

Christmas Decorations

By Jason W. Triplett

My wife wants to make everything beautiful. That's her goal.

Why have a kitchen when in her mind it can be a rooster themed kitchen with a blend of new decorating taste and country charm. She can take an antique coffee grinder, place it on a piece of cloth with some fake greenery and BLAMO! Beauty erupts.

She doesn't make just cupcakes. They must be cupcakes in shiny foil with holiday themed icing and the right amount of sprinkles.

I don't say this because she will be reading my blog; but I think she is talented at decorating stuff. I however, am not. I hang pictures too high (because I'm tall) pay little attention to theme or color and usually the decorations I love are out of date or what my wife calls, "gaudy".

So when it comes time for her all day epic of Christmas decorating, I have mixed feelings.

I believe each Christmas decorator has their own process; this is ours. First is the parade of boxes. We must unearth all of the Christmas decorations we've amassed through 13 years of marriage. We have amassed much.

Then comes the décor explosion that you see in the picture here as she unpacks each box. My wife thoughtfully plans each Christmas scene based on focal points of the rooms and thematic material (nativity, snowmen, Santa etc.)

Decorating happens.

Then she repacks the boxes of unused decorations (because I've learned not all decorations are useful every year) and I carry the boxes back to the storage location somewhere in the basement. The process is long, arduous and painstaking for my wife, but she's committed and focused.

Meanwhile my job is to maintain equilibrium in the household. I fix food for the children, keep them out of certain decorations and include them in selected decoration activities pre-arranged by my wife. I keep the kids busy, healthy, with homework done. I perform duties when I am called upon (i.e. "Can you put a nail right, there?").

I wish I could say that I am a joyful and responsive husband through the process of Christmas decorating. That isn't the truth. I grump, I gripe, I hide, I ask why, OH WHY!, do we have all this "stuff". *Because all this stuff isn't about Jesus anyway, right?* I detest the house being out of order, (the irony is that with four kids, it's out of order most of the time). I end up staying away from the decorating site as much as I can, which not surprisingly is okay with my wife.

When the last box is closed, the final knick knack adjusted to the right (not left) and the kids are in bed, the reason I love Christmas decorations (not decorating) becomes clear. The finished

product is worth the process to get there because of the meaning that now fills the rooms. My wife and I sit, in a finished room in relative silence. She asks what I think and I tell her. Not grumpy, no complaining; just enjoyment and peace. I tell her she did a great job. She loves that and asks if I really mean it. I tell her I do.

I realize sitting there that under the pile of stuff we attached to Christmas is a heartbeat of meaning that we must struggle to hold onto.

Decorations alone have little to do with the source of joy, hope, peace, love and wonder we feel at Christmas. I lose when I miss the point of Christmas décor thinking it's some way for us to spend more money and time we don't have. When my wife and I sit together, I remember there is significance to each decoration.

Maybe it's an ornament one of the kids made at school.

It could be that a snowman reminds us of a winter when we had enough snow to build one together in the yard.

Or that a Santa Clause figurine tells the story of the Christian Bishop of Myra from the 3rd and 4th Centuries who's giving and miracles became legendary.

Our culture searches each year for the "true meaning" of Christmas. Is it shopping? Christmas parties? Cookies? I believe when we excavate the meaning of the décor and spectacle we find the significance of family in our loving Father who gave His Son to die for us; we find hope in a Child who's light will lead us out of darkness, joy at the arrival of the most precious baby the world has ever known and the overpowering love of a God who cares so much that He became one of us.

I think it's all there, if we look. It's richer than a shopping season, a slew of Christmas parties or a day of decorating. (Whether you're the grumpy spouse or the chief decorator of the household)