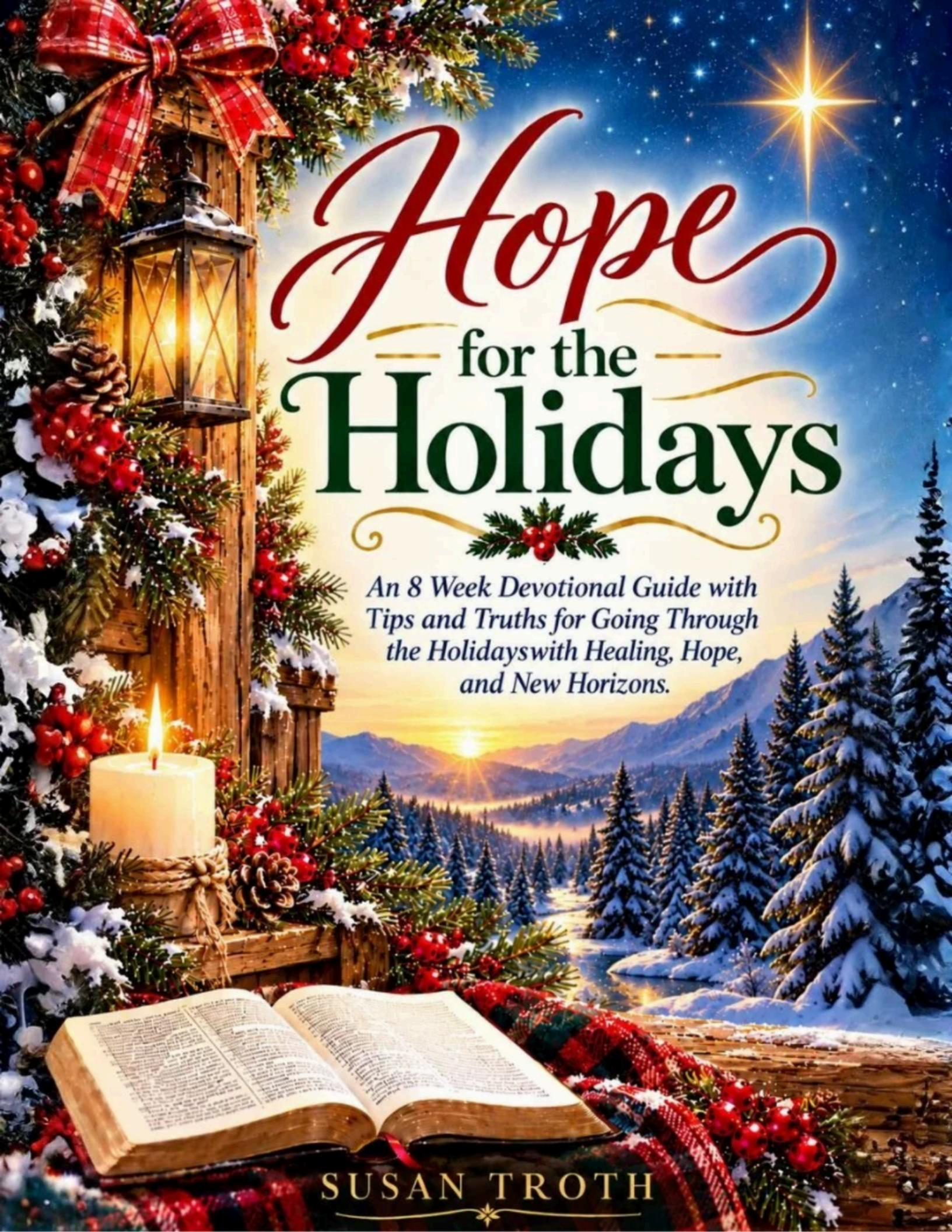

Hope
for the
Holidays
An 8 Week Devotional Guide with Tips and Truths for Going Through the Holidayswith Healing, Hope, and New Horizons.
SUSAN TROTH

Week Five – Still

Be still and know that I am God.
Psalm 46:10

Last week we learned that we must Lean into Truth and guard against emotional decisions. We will continue to dive deeper into the truth that **Emotions are a Gauge, not a Guide** this week. Remember, we are following the S.P.L.E.S.S.E.D path to healing, hope, and new horizons.

The holidays can stir up so many emotions: memories that are warm and those that put a kick in our gut. We can dread certain dates and get togethers. We can cry bitter tears in the car. We can be alone in a crowd.

Truth: We are made in the image of God. We are created with emotions = so they are not inherently evil, but like anything else God created, they can be used sinfully. Anything that God created can be distorted by the evil one.

Truth: Emotions are a measurement. Emotions aren't imperatives; they're not your boss. They're indicatives; they're reports. That's why Paul wrote, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions." Romans 6:12

Truth: We have been given a supernatural Helper, the Holy Spirit.

Truth: Our society has elevated feelings to positions of champion and pilot. This has even crept into church and worship songs.

Truth: Jesus was fully God and fully Man. He was sinless. He expressed emotions.

I have actually heard a theological professor say, "emotions are sinful." That is not truth. Yes, they can lead us to sin and yes, we should be extremely cautious not to be driven by our emotions, but let's look at our perfect example of a man who did not sin although he felt emotions – Jesus Christ. Jesus is such a perfect picture of this truth. He knew what was in front of him - unimaginable pain, loss, and separation from his heavenly Father, but he - "set his face."

The book of Hebrews contains more than 20 names and titles for Jesus. In these first few verses we see God reveal Himself through the humanity of Jesus. David Jeremiah notes, "God's very nature – His glory and the express image – is revealed perfectly in Jesus, because Jesus is God." There is no doubt that when we see Jesus and learn about Jesus, we are learning about God.

Jesus existed eternally as God but humbled himself because He cared about the plight of humanity so much that he came to earth in the form of man. There have been debates about Jesus being fully God and fully man, but the scripture clearly teaches that Jesus was both.

Now we turn to the historical account written by Dr. Luke. I have to go right to my favorite passage – Luke 9:51-56. Prior to this passage, Luke gives us the genealogy, birth, and the description that, Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and favor with God and men. He then shares Jesus' baptism, temptation, Galilean ministry, the calling of the Apostles, healing of multitudes, teaching on the shores of the sea of Galilee, more miracles, his transfiguration and Jesus predicting his death.

Finally, in verse 51 is an example of how we can rule our emotions. *Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.*

Did He know what was in front of Him? Yes, he had been teaching about His death. Luke 9:44 Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men. He knew what was coming – the betrayal, pain, humiliation, his Mother's grief and scattering of his followers. **But he kept his emotions from directing his decisions.**

In Luke 19:41 he wept when He came to Jerusalem and then Luke describes Jesus chasing the scammers out of the temple. Yet, he did not sin. He was also sinless when he sweated and prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane for God to remove this cup, (honest lament), but submitted and prayed, nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.

What an example! Hallelujah, What a Savior!

When your emotions are beginning to overflow, here's what I recommend you do:

Get **ST.I.L.L:**
Stop **T**alking
Identify the feeling
Listen to God
Live to please God.

When you process your emotions through this grid, you will quiet your heart so you can listen to the truth and set your face to walk in the light of these truths.

It isn't easy to set our face like Jesus did. **It is an act of faith taken in the power of the Spirit and ignited by the truth of God's word**. In fact, I Peter 1:13 tells us to prepare for work, set our face and don't compromise where we set our hope - *"Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* I Peter 1:13

Is it hard to control our emotions and live by truth – yes – but, we have the Great Shepherd guiding us, the example of our Savior and the Holy Spirit to help us.

- Use this journaling page to help you get still and process your emotions.

Get S.T.I.L.L.

A JOURNALING MOMENT WITH GOD

When emotions feel overwhelming, take a moment to get S.T.I.L.L. Quiet your heart, be honest with God, and let His truth guide your next step.

S
Stop Talking

What noise or distraction do I need to surrender today?

Psalm 46:10
"Be still, and know that I am God."

I
Identify the Feeling

What am I feeling, and what may be causing it?

Psalm 62:8
"Pour out your heart before Him."

L
Listen to God

Which of God's promises speaks truth into this feeling?

Psalm 119:105
"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

L
Live to Please God

What is one small step of obedience I can take today?

Colossians 1:10
"Walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him."



The Candle of Hope

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
Galatians 4:4

Deferring something is not necessarily bad. When the teacher says, "I've decided to delay the test until next week." When the doctor says, "We don't need to test this for another ten years."

However, I can get quite irritated when something that I want is delayed and I can willfully try to maneuver to a faster result. Afterall, God has given man the intelligence and skills to create tests, programs, machinery and resources to alleviate suffering, delays, and disappointments in life. But there should be a big caution flag – these objectives must fall within God's moral laws or there can be grave consequences.

When Ronney and I were in the midst of, what turned out to be, ten years of fertility treatments our eyes were opened to man's desire to be god and skirt moral boundaries in order to satisfy delayed desires. Ultimately, we ended our treatments when we believed that continuing would cross a moral boundary and would not be pleasing to God. A hard decision.

Proverbs 13:12 teaches, Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.

How do you live in delayed results, deferred hope, or just plain heartbreak – especially during the holiday season?

- I learned that what I really needed was to love God and to grow in that love. Every month, before I knew the results of fertility tests, I would pray, "God, I love you – even if I'm not pregnant." You see, God wants the path to the Desire to grow our relationship with Him, His Word, and His family. Those were dark years emotionally, but the decision to love and trust God, to dig into the Word, and to share with the Church was what healed my heart and help me become peaceful with God's different path.
- God is patient, merciful, gracious, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth – I am not. But I can use the time of waiting to grow in these traits when I surrender to God's plan and timing. What is the deferred hope in your heart this season? Trust in the Lord with ALL your heart. When your thoughts wander down dark paths, turn them around by repeating God's promises, singing His songs, talking with Him. Just this morning I woke up and began to worry about my family. Rather than stay there, I immediately began to quote scripture, remember His promises, then pray and thank Him that He is watching over my family. We can surrender to His will and trust His timing.

God has a fullness of time for all things. In His sovereign hand, He holds the universe, watches the sparrow, and cares for me.

The story of Christ's birth is the perfect picture of deferred hope. Galatians 4:4 teaches, *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

The Jewish people waited 400 years from the last word by God to the birth of Jesus.

That is deferred hope.

They were told how Jesus would come, that he would suffer and be a servant – so many prophecies. But God's sovereign wisdom knew that Jesus' mission to earth must wait for His right time. Then at the perfect time - pre-birth prophecies fulfilled, the Roman Road was built so the good news could travel throughout the Roman Empire, and God's chosen recipient, Mary, was of age – God sent His son. His delay was not unkind, on the contrary, it was goodness.

Is it truly possible to Discover **Hope** when you are grieving, broken, hurt and living with pain or your life just feels stuck?

Imagine the shepherds - they were doing their job in the fields watching sheep - an uneventful evening. In the span of a frosty breath, God announced his plan to mankind. What had been secret - between Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth and Zacharias is now a discovery of **Hope** - A SAVIOR IS BORN!

The Shepherds left their field and followed the angel's directions to find the Babe in a manger in Bethlehem. They discovered **Hope** in the manger. Imagine what they would have missed had they decided to stay in the field and ignore the multitude of angels.

You will discover **Hope**, too, when you follow God's directions to make His Word a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105). Order your Steps in the **H**oly Bible, with **O**bedience to His Word, **P**raying without ceasing and **E**ndurance. Within this acronym you will walk in trust, patience, longsuffering, and surrender to your heavenly Father.

He knows the end from the beginning and can fill your heart with Hope – in Him – not because we have everything we desire, not because life is easy, and not because there is no pain in our lives, but because we have His presence and the hope of a future - eternal life through Jesus Christ. In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began. Titus 1:2

This is the hope of Christmas. Jesus Christ. God's gift that arrived at the perfect time.

The Candle of Hope

Draw a picture of the shepherds discovering Jesus at the manger.

