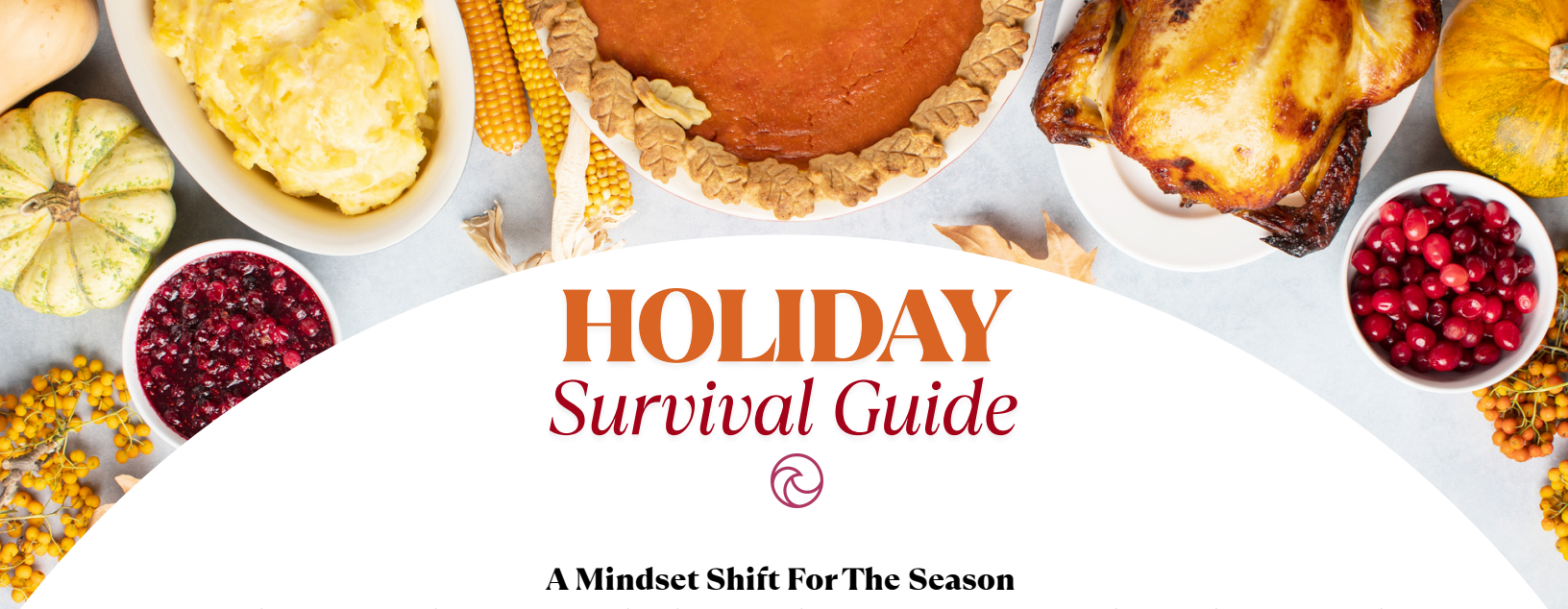




HOLIDAY *Survival Guide*



A Mindset Shift For The Season

The holidays can stir up old stories in our minds: stress, drama, disappointment. With God's help, we can choose a different path this year and practice a new mindset that leads to peace and joy.

1

Enjoy the Season: Have Fun and Treat Yourself

Holiday mindset: I will look for moments of joy instead of bracing for impact.

God is not against you enjoying the good gifts He has given. Sometimes it is the simple things that reset our mood and mindset. A favorite cup of coffee, a walk to see the lights, or a Christmas movie with a cozy blanket can help us remember that this season is a gift, not a threat.

Instead of focusing at what might go wrong, intentionally add small, life giving moments that make you smile. They prepare your heart to walk into gatherings with gratitude instead of dread.

2

Set Realistic Expectations

Holiday mindset: This does not have to be perfect to be meaningful.

Many of us walk into the holidays secretly hoping for a Hallmark movie moment, even if past years have been full of tension. Wisdom looks at what has actually happened before and then sets expectations that match reality, not fantasy.

Maybe your family interrupts, maybe someone always shows up late, maybe a certain topic always turns into an argument. None of that has to steal your joy if you choose to expect a normal human gathering instead of a flawless storybook scene. A “decent time” that is honest and imperfect is still a gift.

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” - Rom. 12:18 (NIV)





Don't Overdo It

Holiday mindset: I choose simple, sincere, and sustainable over more, bigger, and better.

We often overbuy, overspend, and overextend ourselves, hoping people will notice everything we did. When they do not respond the way we hoped, we feel hurt, unappreciated, and empty.

Give yourself permission to do less, but to do it with love. If you want to go “all out” because you truly enjoy it and can afford it, wonderful. If you find yourself driven by guilt, comparison, or the need to be noticed, that is a warning light.

“Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil.” -Proverbs 15:16 (NIV)



Prepare By Prayer

Holiday mindset: I will ask God to prepare me first, not just fix everyone else.

Of course it is good to pray for your family and friends during the holidays. But often our prayers focus almost entirely on how we want others to behave. The deeper work is to invite God to shape our own hearts long before we walk through the door.

Ask God to make you patient, loving, courageous, hospitable, and long suffering. Ask Him to give you gentle words and a peaceful spirit, even if others are stressed or unkind. We do not wait until the conflict is happening to start praying. We prepare in advance.

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” - Psalm 51:10 (NIV)



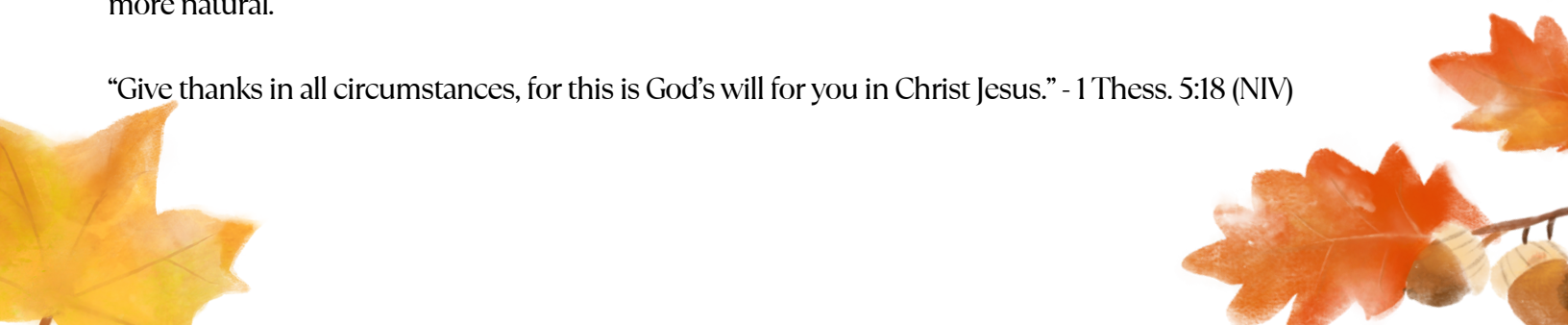
Practice Gratitude On Purpose

Holiday mindset: I will train my heart to see what is good, not only what is wrong.

Practicing gratitude leads to a grateful heart. Being thankful reduces anxiety. It helps us regain proper perspective and reminds us that God is still at work, even in imperfect situations. When we slow down to say “thank you” for specific blessings, we are aligning our hearts and minds with the One who is our provider.

Gratitude does not mean pretending that nothing is hard. It means that in the middle of what is hard, we choose to remember what is still true and good. Over time, this builds a new pathway in our thinking and makes joy more natural.

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” - 1 Thess. 5:18 (NIV)





Choose Your Focus, Not Your Feelings

Holiday mindset: What I focus on will shape how I feel.

Your brain builds pathways. If you rehearse negative memories and possibilities, anxiety grows stronger. If you rehearse God's promises, gratitude and peace grow stronger. You might not be able to control every thought that shows up, but you can decide which ones you will feed.

When worry shows up, intentionally shift your focus. Thank God for three specific blessings. Repeat a verse out loud. Remember a time He carried you through something hard. Let truth, not fear, have the final word.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice." -Phil. 4:4 NIV



Choose Love, Even When Others Do Not Deserve It

Holiday mindset: I will love from the love I have received, not from how others behave.

Some family members will not change. Some will still push your buttons. The call of Jesus is not to pretend bad behavior is ok, but to respond in a different spirit. With good boundaries and God's help, you can still be patient, loving, courageous, hospitable, and long suffering, even when others do not "earn" it.

You are not loving them because they are easy to love. You are loving them because Christ has loved you with patience and mercy again and again.

"We love because he first loved us." - 1 John 4:19 NIV



You may not be able to change your family history, but with God's help you can change your mindset this holiday season. As you enjoy small moments, set realistic expectations, resist overdoing it, prepare by prayer, practice gratitude, choose your focus, and love those around you, you are training your mind and heart to live out the hope of Christ in real life, not just in ideal scenes.



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