any time to help me put up the tree. She responded enthusiastically and offered to come by the next day. *As I read her gracious response I was overwhelmed. I realized how often I don't ask for help because I'm afraid of rejection. My friends are not mind readers and won't know what I need unless I tell them.*

As I reflected on the morning, I was grateful that the Lord opened my eyes. It's humbling to ask for help, but it's an opportunity for both parties to be blessed. I wrote about this in the booklet *Helping the Hurting* where I encourage hurting people to print out the PDF which has over 100 practical ways friends can help, to circle what resonates with them, and then give it to trusted friends. While it sounds simple, I know it can feel vulnerable and difficult.

I suggested that people say something like: *"This is a hard season for me, and I realize no one really knows what I need – honestly I'm not even sure myself. But I marked a few things that resonated with me. If you or anyone else wants to know what would be helpful, here are a few ideas. I so appreciate your reading my comments, but please don't feel any obligation."*

**Some people will be able to help while others may not respond. Regardless of who steps in, I remind myself that only the Lord can meet my deepest needs. And he will unfailingly provide.**

*God created us to live in community.* Scripture exhorts us to: wash one another's feet (John 13:4), love one another with brotherly affection (Rom 12:10), bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2), encourage one another and build one another up (1 Thess 5:11), pray for one another (James 5:16), and show hospitality to one another without grumbling (1 Peter 4:9). We all have seasons when we serve and seasons when we need help and seasons that encompass both.

***Though we know everyone requires help at some time, asking is hard. We want to be self-sufficient. But as someone who just did what I tell others to do, I can't describe what a great blessing it was to me.*** It brought me to tears. I realized I was not alone. I have friends who care - I just need to be brave enough to reach out. When I told the story to another friend, she offered to help as well, and I marveled at the Lord's abundant provision.

December is a particularly difficult month for many. Maybe you need physical help with cooking or decorating or shopping. Or perhaps you want help starting new holiday traditions or someone to sit with at a Christmas event. Or maybe you'd like a friend just to listen as you process your emotions. Whatever it is, prayerfully consider who to ask.

**If you are overwhelmed and need help but feel uncomfortable asking, don't wait for someone else to reach out. Tell some trusted friends what would be helpful for you. You'll all be thankful that you did.**