

Published based on [When Christmas Doesn't Live Up to Your Expectations](#)

# **When Christmas Doesn't Live Up to Your Expectations**



I suppose I've always been a romantic at heart, at least in the sense that I have an unspoken belief that life should be full of magical moments that take my breath away. Like many others I've believed that Christmas should always be magical.

My romantic ideas have not always served me well. At times, they have sent me on an endless search for a 'perfect' gift, or led me to work to exhaustion to present my home in Christmas splendor, moved me to send a hundred Christmas cards, or left me feeling empty when I opened that less than perfect gift.

Life is not always magical, and sometimes falls short of our expectations.

The first Christmas must have been filled with expectations, too. Mary responded with childlike faith to God's work in her life. She embraced an unexpected pregnancy of miraculous origin. She, no doubt, endured scorn and gossip. She faced Joseph's honest doubts and struggles. And now, she has journeyed a long way on a donkey. That's certainly enough to send a very pregnant woman into labor! Speaking as a woman who has delivered four children, it would be enough to make me irritable!

After her long, uncomfortable, exhausting trip, Mary finds herself delivering her firstborn in a stable. Can you say 'disappointed'?

I am reminded of the birth of our third born child, Elliott. It was November 1992. Indulge me the telling of my funny birth story. You'll love it.

I awakened at 2:20 a.m. on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. "Hmm," I thought, "Did my water just break?" It was not a dramatic event. I got up and walked around, knowing that if your water breaks, things will expedite. As a few pains began, I decided to get a shower. By mid-shower, my pains were five-minutes apart. I finished my shower and awakened my husband, Eddie. He also wanted to get his shower. I thought it was a bad idea. After all, child number three, two-weeks overdue, a stop to deliver our two children to a friend's home, an hour drive to the hospital, and contractions five-minutes apart.

"It will only take a minute," he assured me. I began to put my makeup on. Yes, vanity of vanity. I covered my face with a green, yes green, primer that was supposed to even out my skin tone.

My pain got so intense that I abandoned the makeup idea.

We grabbed the kids, dropped them at our friend's home, and began the hour drive. My labor accelerated. Eddie accelerated the car. In about thirty minutes, I begged him to stop at a hospital which was en-route to my hospital. "No," he said, "my baby's not being born here." (Do you sense that there is a story behind that?) "Well," I said, "your baby is going to be born on the side of the road!" He accelerated even more. I didn't know Toyota's could move at 90 mph.

We arrived at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. The doctor suggested Eddie put his scrubs on. He was making phone calls to alert the grandparents in Alabama. "We're at the hospital and Elliott is going to be born today!" he reported. I remember thinking, "He doesn't have a clue that I am about to deliver!" When I hurt, I

get quiet so I wasn't clueing him by screaming. I was in my tough endurance mode.

Eddie continued his preparations. He was getting the video cam ready. I heard the doctor tell him, "If you want to see your child born, you better get your scrubs on NOW!"

Elliott arrived at 5:15 a.m., less than three hours after I first wondered if I might be in labor. Let's just say that natural childbirth is not all it's cracked up to be. It wasn't magical. It was painful.

Perhaps I should post a picture of me holding Elliott with mint-green primer on my face??

What a beautiful blessing I received that day! Elliott has always been the kindest, sweetest boy – now a sweet,



kind young man.

But the delivery itself wasn't all magical. It was a mixture of tension and pain and plans gone awry and joy and excitement and anticipation just like the first Christmas.

As I anticipate this Christmas, I am aware that it will not be perfect. It will be a human celebration of a divinely human event. It will have disappointments such as my daughter being in Texas for Christmas Day. It will have joys such as seeing my almost 16 month old granddaughter open her toys.

You see, both joy and disappointment are a reality for us in this life.

How do we navigate the holiday season and our lives in healthy, holy, ways? Here are a few ideas:

*Hold your expectations loosely. Unmet expectations can cause us to miss the wonder in the midst of the disappointments.*

*Look for the silver lining.*

*Be thankful for the joys.*

*Turn to God with the disappointments.*

I do wish you all a Merry Christmas this year. May you find God both in your joys and in your disappointments.

You can also find this article published on [When Christmas Doesn't Live Up to Your Expectations](#), and on the tag pages [Christmas](#), [disappointments](#), [gifts](#), [Joy](#), [unmet expectations](#).