

A FORGIVING THANKSGIVING

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Thanksgiving was always an easy holiday. Unlike Christmas, there was no pressure of giving just the *right* gift! Thanksgiving Day brought family gatherings and good food. Late on those afternoons, we would return home full from over-eating and satisfied that our family relationships were intact. It was also a day that reminded us of everything for which we were thankful.

We are supposed to be thankful for our health, our families, our comfortable life, etc. The death of a child changes our perceptions, however. When the family now gathers around the Thanksgiving table, I now see a missing plate that no one else sees. When our nieces and nephews are laughing or crying. I hear a voice that no one else hears. When a family member recounts a story about something his or her child did last week. I wish for a story to tell. (Of course, when I say *no one else*, I exclude my wife and daughter. I'm sure they see, hear and wish what I do, although probably at different times.)

We still have much to be thankful for, we bereaved parents; and we should remember that. But now Thanksgiving Day has an additional observance for us, too, doesn't it? It is a day of forgiveness, also. We must forgive others who cannot acknowledge the missing child, for whatever reasons. If family and friends cannot understand us, then we must try to understand them, especially on holidays. If we can exhibit tolerance, forgiveness, and understanding on a day on which we offer thanks, we can climb another step on our ladder to recovery.

I hope you have a forgiving Thanksgiving.

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