



# Surviving The Holidays

It's hard to believe the holidays are just around the corner. While society begins to hustle and bustle and beam with holiday cheer, many bereaved families across the world are dreading these next two months. It is a proven fact that there is a rise of depression and suicide during the months of November and December. Most people who are in mourning or are experiencing a tragic situation in their lives have a very hard time facing Thanksgiving and Christmas with gratitude and joy. We should be facing these days with the anticipation of family get-togethers, home-cooked meals and reunions with loved ones. Instead, these expectations are overshadowed by the heartbreak of knowing that there is family member who will never be joining us for turkey carving or trimming the tree.

Thanksgiving 1995 seemed to be a mockery to me. What in the world did I have to be thankful for? Sure, I had a wonderful husband, a beautiful and healthy four year old, and a great family, but...my baby was DEAD!! I mentally dared anyone to ask me what I was thankful for that year. I knew they would be shocked at my answer, and truthfully, I myself was afraid of what my answer would be.

However, last year was different. I had endured my first year of grief and had finally accepted the role of a bereaved mother. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 to "give thanks in all circumstances." It took me awhile, but I can sincerely thank the Lord now for my precious little Jonathan, who never drew a breath on this earth. I realize what a different and better person I am because of his death. Paul also wrote in Romans 5:3 that we should "...rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." I want to emphasize that it took me many months to take to heart Paul's advice and words of wisdom. Now, I can honestly say that I have persevered triumphantly in that I am still here on this earth with a smile on my face and peace in my heart. My character has been enhanced in that I am more compassionate and sensitive to the needs of others, and I have been given great hope that some day I will once again hold a live newborn of my own in my arms.

Like my first Thanksgiving, my first Christmas after losing Jonathan was very difficult. I think I was in denial during the weeks that led up to the 25th as I occupied myself with shopping, decorating, and Christmas parties. On Christmas day Byron and I played "Santa Claus" with Little Byron then headed to the cemetery before going to my parents' for Christmas dinner. I had not been to the cemetery since Thanksgiving, and as we drove through the cemetery gates, I was mortified by the realization that Jonathan's grave was the only one not decorated with poinsettias, wreaths, and other holiday decor. or some reason, it never occurred to me to do so; I think that's part of denial. With all the stores closed and nowhere to buy anything, we went to my parents' house and raided their decorations. My sister adorned a little teddy bear with a green and red halo while my parents gathered two of their largest poinsettia plants. We then all caravaned back to the cemetery to place these on his grave. The next year I made sure Jonathan had a nice big wreath on his grave the first week of December. I think Christmas will always be somewhat bittersweet. I know my baby is with Jesus having a wonderful time, but I can't help imagining his eyes lighting up with glee as he comes downstairs to see what "Santa" left under the tree.

This may be your first holiday season, or perhaps you have endured many holiday seasons without your baby. Whatever the case, as Philippians 4:7 states, I pray that "...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Rebekah Mitchell

# Getting Past The Holidays

Do we need to "get past Christmas" or Thanksgiving for that matter? Just as the sun rises each day, the holiday season will come. The world will celebrate whether we want to avoid facing the festivities without our babies or not. Shouldn't we still be thankful for our blessings and enjoy Christmastime? The world would expect as much, and we may or may not expect it and want it for ourselves and our families. It can be hard; no use candy-coating that even amongst the sweet goodies that fill this time of year. But, whether you wish to be "joyful, joyful" or not, here's some collected ideas to make all your Christmases a little brighter:

- Buy a beautiful Christmas candle and light it each day through December. It can be a daily, silent reminder of your baby and, maybe, make the whole house seem just a little bit warmer.
- Plan your shopping trips ahead of time or try creative alternatives. Try shopping at a different mall and go early in the day, before bumping into all those merry shoppers.
- Enlist the help of others in wrapping your gifts. Many friends would love to help but need to be asked.
- Consider changing your traditional family Christmas letter. Feel free to mention your loss. You may feel good sharing your feelings and others may benefit from hearing it as a reminder of the "true meaning of Christmas."
- Give yourself permission to change family traditions. Doing things differently this year may help to ward off some bad memories or expectations.
- Try a new idea when you are getting ready to hang up Christmas stockings. Go ahead and hang one up for your baby. Encourage each family member to write a note to the baby that can be read on Christmas Eve. A flower placed in the stocking for Christmas morning is a sweet sight.
- Determine to do one special thing for someone else in December. Maybe you know someone who is hurting like you or a lonely neighbor who could use a short visit. Perhaps you could make cookies to give away, pick out a special card to send or take a plant to someone.
- Contribute to your favorite charity in your baby's name.
- Pamper yourself this month. Be determined to buy yourself a present.
- Plan on taking time to cry. It is normal to have to cry during the holidays. Holidays intensify all emotions-why should your loss be any different?

From "Getting Past Christmas"

by Carlene Vester Eneroth

## Other Special Ways to Remember Your Baby During the Holidays

Here are some ways to create memories that would be very appropriate for a season when most of us have our babies especially on our minds:

- Buy an age appropriate gift for your baby and give it to charity in memory of your baby.
- Buy a special ornament for your Christmas tree.
- Buy a Birthstone Babies necklace, Mother's ring, Angel pin, or other appropriate jewelry.
- Contribute to your local church, school, library, or favorite charity in your baby's name.
- Donate a children's or pregnancy loss book to your local library.
- Plan a special meal and/or open house with family/friends to celebrate a special date (i.e. birth/death date, due date, anniversary date, etc.)
- Create a special place to keep or display your baby's things (i.e. blanket, outfit, hospital bracelets, other mementos, etc.)  
For example, a shadow box, small toy chest, a curio, etc.
- Make a scrap book.
- Create or buy a special frame for your baby's picture(s).
- Create a photo album or collage.
- Write poetry to or about your baby.
- Visit the cemetery and take a poinsettia or other seasonal flower/plant.
- Reach out to others who have lost a baby or share your experiences.
- Buy a special reminder of your baby for your work space.
- Buy fresh flowers for your home to enjoy while remembering your baby.

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*We Ask...*

*To be considerate of others, please refrain from bringing children to monthly meetings. Note: Pregnant women may be in attendance at the monthly meetings as SHARE does not have a separate subsequent pregnancy meeting. If you have checked out something from the SHARE lending library, please make sure to return it. ~Thank You*

*Our heartfelt thanks goes out to all the special people who donated supplies and time to make The Walk To Remember so wonderful!*

In place of our regular December meeting, we will be having a remembrance service to honor our babies memories. We will have a special ceremony that will include lighting candles and hanging ornaments in remembrance of our babies. You may bring an ornament or one will be provided for you. There will also be a table available to share pictures, keepsakes and other special mementos of our babies. It is sure to be a special evening.

### *Love Gifts:*

*None*

To donate a love gift (any amount) in memory of your baby, please send a check or money order to the P.O. box listed on the front of this newsletter. Please remember \*We are a non-profit organization which relies on donations and volunteers to provide our services. \*Donations given to the United Way can be assigned to benefit SHARE\*Donations to SHARE are tax deductible.\*Please remember that any donations sent, must be postmarked by the 15th to be in the next issue of the newsletter. Thanks!