

GUEST COLUMN SUBMISSION

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Christmas is my favorite time of year. Christmas carols on the radio, bright and cheery decorations, and people seem to be just a bit nicer to each other. When was the last time, outside of the Christmas season, that strangers smiled and greeted you as they passed on the street?

But lately I've noticed some tarnish on the shiny Christmas holiday. Just the other day I caught myself griping about the length of my to-do list and my busy calendar -- wishing it was next year already.

I had to stop and ask myself -- is it really that bad? Am I losing sight of what's really important? When I got home that night, I kissed my wife hello, and sat down to a hot meal surrounded by family. And I thought to myself, "This is what's really important."

There are many Americans this holiday season who won't have that luxury. Our men and women in uniform serving our country overseas won't get to come home for Christmas. They won't get to be surrounded by friends and family. Lest we forget, our country is at war. And no matter what your views on the war are, we all can agree that we owe a debt of gratitude to those that make the sacrifice of service.

We should all take a few minutes to give back to those who sacrifice it all for us. Visit Operation Gratitude at www.opgratitude.com, or one of the many charities that supports our armed forces, and make it your mission this year to give the gift of a brighter Christmas to someone in uniform.

And next time you catch yourself complaining about the stress that often comes with this season, stop and ask yourself -- is it really that bad?