

*2022 Holiday Journal
& Survival Guide*



Finding hope and joy
when you don't feel "merry"

2022 Holiday Journal & Survival Guide

By: Susan M. Clabaugh

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This time of year can still be difficult for me, but that is why this year God led me to do this for you again, and also for Him to remind me of His faithfulness.

This journal and guide was prayerfully put together to walk you through the days up until the new year and help you focus on what the true reason of the season is, as well as how to take care of yourself during a difficult time of year for many.

It's my prayer that through each day you will begin to focus on all you do have and the blessings God have given you.

What I discovered was that by forcing my thankfulness I eventually had my spirits and depression lift. As I focused on blessings instead of things that I thought I didn't have my mood lifted and God began to help me see all He has given me, instead of what I thought I should have instead. As we walk through the days leading to 2023, I will walk you through a process to "force" thankfulness, share self-care tips, and provide a place to journal during this season.

Focusing on the blessings and also taking care of yourself can help the holidays not seem as daunting. (Though, they may still be painful emotionally-sorry that's the truth-but, you'll have a little different outlook when you open yourself to what God has to say, and depend on Him for strength.)

Thank you for choosing to download and read what God has laid on my heart! I pray you find the hope and joy God has for you despite the fact you may not feel "merry".

Blessings to you,
Susan

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Father God,

I pray that you bless each person that has chosen to walk through the next few weeks finding out what You have to say about thankfulness, Your love, Your purpose for us, and most of all the true reason we have to celebrate this season.

Comfort those who do not have family or a "traditional" looking Christmas season, but help them find ways to allow You to bless them and touch their hearts. I pray You use my pain and struggles to show these wonderful people how faithful and gracious You are to each of us.

Let each one reading this experience Your compassion and love in a brand new way this season as we thank You for the ultimate Christmas gift—Your Son Jesus.

In Jesus Name,

Amen

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Encouraging Music

Look up these videos each week on YouTube to encourage you and listen to what God might want to say to you. Type the words following "week #" into the search bar on your search engine, and the video will come up. (or while in this PDF on your computer, click the link and play the song.)

[Week 1: God Is In this Story - Katy Nichole](#)

[Week 2: I've Got Joy - Cece Winans](#)

[Week 3: Away in a Manger - Matthew West](#)

[Week 4: Chris Tomlin—Emmanuel](#)

[Week 5: Jordan Smith—All is Well](#)

[Week 6: O Holy Night - Katy Nichole](#)

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Format of This Journal and Guide

You can download this document and view it on your screen and write your responses in another journal, or you can print it out and follow along with the papers in front of you. I like to print mine and put it in a three ring binder to work through during this season.

Bible Verse of the Week

Tidbit:

My brief thoughts.

Self-Care Tip:

A tip of how to take care of yourself during the holidays.

List 3 blessings or things you are thankful for each day:

On this section fake it until you make it. Is your refrigerator working? Do you have food to eat? Start simple. Blessings come in all shapes and sizes. I get it there were days the only thing I was thankful for was deodorant. See, there's all kinds of things!

There will be 2 lined pages following the main page for each week.

This is for extra journaling or prayers.

Week 1

November 13 to 19, 2022

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV

Tidbit: This verse is about giving thanks **IN** our circumstances, and not **FOR** them. We can always be thankful because of our Joy in Jesus and our hope in heaven, but we will not be thankful **FOR** everything. (We won't be thankful for abuse, cancer, illness...etc., but we can be thankful **IN** it.)

Self-Care Tip: Read your blessings list out loud. It will help retrain your brain and actually begin to feel the gratefulness. 😊

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Week 1 - November 13 to 19 2022—week before Thanksgiving

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV

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Week 2

November 20 to 26, 2022—Thanksgiving Week

*"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV*

Tidbit: Joy does not mean happy. Joy is a peace that only God can give. If you know Jesus then you have the peace that one day you will spend eternity with Him in heaven.

Self-Care Tip: Go to bed at the same time and get up about the same time everyday. Making sure your body gets the sleep it needs will help you have energy for the extra emotions at this time of year.

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Week 2- November 20 to 26, 2022—Thanksgiving Week

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV

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Week 3

November 28 to December 4, 2022

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 1 Corinthians 4:17-18 NIV

Tidbit: We need a vision of "why". This is the vision—nothing here compares to what we will experience in eternity when we know Jesus. So, we fix our eyes on Him! The eternal glory of heaven will outweigh any struggle we endure here on earth. Keep that focus!

Self-Care Tip: Be mindful of what you eat and how much. It can get easy to eat mindlessly while at parties, or home watching tv. Also watch your sugar and carb intake which can add to anxiety and depression.

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Week 3- November 27 to December 3, 2022

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 1 Corinthians 4:17-18 NIV

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Week 4

December 4 to December 10, 2022

"Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday."

Psalm 37:5-6 NKJV

Tidbit: Committing each moment of each day to God will free you up to do what He has for you. It will help you prioritize what truly needs to get done—especially in the holiday season.

Self-Care Tip: Exercise—go for a walk with God, and preferably do it outside where you can get sunlight and vitamin D. Try for at least 20 minutes. Set an alarm to remind you to fit this in and boost your serotonin.

2022 Holiday Journal & Survival Guide
Week 4 - December 4 to December 10, 2022

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Week 5

December 11 to December 18, 2022

"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass." Psalms 37:7 NKJV

Tidbit: Rest—even Jesus took time to rest and renew and spend time with God. Make sure you are resting as well and not constantly going. Also, don't fret what others have or are getting, but focus on what God has given you.

Self-Care Tip: Take a nap one day this week—maybe on Saturday or Sunday. Turn off all electronics and close your eyes. Step away from the screens and realize you are still breathing and start living outside the phone or tv.

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Week 5 - December 11 to December 18, 2022

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Week 6

Special Christmas Message From Me

The world tells us the holidays are for family, and yet sometimes it's our families who are toxic to us. So, to put things in perspective we have to look deeper than what the world tells us. Christmas didn't come about to give gifts or sit on Santa's lap or even spend time with family.

The whole meaning of Christmas is that Jesus was born as a baby in manger one night 2000 years ago in Bethlehem. He came as a human in the flesh.

He has walked and lived on this earth with all the evil it entails. Yet, He is also God. He saw all the evil and our sin and chose to give His life for ours.

I would not be able to make it on this journey without depending on Him. It's His strength that gets me through.

There have been times along the way I didn't call on Him for help and when I tried it on my own I came close to death. That is not what He wants for us. He has plans for our lives we cannot begin to imagine.

So, on this Christmas, if you don't know Jesus, what better time to turn to Him than on His birthday? All you have to do is reach out and He is there.

He never leaves us once we call on Him.

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Week 6- Special Christmas Message From Me Continued

I don't believe it's one fancy prayer that leads You to Jesus, just honest, heartfelt confession that you are a sinner and reaching out to Him. The Bible says:

"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. It is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.' Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:9-13
ours.

None of us are perfect. We all have sinned and will continue to, but Jesus came to die for those sins so we can spend eternity with Him in heaven.

What do you say today? Reach out to Jesus and begin a relationship with Him if you don't already have one. He's waiting with arms open wide to welcome you and He longs to help you on this life journey. If you already know Him cherish what He's done in your life.

As we celebrate Christmas let's remember the real reason we celebrate is Jesus, and when you start to feel down and depressed about this time of year, remember if you know Him He is always with you.

It's only because I know Jesus loved me enough to save me so I can have the most amazing love relationship with God that I can have hope. It's in this relationship which helps me to have a joy beyond measure during a time of year which is difficult for many. I pray you find this joy too.

Week 6

December 19 to December 24, 2022

"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Luke 2:7 NKJV

Tidbit: 2000 years ago there was no room for Jesus. Will you make room for Him in your life as we celebrate the fact He came to earth to make a way for all of us to spend eternity in heaven?

Self-Care Tip: Limit your time you spend on social media, watching or reading the news, and spend some time talking to God and reading His word.

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Week 6 - December 19 to December 24, 2022

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Week 7

December 25 to December 31, 2022

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Genesis 1:1-2 NKJV

Tidbit: This verse seems to fit as we head into a new year—and a new beginning so to speak. God hovered over the waters as He created the heavens and the earth. Hovering means to linger close—that's where God is as we begin 2022. He is close and right here with us.

Self-Care Tip: Remember to breathe! In for 5 seconds and out for 5 seconds. Do this for about 5 minutes at a time to reduce anxiety about the holidays or what you are facing. It will slow down your nervous system and you will have more energy to face what's ahead.

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Week 7 - December 25 to December 31, 2022

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Additional Self-Care Tips

- ❖ Spend time with God first thing each day.
- ❖ Spend some time each day journaling your feelings and emotions so they don't stay bottled up inside. (This guide is a way to do that.)
- ❖ Say "No".—Don't overcommit yourself just because you "feel" obligated. Pray about what things God wants you to participate in and what you can let go.
- ❖ Get plenty of sleep.
- ❖ Breathe
- ❖ Exercise
- ❖ Limit your time on social media, watching or reading the news.
- ❖ Stay hydrated—drink plenty of water. (It is truly amazing how our body responds when we make sure it gets what it needs.)
- ❖ Be mindful of what you are putting into your body and how much. (Limit sugar and carbs which can add to depression, inflammation, pain, and a lethargic feeling.
- ❖ Realize it's okay to feel sad, unhappy, down, or struggle. You are not alone in these feelings and it's okay to feel them. This is why the thankfulness is important so we don't drown ourselves in the negative feelings we do experience.
- ❖ Reach out for support—whether to a counselor, trusted friend, or mentor.
- ❖ Stop trying to be perfect—this is a mentality that our world seems to think is possible despite the fact we live in a fallen world. Let the "perfectionism" go.
- ❖ Take some time to enjoy and worship God for His amazing gift of Jesus.

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Additional Bible Verses and Thoughts for Encouragement

Matthew 6:25-26 NKJV: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you not much more valuable than they?"

Tidbit: God feeds the birds, so how much more will He take care of each of our needs? Of course, as I've said before, God feeds the birds, but He doesn't throw the worms in the nest. We have to choose to do the work—whatever that may be.

Philippians 4:9 NKJV: "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in the circumstances."

Tidbit: This is a hard one to come to, but I am proof with God's strength you can be content whatever the circumstances.

Philippians 4:19 NKJV: "And my God will meet all your needs to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."

Tidbit: I have had, and continue to have, times where I have to trust God will provide even when my sinful mind tells me I can only depend on myself. God has proven to be faithful, and He can do the same for you if you let Him.

**My prayer for you today and in
the new year ahead.**

“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
and give you peace.”

Numbers 6:24-26 NKJV

Thanks for walking through the
holiday season with me.

Happy New Year!

Susan

2022 Holiday Journal & Survival Guide

About the Author

Susan is a former elementary school teacher and now has her own business working with students who struggle with reading. She is also still in the process of recovering from years of sexual abuse and rape.

She has a blog—hopeaftersexualassault.com. Follow her there for more of her story of recovery from the trauma she endured, and how God is bringing healing and beauty from ashes in her life.