

When you read God's Word, you will find He has much to say about waiting. He could have breathed all creation into being, and it would have appeared in a moment; however, He created the world in stages. Before His ascension, Jesus promised He would return, and the Church continues to wait. As we approach this Advent season, our focus remains on Jesus Christ – His coming into the world, how He remains present with His people today through the gift of the Holy Spirit and the glorious hope of His promised return. We wait, trusting and adopting this posture with faith as we rest in the promises of God.

To wait means to slow down, pay attention, be intentional, and live in the moment. Yet in today's fast-paced world, the word "wait" conjures images of lost or squandered time. Waiting not only seems lazy and purposeless but also evokes a deep fear of what might arise from the depths of our souls, something we work so hard to avoid.

Waiting stirs anticipation and, when allowed, sparks joy. Without it, life flattens into a series of forgettable moments strung together by the question "What's next?"

Waiting also fuels creativity. Neuroscience shows that boredom activates the brain's central problem-solving network. No boredom? No breakthroughs. Waiting offers us space and opportunities to stay close to the Lord, examining our hearts in the light of what He says in His Word.

Advent is about expectation even as we wait. Can you find yourself in the story of a world pregnant with anticipation for the coming of the Promised Messiah? The prophecies of the Messiah's coming echoed repeatedly in the ears of God's people. When... yes, when will Yahweh's long-ago Promise be fulfilled? How... how will all this take place? How will it play out? How will it come to be? And what... what will this redemption look like for my people? My family? For me?

This kind of waiting can spark a new desire for more of Jesus. This Advent can be a reset. Instead of filling every pause, use moments of silence as reminders to adjust. When waiting in line, at a traffic light, or for an appointment, check in with yourself. What's one thing you need more or less of? This intentional questioning can help you see what's causing you to yield to mindless distractions.

Let moments of boredom or inactivity be fertile ground. Try to resist the urge to scroll and let your mind wander. Sometimes, this leads to the sprouting of great ideas.

Use moments of waiting to approach the throne of God through prayer, His Word, and thanksgiving.

Perhaps we have filled our holiday season with so much activity that we forget to be... a soul in Christ's presence, the truest celebration of His coming.

"Waiting Well" is a resource that helps you see waiting with fresh eyes. Rather than viewing waiting as a waste of time, reflect on what you gain and what matters most in life. What God does in us while we wait is far more important than what we're waiting for.

When you start to fidget, scroll, and scramble to fill your time, step back and ask yourself whether you are waiting well. If you are, rest in the knowledge that your Heavenly Father is delighted with you. If you're not, remember that your Heavenly Father loves you so much that He desires time with you and is delighted with you.

God's richest blessing as you navigate this Advent passage and await the coming of the

Christ Child.

December 25th – A Christmas Prayer



Today is the day we have been waiting for, Lord.
We were told of your coming so long ago,
Waiting in hope, believing the promise:
"To us a Child is born,
To us a Son is given."
You have come.

Emmanuel, God with us.
Now, in rugged surroundings,
To the humblest of people
You have come.
The Savior of the World.

Anxious mother, betrothed at her side.
Amid stench and hay,
Sweat and pain,
With muffled whimpers and heavy eyelids
You make your entrance.

And now, centuries later
The Babe born in a stable
Has turned the world upside down.
Your presence leaves its mark on all
Who hears your story.

On this day, I read the story again
As if it were the very first time
It conjures an earnest response,
"Come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee."

Amen.

December 24th – Morning by Morning



Isaiah 50:4-5 (NLV)

"The Lord God has given Me the tongue of those who follow Him, that I may know how to give strength when I speak to one who is tired. He wakes Me up morning by morning. He wakes up My ear to listen as a follower. The Lord God has opened My ear, and I obeyed Him. I did not turn back."

Christmas is upon us. An air of anticipation hangs in the air on Christmas morning. All your holiday preparations have fostered it. How can you carry this anticipation beyond the Advent season?

As you move through these final days of this season and into the New Year, consider a daily exchange with the Lord. Today's scripture says, *"He wakes me up morning by morning...my ear to listen as a follower."*

You may already have a daily rhythm of meeting with the Lord and reading His Word. "Waiting Well – A Passage Through Advent" may be your first experience of a daily exchange with the Lord. Wherever you are on your walk with Him, consider going deeper and waking with anticipation of meeting Him each day.

While you wait...

What is one takeaway from meeting with the Lord this Advent? What have you learned about Him? What have you learned about yourself? How is He leading you as you move forward?

Pray

Lord, help me to understand your Word and obey it. Lead me by your Holy Spirit in ways that are consistent with Scripture and give me the wisdom to live a Christ-like life.

December 1st – Waiting is Hard



Psalm 69:1-3 (ESV)

"Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God."

This scripture is rich in historical significance. In these words, we see David filled with deep distress, yet he is so dependent on the Lord. David was the heir apparent to the throne of Israel. Saul's insecurities and jealousy led him to seek David's life. This scripture could also have been echoed by the Children of Israel, who waited centuries for the coming of the Promised Messiah.

This scripture can be deeply meaningful to us today. Why? Because waiting is hard. Whether we are aware of it or not, we have an internal clock that tells us how long things should take, and it rarely aligns with reality.

Advent is all about waiting, and that can bring all kinds of emotions to the surface. Some of those emotions may include anticipation or longing, while others can bring impatience, hopelessness, and irritability.

How can we view waiting as a gift from God rather than a hardship to endure? Writer and pastor Andrew Murray (1828-1917) said, "This is the blessedness of waiting upon God, that it takes our eyes and thoughts away from ourselves, even our needs and desires, and occupies us with our God." Can we reach a point in our waiting where it yields a deeper revelation of God's perfect timing? This is our opportunity to release our need for control and to stay in step with God's Spirit.

While you wait...

When you find that you have a change in schedule today, look on the change as an opportunity to trust God's providence and turn your thoughts toward Him. Every circumstance is an opportunity to exercise our faith in God.

Prayer

Lord, today I will neither run ahead of You nor lag behind You, but will keep in step with Your Spirit. Amen.

December 2nd – The Waiting Exchange



Psalm 27:4-5, 13-14 (NIV)

"One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble, he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock…I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

In these early days of Advent, Psalm 27 is a beautiful reminder of the give-and-take relationship between you and the Lord. Imagine yourself as the psalmist. What are you asking of God—time to dwell, gaze, and hide with Him? The desire to linger in the Lord's presence? When that happens, God assures us that our eyes will be opened to see what He sees.

Today, you may feel a bit weary of the world around you. The world can be a cold and heartless place. This is exactly when you need to dwell – stop for a moment and be still; seek – look beyond the surface; and gaze – once you've gone below the surface to see what God wants you to see, then look longingly and lovingly, as through the eyes of Jesus.

What a way to begin this season of Advent. It's a challenge, but the benefits far outweigh the effort. You may find a whole new perspective on Christmas you've never had.

While you wait…

Where are you experiencing your greatest yearning today? The need to dwell, seek, or gaze? Tell the Lord of your desire and be confident that He will shower you with His goodness.

Prayer

Today, Lord, I will give what You long for me to give. Help me dwell with You, seek Your face, and gaze with the eyes of my heart. I am confident I will see Your goodness. Amen.

December 23rd – Endurance



Romans 5:1-4 (NLT)

"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation."

Today's scripture opens with the wonderful work accomplished for us through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Through this gracious act of God's Son, we can stand before the throne of God *"confidently and joyfully."* This is not the result of any work of our own but of God's grace.

Pay attention to the connecting phrase *"when we run into…"* This phrase reminds us that, inwardly, we have changed, yet this earthly life is not trouble-free. We are not immune to *"problems and trials."* This is where the word *"endurance"* is key. Remember that this spiritual journey is not a sprint but a marathon. God rewards each step of the journey with strength of character and confident hope.

May the fact that we do not run this race alone mean that the Holy Spirit is with us every step of the way. Run with endurance.

While you wait…

Recall a problem or trial in your life that once stopped you in your tracks but that you have now endured through the Holy Spirit's work, and you now sense strength in your character and confidence in God.

Pray

Lord, you are my constant Companion in my walk of faith. Help me lean on you and sense that you are developing a godly character within me. Amen.

December 22nd - Mindset



Colossians 3:1-4 (AMP)

"Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, sharing in His resurrection from the dead], keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]. For you died [to this world], and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

Every relationship is two-sided. A solid, healthy relationship is one in which both sides understand their roles and give 100%. Relationships become weak, lopsided, and fragmented when one side fails to fulfill their part.

We are assured that Jesus has given His all when we consider our relationship with Him. *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8). Paul, the writer of Colossians, writes to believers, indicating the role of the believer in a thriving relationship with Christ. We are to *"keep seeking the things above."* If that seems daunting, the Scripture goes on to provide more detail. *"Set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above..."*. The Holy Spirit renews our minds, and through this we become more like Jesus. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we as believers participate in this transformation by reading His Word, praying, worshiping, and obeying what He asks of us.

As you trust in the Lord and surrender yourself to Him, you will find yourself conforming to the image of Christ.

While you wait...

Consider cultivating a new mindset by memorizing Scripture. Perhaps you could begin with today's scripture – Colossians 3:1-4. Too much to start with? Choose the verse or phrase that stands out to you and memorize it. Throughout the day, use it as a statement of belief and an opportunity to set your mind on Christ.

Pray

Lord, I desire to conform to the image of Christ. I am open to the Holy Spirit's work in me to transform my mind. Amen.

December 3rd - Eagerly Waiting



1 Corinthians 1:4-9 (NIV)

"I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

Today's devotional title may seem like an oxymoron. How can you wait eagerly? When you are eager, you jump into action, yet waiting seems more passive. What is Paul, the author of 1 Corinthians, trying to convey?

Let's back up a sentence. You can wait eagerly without losing focus by being "enriched in every way-with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge...". When we make God's Word a daily rhythm, we become remarkably open to the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), which will transform our thoughts, attitudes, actions, and reactions (Philippians 4:8-9). When that happens, we will exude the presence of Jesus and make an impact in our sphere of influence. That brings a little bit of heaven here on earth, and heaven is what we eagerly await.

While you wait...

Read Romans 12:1-2 carefully. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal its meaning to you and apply it to your life faithfully.

"So, here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you." **Romans 12:1-2** (MSG)

Prayer

Lord, may I be so challenged by Your Word today that I demonstrate Your presence within me. Amen.

December 4th - God's Good Pleasure



Proverbs 8:33-35 (NIV)

"Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For those who find me find life and receive favor from the Lord."

We can spend a lot of time and energy trying to live up to other people's expectations. Pleasing others can become a costly addiction. Nowhere is this truer than during the holidays. Our annual to-do list includes making sure we've met everyone's expectations—gift-giving, Christmas cards, attending holiday events, and keeping up family traditions. If we are not careful, it can become burdensome, and we lose sight of waiting in expectancy.

Today's scripture offers a remedy for the burden of meeting others' expectations. The remedy lies in staying close to the Father, or "watching daily at [His] door." It is as if we are there to hear the Lord's every word, in a spirit of expectancy, not wanting to miss anything.

The scripture ends with the affirmation that the one who waits expectantly receives favor from the Lord. Those who seek Him, remain connected to Him, and wait in anticipation receive God's good pleasure. When we adopt the attitude of a soul in His presence, we will not miss a moment of being showered with His favor.

While you wait...

Read Proverbs 8:33-35 again. What have you learned about God in this passage? What does it teach about wisdom? What steps is God asking you to take in faith in response to His Word?

Prayer

Loving Father, I desire to be in your presence. Thank you for lovingly receiving me each time I return. Amen.

December 21st - Filler



Psalm 139:1-6, 23-24 (NIV)

"You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain..."

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

The word "filler" refers to something used to eliminate emptiness, whether in space or time. We have become master fillers, especially when it comes to time. An unscheduled moment can feel uncomfortable, so we fill it by scrolling through social media, checking the latest news, watching videos, or texting someone.

The question that begs to be asked is: Why do we feel the need to fill an unscheduled moment? Is it the fear that an unguarded moment will bring up something you have worked very hard to keep down?

Today's scripture tells us that nothing is hidden from the Lord. He knows all there is to know about us – our wholeness and our woundedness. Through the Holy Spirit's gentle work, God wants to use those unscheduled, unguarded moments to bring freedom and to do a new work in each of us.

The psalmist begins his psalm with the understanding that God has searched his heart and ends with a heartfelt invitation to search his heart. Perhaps it was during one of the psalmist's unguarded moments that he let go of the need to control and opened himself to more of the Lord's love and grace in his life.

While you wait...

When you find yourself reaching for your phone today to "fill some time," consider filling that time by asking God if there is anything within you that you need to open yourself to His loving, searching eye. If you do... and He does... ask Him to reveal to you through His Word and through the Holy Spirit any area that you need to relinquish to Him.

Prayer

Lord, may all my unscheduled moments today be filled with Your fullness. Amen.

December 20th – Selah



Psalm 24 (NKJV)

"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, or sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face." Selah

Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!- And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory." Selah

"Selah" places a period at the end of today's scripture. The word "selah" is a Hebrew term that appears 74 times in the Bible (mostly in Psalms) and is traditionally understood to mean "pause and calmly think about that."

Psalm 24 is filled with reminders of who we are and what we are to do. "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." (vs 1) This reminds us that we are stewards, not owners. That reminder would cause us to loosen our grip on things. Maybe we need to pause and think about that calmly.

We are reminded that through God's Son, we can share in His victory and live confidently, knowing that His grace sustains us. As verse 5 explains, "He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Perhaps we need to pause and reflect calmly on this truth.

Lastly, verse 8 reminds us that God is the "... King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle." This should prompt us to praise rather than complain. Maybe today we need to pause and reflect calmly.

While you wait...

Look for your "selah moment" today. Is it loosening your grip on control? Remember that you are a victor through Christ Jesus. Fill your mouth with more praise than complaint.

Prayer

Almighty God, I am your humble steward, yet you make me a victor. May this prompt me to sing your praise with abandon! Selah.

December 5th – More than Enough



Lamentations 3:22-26 (NIV)

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him.' The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."

The holidays seem to be a season of abundance – food, celebration, gifts, and decorations. With every holiday movie and Christmas song played in stores, we can become overwhelmed, overstimulated, and socially overloaded. We can become consumed by it all.

Some days it may feel like too much, and you may want to step back and find a quiet moment to reduce the stimuli. What will surface is that all the holiday "trappings," though lovely and lively, are not enough to satisfy your soul. In that quiet moment, remember: "The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him."

God's Spirit meeting with your spirit is not disruptive or complicated but a beautiful undercurrent of faithfulness and compassion. He is more than enough to help you through your day, whether it's filled with overstimulation, feelings of overload, or overwhelming concern.

While you wait...

Amid all the holiday stimuli you encounter today, take a moment to step outside and notice one simple beauty in the Lord's creation. It will turn "earth's confusion to sweetest rest." (William H. Draper)

Prayer

Lord, when the sights, sounds, and activities of the day overwhelm me, gather me to You, for You are to me. Amen.

December 6th - Waiting Wisely



Ephesians 5:15-16 (TLB)

"So be careful how you act; these are difficult days. Don't be fools; be wise: make the most of every opportunity you have for doing good."

We have become masters of multitasking. We keep the morning news on while getting ready for work. We text in the car at a stoplight (and only then!). We scroll while talking to someone. We can certainly justify our multitasking. We have much to do and only so many hours in the day to do it all...right?

But what if...for one day, during those momentary stops, those seemingly mindless, menial tasks, you prayed for someone? What if, today, in conversations, you looked at the person you were talking to and breathed a prayer for them? What if, while in the grocery store line, waiting to pick up your children after school, or during dinner preparation, you prayed for the people that God brings to mind even if you don't know what their needs are? That is making the most of your time.

While you wait...

Follow the challenge in today's devotional.

Prayer

Lord, Your Word challenges us to pray continually. In my steps and stops today, bring to mind those I can bring to Your throne. Amen.

December 19th - Seasons



Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (NLT)

"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.
A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest.
A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up.
A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance.
A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away.
A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away.
A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak.
A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace."

Today's scripture speaks of seasons in our lives. As you read each line, you may recall a segment of your life it describes. Some descriptions conjure sweet memories; others recall trials and suffering.

While you wait...

What season are you in today? Ask God, by His Holy Spirit, to help you understand and apply the truths of His word to your life and what you are going through.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the reminder that You are with me in every season of my life. Thank you for the revelation I will receive today. Amen.

December 18th – His Timing is Perfect



Habakkuk 2:2-4 (NLT)

"Then the Lord said to me, "Write my answer plainly on tablets, so that a runner can carry the correct message to others." This vision is for a future time. It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled. If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed. "Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God."

Today's scripture is a prophetic word given to Habakkuk. Amid the prevailing national disobedience and darkness, Habakkuk earnestly sought the Lord. Today's verses are God's message to His people through Habakkuk.

In this Scripture, we see God's faithfulness, and we, as believers, can be encouraged to trust His timing. You may want to wait well as part of your Advent worship, or you may want to wait well until the Lord gives you direction in your personal life. Whatever the need, it may *"...seem... slow in coming; wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed."* (vs. 3) When you read the words *"...will not be delayed,"* keep in mind that God's timeline is very different from ours. Trust His timing to be perfect. Until then, wait well.

While you wait...

What are you waiting for today? Look less at your timeline and more at the quality of your patience as you wait. When impatience rises, remember that God is faithful to respond at just the right time.

Prayer

I trust you, Lord, because your timing is perfect. As I wait, I will keep my eyes on You. Amen.

December 7th – Blue Christmas



Psalm 40:1-3 (NIV)

"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him."

For many, Christmas is a time of joy and celebration, yet for some, it is a difficult season marked by loss. The death of a friend or loved one can make the holiday season a painful reminder of their absence. A quiet voice within us whispers that Christmas will never be the same without them.

Some churches observe a service known as "Blue Christmas." It is a space for those who have lost someone special to remember and cherish their memories and to thank God for the lives of those who have left an imprint on our hearts. It is a time to thank God for their impact and to worship the One who understands our sorrow.

At Christmas, we often speak of Jesus as "Emmanuel, God with us." We must remember that this means being with us in our joys and victories, as well as in pain and sorrow. Perhaps today you need to pause to remember someone special who is now gone. Sit in God's presence and, with joy and thanksgiving, reflect on their unique contribution to your life. Jesus is your Emmanuel; He is with you as you remember. He knows your pain, is with you in it, and will give you a firm place to stand so you can sing through the suffering.

While you wait...

Consider a way to keep your loved one's memory alive.

- Possibly find an ornament that depicts something about them and can hang on your Christmas tree.
- Share with someone who also remembers the impact your loved one had on your life.
- Give to a cause in memory of your friend or loved one.

Prayer

Lord, this season celebrates your coming. Help me remember that you are my Emmanuel, with me in both joy and sorrow. Thank you for your abiding presence in my life. I worship you today. Amen.

December 8th – Seasons of Waiting



James 5:7-8 (NIV)

"Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near."

Today's scripture associates waiting with seasons. The farmer waits for the crops to grow, making sure that as days and weeks go by, the plants' every need is tended to for optimal health and growth. This imagery relates to the season of waiting in our lives, which has nothing to do with plants but everything to do with harvest.

At its deepest level, waiting reveals what we believe about ourselves and God. It challenges our dreams, expectations, and abilities. Waiting is a frequent, often painful reminder that we're not in control. God is. Just as the farmer carefully tends the crops, the farmer has no control over how much rain will fall (or not fall) or over scorching heat or freezing temperatures.

Our seasons of waiting on God are an opportunity to use our uncertainty for spiritual growth and intimacy with our Savior. Sadly, we waste these seasons because we don't view our waiting this way. We're just reacting, possibly in ways that don't reflect the Fruit of the Spirit.

What would happen if, amid the waiting, we turned our impatient thoughts toward obedience by asking the Lord what He wants, confident that our waiting is not in vain and trusting the God who will reap a harvest in our souls?

While you wait...

Sometime today, you will find yourself waiting. During that wait, thank God for the work He is doing in your soul and for the fruitful harvest that will be reaped in His glory.

Prayer

Lord, I wait for You, and as I do, I am confident You are cultivating in me a harvest for Your glory. Amen.

December 17th – Ready and Waiting



Matthew 25:1-10 (AMP)

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins, who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish [thoughtless, silly, and careless], and five were wise [far-sighted, practical, and sensible]. For when the foolish took their lamps, they did not take any [extra] oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delayed, they all began to nod off, and they fell asleep. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! The bridegroom [is coming]! Go out to meet him.' Then all those virgins got up and put their own lamps in order [trimmed the wicks and added oil and lit them]. But the foolish virgins said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No, otherwise there will not be enough for us and for you, too; go instead to the dealers and buy oil for yourselves.' But while they were going away to buy oil, the bridegroom came..."

It is easy to lose focus while waiting. The urgency fades, and discouragement sets in. For instance, you want to complete your education and earn that degree. Yet life happens; you need to take a "gap year," get married, and start a family. Amid all the waiting, your drive to finish your degree wanes, and you feel ill-prepared to resume the degree requirements.

In Jesus' parable, some kept their focus, thought ahead, and were prepared for any detour. Others lost focus and were unprepared for the bridegroom, who, in the parable, is the returning Lord.

Advent is about remembering the first period of waiting for Christ. Throughout the Bible, there is a promise of His return. Are you prepared? Do you still maintain a focus on continued intimacy with Him? How are you preparing for His return?

While you wait...

How would you describe your relationship with Jesus today? What is one step you could take today to draw closer to Him? Is it service? Greater engagement with Scripture? More time in prayer? Or giving up something that is holding you back from a deeper relationship with Him?

Prayer

Lord, I desire that my light of faith will grow brighter. May nothing cause it to be diminished. May your Spirit stir within me today. Amen.

December 16th - Benefits of Boundaries



Jude 1:21, 24-25 (NIV)

"...keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life...To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."

Boundaries are most often set for protection. We give our children boundaries – not as punishment, but as a way of looking after them. Parents have experienced more of life and understand some of its pitfalls, so they set boundaries out of love.

God is our all-knowing Father who desires to protect you. This happens when we remain within the boundaries of His providential care. His Word shows us when, where, and how this occurs.

Today's scripture tells us that when we wait for Him, with Him, and through Him, we receive His mercy and will one day be delivered into His glorious presence.

Wait for the Lord, trust that He has your best in mind, and He will walk with you all the days of your life, eventually delivering you to spend eternity with Him.

While you wait...

When we live within the boundaries of God's love, we gain a deeper understanding of His mercy toward us. Be on the lookout today for someone who needs to experience God's mercy. Through a simple act today, be His channel of mercy to someone.

Prayer

Merciful Lord, help me be your channel of mercy in someone's life today. Amen.

December 9th - The Finished Product



Psalm 25:20-21 (NIV)

"Guard my life and rescue me, do not let me be put to shame for I take refuge in you. May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope, Lord, is in you."

Life for many during the Advent season is full of activity. Work, family, corps activities – it can be a lot, and we can get tired. Our guard can come down as fatigue sets in, and it is during this time that we need to rely on the Lord to be our strength: *"...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* Philippians 1:6

While you wait...

What "loose end" do you need to give to God today? Trust His "integrity and uprightness" to do what is right, then wait to see His finished product. Are you willing to wait as long as it takes?

Prayer

Lord, I trust you and your timing to shape me into who I am meant to be. Thank you for being with me throughout this process. Amen.

December 10th - The Flame of Hope



Romans 8:24-26 (NIV)

"For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans."

Today's scripture describes hope as a flame that never goes out. Many things can dampen our spirits, including unkind words, isolation, and wounds. Some situations and relationships have deeply affected us. Yet the scripture tells us that when we are at our weakest, the Spirit intercedes for us, helps us when we are weak, and advocates according to God's will.

Perhaps you are feeling weak in some areas of life today, worn down by the demands of responsibility, expectations, and even productivity pressures. Open yourself to the Holy Spirit's intervention. Waiting patiently may seem counterintuitive to what needs to be accomplished, yet the Lord works in ways we cannot see, in the deep recesses of our souls.

Let the Holy Spirit ignite in you the kind of hope that is a flame that will not go out. He is your Intercessor as you wait patiently.

While you wait...

What is it that you need to hand over to the Holy Spirit? With hands outstretched and palms down, as a sign of letting go of that burden. Then, with palms up, as a sign of openness to the Holy Spirit, give Him full control over what you have released.

Prayer

Gracious Lord, accomplish Your work in me as I release my burdens to You. Amen.

December 15th - Homecoming



Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

Waiting tends to stir up an anxious mind. With nothing to keep your mind occupied, you find yourself spiraling into worry about how you must fix it. If you're reading this amid worry and anxiety, these words to the Philippians may feel a bit daunting. Can we really find peace if we bring every situation to God? And if we worry, does that mean we're not praying right or not spiritual enough?

Instead of berating ourselves for not being worry-free, let's imagine for a moment that peace is like a homecoming. A sense of comfort, security, and peace comes over us when we think of our favorite chair, surrounded by things that hold deep meaning. That is what can happen when we bring all our anxious requests to God, for He is our home and our source of comfort, security, and peace.

And so, in anxious waiting, when we cannot solve the problem that occupies our worried minds, let's bless our desire to return home to the Heavenly Father. In His time, He will give us *"...peace which exceeds anything we can understand."*

While you wait...

When anxiety fills you today, imagine coming home to the Lord. May the peace of that homecoming overshadow every worrisome thought.

Prayer

Today, Lord, I claim your peace that transcends all understanding. Guard my heart and mind in You. Amen.

December 14th – Gaps in Life



Isaiah 40:28-31 (GNT)

"Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Lord is the everlasting God; he created all the world.

He never grows tired or weary. No one understands his thoughts. He strengthens those who are weak and tired. Even those who are young grow weak; young people can fall exhausted. But those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak."

Another way to describe waiting is as a series of gaps in life. They are moments void of focused activity. When we've got things to do, places to go, and people to see, a time gap due to unforeseen circumstances (traffic jams, a doctor's waiting room, etc.) can make the wait feel purposeless.

In God's economy, waiting is not a waste. These are times to turn our attention to God, as Scripture puts it: "waiting on God." Waiting on God means living by what we know to be true about God when we don't know what is true in the present moment.

Today's scripture contains an amazing promise! It tells us that God has a purpose in every aspect of our lives. In those unforeseen times of waiting, if we intentionally turn our thoughts to Him, the Word tells us we will gain renewed strength. The Scripture uses the image of a soaring eagle rising above the earth.

Maybe you need strength to rise above your circumstances today. This does not mean you can avoid or ignore them. When your attention turns to God, your soul is renewed and can navigate anything in His strength.

While you wait...

What is your disposition and attitude toward waiting? Today, strive to make any gap in your day a moment to dwell on God. Ask Him to help you rise above negative dispositions and attitudes.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for being with me in the waiting. Help me turn my thoughts to you in the unscheduled moments of my day. Thank you for your constant presence with me. Amen.

December 11th - Waiting is Relational



Psalm 33:20-22 (NIV)

"We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you."

Given the emphasis on waiting in the Christian life, it seems we should be thinking and talking about it much more as a community. It's easy to let false narratives dominate our thinking. We can become fixated on what's not true about our lives and forget what is true about God. This is where the faith community can offer balance and encouragement to a brother or sister who is waiting for a prayer to be answered.

We can all think of someone who has encouraged us as we wait for God to move in a particular situation in our lives. They stirred our hope, reminded us that God is always at work, and reassured us that we were not forgotten.

Waiting is relational. Some came alongside us, so we did not wait alone. This is a wonderful ministry of the Body of Christ.

Are you waiting for an answer today? Reach out to a brother or sister in Christ rather than waiting alone. Do you know someone who is waiting for an answer? Consider sitting with them as they wait.

While you wait...

Consider writing your own prayer for someone who needs encouragement and sharing it with friends.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for those who came alongside me as I wait for my prayers to be answered. Show me whom I can do the same for. Amen.

December 12th – In the Darkness and the Dawn



Isaiah 26:7-9 (NCV)

"The path of life is level for those who are right with God; Lord, you make the way of life smooth for those people. But, Lord, we are waiting for your way of justice. Our souls want to remember you and your name. My soul wants to be with you at night, and my spirit wants to be with you at the dawn of every day. When your way of justice comes to the land, people of the world will learn the right way of living."

We can mostly agree that waiting does not come easily. Waiting is a learned posture, and today's scripture speaks to the various forms it takes—from night into the dawn.

In our darkest nights – both literally and figuratively – waiting feels most difficult. When all is dark, and there is no light to focus on, isolation and fear set in. In those darkest moments, we earnestly call out to God. Sometimes the darkness may seem interminably long. God uses these times of suffering and waiting to deepen our faith and dependence on Him. In these moments, our faith is strengthened.

Imagine how God's people waited for the coming of their prophesied Messiah. Surely there were dark moments of waiting, wondering whether His arrival would ever come. Those who did not lose hope in the darkest night found joy on that first Christmas morning.

Maybe you feel like you are stumbling in the dark today. Do not lose hope, for "*Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."* Psalm 30:5

While you wait...

Reflect on how past (or even present) moments stir your desire for greater intimacy with God.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for you are always with me, in the darkness and at dawn. Amen.

December 13th – Rehearsal



Philippians 3:20-21 (AMP)

"But [we are different, because] our citizenship is in heaven. And from there we eagerly await [the coming of] the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who, by exerting that power which enables Him even to subject everything to Himself, will [not only] transform [but completely refashion] our earthly bodies so that they will be like His glorious resurrected body."

We spend these days reflecting on the coming of the newborn King, a sense of anticipation that, once again, reminds us that Jesus is our Emmanuel, God with us.

These days are a dress rehearsal for Emmanuel's coming again. *"...We eagerly await [the coming of] the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..."*. Today's scripture says everything is subject to Him, which reminds us of His 2nd coming. He will not come as a helpless Baby but as the reigning King. That is when *"...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* Philippians 2:10-11

While you wait...

As you are reminded of the coming of the Christ Child today, consider His 2nd coming to earth by reading Revelation 1:1-8.

Prayer

I thank you, Jesus, for coming to earth to identify with us. Thank you for the promise that you will return as the Conquering King. Amen.