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Wells and Wrights' "Homeless for the Holidays" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Wells, P. & Wright, M. (2018). *Homeless for the holidays*. Plymouth, MA: Elk Lake Publishing, Inc. 184 pp. \$12.99. ISBN 9781948888486

The fateful words from a stingy encounter with the shopping center, bell-ringing Santa, left Jack Baker feeling disgruntled and uneasy. Why should he feel guilty about where he put his hard-earned money? Christmas at the Baker home must be perfect and Jack, a career marketing executive, spares no expense to be the best decorated home in Wooded Falls. Overwhelmed by her husband's zeal for the seasonal rush to keep up appearances, Sheryl attempts to pacify her disheartened children, Adam, Michelle and Kim, as Jack's work phone inevitably rings and steals him away from yet another would-be-cherished family moment. Just as Jack begins to revel in the accolades of his success at work, an unforeseen debacle with product printing labels threatens to undo the company bottom line and Jack is forced out of his job. A cascade of events, missteps and emotions begin to unravel both the usual and extravagant elements of the Baker family life. Jack and Sheryl wrestle with mounting bills, emotional pressure and personal pride as they wait impatiently for everything to go back to the way it was. In their desperate state, the Baker family Christmas looks truly different one year later. Yet, absent the empty trappings that once occupied their lives, space opens for changed hearts, familial joy, and reminders of caring, kindness and generosity.

The storyline of this holiday novella is written similar in style of a journal with modest chapters and telling dialogue which chronicle the intimate dynamics of the Baker family household. Over the course of a year the reader keeps pace with the family's struggle to identify and embrace what is truly meaningful and to understand just how God is working in them through it all. In this struggle over priorities and pride, readers will be pressed to consider and possibly rediscover the meaningful depths of generosity, sacrifice, and the intimacy of family ties.

Readers are keenly reminded of the internal perspectives, questions and concerns that any family might encounter as they enter in and out of seasons of hardship. The book climaxes with the wisdom of a heavenly, Father-like figure who weaves in and out of the storyline just enough to remind both characters and readers, "How would our life be different if one person cared enough to make personal sacrifices

on our behalf?" (p. 147), reflecting the ultimate example of Christ. This novella is soaked in the same heartwarming detail and self-reflection enjoyed in like novels as Donna VanLiere's *The Christmas Hope Series*. Highly recommended for young adults and families as a timeless story to remind us all to slow down and treasure the truly meaningful.

Reviewer

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