

IN THE WAITING

July 16, 2023

It is almost inevitable that at some point the direction your life takes does not line up with your expectations for your life. For many, there are unmet expectations regarding marriage, children, and family. Often, the unexpected place you find yourself in leaves you waiting. In this reading plan, learn how to navigate uncharted territory and wait with hope, patience, joy, and even contentment as you lean into God, (re)discovering His Word and His ways as you wait.

DAY 1 EXPECTATIONS and WAITING

Scripture: [Romans 8:18-19](#), [Exodus 14:14](#), [Psalm 5:3](#)

Reflection: How many times have you been disappointed by expectations that were not met? I know I can say it has happened to me more often than I thought it would! Perhaps it was the job I REALLY wanted but did not get, or a meal I prepared was not as delicious as hoped or a relationship did not pan out in the way I had hoped or prayed it would. Expectations are things we all know, hear, and see all around us. We grew up learning about expectations from a very early age and many of them shape how we act and interact with the world around us.

Now, imagine the garden when Jesus is arrested and all the parts that unfolded in those next hours. Imagine how the disciples felt on Friday after Jesus died on the cross. Or on Saturday, when everything was silent, and they wondered if everything they thought they knew might not be true. The expectations they had built up for what it meant for Jesus to be The Savior most certainly could not have included Jesus' trial, crucifixion, and death. Imagine how uncertain and fearful they felt in those moments. What they expected their journey with their Savior to look like suddenly took a very different turn.

And we can often find ourselves in that same place as the disciples on those three days, on a journey that looks nothing like we expected, feeling uncertain and alone.

Ask Yourself:

- What are you waiting for? What words describe how you feel while you wait to hear God's voice?
- Does your posture and perspective in the waiting look the same today as they did last month or last year or years ago? How have you grown more patient? How have you grown more weary?
- God sees you in the waiting. How will you look for God's goodness in the unexpected?

Pause to Pray: *Lord, thank you for always looking out for me. For loving me enough to sometimes answer my prayers with the words "not yet." Help me to trust you enough to put my own expectations aside and walk beside you on the journey you have created for me. I want my heart to be aligned with yours. Guide me to that place of waiting. Amen.*

Take a Next Step: Waiting is especially hard when you do it alone. Invite a trusted friend or mentor to do this reading plan alongside you or set up a time to share your journey with them. Consider asking them to pray with you and for you in this season.

DAY 2 HOPEFUL WAITING

Scripture: [Lamentations 3:21-26](#), [Psalm 62:5-8](#), [Matthew 19:26](#), [Romans 8:25](#), [Hebrews 11:1](#)

Reflection: Hope. What do you think of when you hear that word? To hope is having a feeling of expectation and desire for your preferred future. Hope can give buoyancy to situations that feel overwhelming or hard. However, hope is more than a feeling, it is also an action we take to show where our faith lies. We must learn how to make hope an active part of our lives.

So how *do* you hopefully wait for what comes next? First, we must look at where our hope is rooted—is it rooted in the “something” we really want or is it rooted in Jesus? When hope exists without faith, its roots are shallow at best. Hope rooted in faith, however, has deeper roots. This hope does not say that we believe we will get all things we desire, it means that we will seek God first and trust that He will hear and give us our hearts desires. Second, we must let ourselves release the grip we have on what our eyes tell us we desire and allow God to be in control. This means releasing our hopes and desires and asking God to match our plan to His plan. It is not easy to do, but it is always worth it! Last, we must walk the walk and talk the talk. If we say our hope is in Jesus, then we have to read His word, pray to Him and make Him the center of all we do. We must relinquish control to our Savior and Lord in order to truly experience Hope.

Ask Yourself:

- Why is placing your hope in Jesus the hardest part of waiting?
- Read Lamentations 3:25. Are you seeking God daily? If not, what is one step you can take to developing a daily habit?
- How is the time spent with Jesus and His Word connected to Hope?

Pause to Pray: *Father, help me to place all my hope in you. Allow me to face the areas I want to control and lead me back to you. Set my eyes upon you and your will for my life. Help me to stay tuned to you as I share my hopes with you, Lord. Align my heart with yours! Amen.*

Take a Next Step: In Hebrews 11:1, we learn that “*faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” Being hopeful can be difficult when your path is going in a different direction than many others around you. You can find yourself wondering “when will it be my turn?” or “why not me?” Write down a personal prayer to Jesus about your season of waiting. Make it a cry of hope! Pray it daily this week (and beyond!)

DAY 3 PATIENTLY WAITING

Scripture: [2 Corinthians 12:5-10](#), [Psalm 37:3-7](#), [Psalm 46:10](#), [Ephesians 4:1-6](#)

Reflection: Patience. What exactly is the definition of patience? One idea is that patience is sitting in the unknown without hurry, without worry, and without feeling this overwhelming sense that if you just do something you will be able to help move the journey along. It is often said that Patience is a virtue, but that does not mean it is easy to put into practice! It is something you have to pray for, work on, something you have to put time and energy into daily. It can be difficult to patiently live in an unknown space until the next step is illuminated.

Remember Abraham? Moses? Sarah? Noah? Elizabeth? All these people in the Bible had to wait for God to do what He said He would do. Some waited patiently while others did not. And some experienced the payoff of patiently waiting, and some had to encounter the consequences of rushing things forward. Yet, in the end, all saw the goodness of who God was during their time of waiting.

Ask Yourself:

- Read Psalm 37:3-5. The first word in each of these verses is an imperative- a command to take action.
- Which one do you feel is hard for you?
- What one thing can you do this week to help you improve in that area?

Pause to Pray: *Lord, help me be patient in the waiting. Help me to give all control back to you. I pray for eyes to see the good you have given me in this life and to not miss the beauty in those things. Help me to not jump and react, Father, but lean into you and your word. Amen.*

Take a Next Step: On your unexpected journey, is waiting patiently easy or difficult? What makes it difficult or painful? What helps ease the difficulty? Write down the answers to these questions and then take them to God in your prayer time. He already knows what is in your heart but wants us to share it with Him anyway.

DAY 4 STRENGTH in the WAITING

Scripture: [1 Chronicles 16:8-12](#), [2 Timothy 1:7](#), [Psalm 27:14](#), [Psalm 28:6-8](#)

Reflection: Strength has a multitude of meanings and uses. It can mean physical strength or emotional strength. It can be used to describe personality traits or character traits. But where does the strength that lives inside of us come from? If we listen to what the world tells us then we believe strength comes from within, that we make and build up our strength, and that we are strong on our own. Whew. That is a big burden to carry on our own! However, as Christians, we know that our strength comes from the Lord. From the truth of who God is and from the presence of his Holy Spirit in our lives. We do not often think about needing to be strong until life throws us a curveball. Think about the story of Job. He lost EVERYTHING....and yet, even in his despair, he seeks God and asks him to be within him in this season. Have you ever been in a situation where, suddenly, life does not look the way you expected it to? As Job teaches us, again and again, where we find strength matters.

Ask Yourself:

- Read 1 Chronicles 16:11. What are you continually seeking as you are in this season of waiting?
- How do you lean into God's strength?
- In moments of weakness, what/who do you find yourself grasping for?

Pause to Pray: *Father, give me your strength on days when I feel weak. Help me to ignore the noise of the world and hear only your voice. When temptations come, help me to hear your words echo in my heart and keep me from giving in to those temptations. Infuse in me a strong desire to chase you and my relationship with you, Father. Remove what is not for me and help me to be strong to not chase it down. Amen.*

Take a Next Step: In your waiting, it can be hard to stay strong when faced with people who have what you're waiting for. For example, as a single person, it can be hard to be strong when the message of marriage and family centers around moms and dads and babies in homes and white picket fences. Today, every time you feel weak, think of God's goodness in your life and pause to reflect or write it down. At the end of the day, and for the rest of this week, start your prayer time with God by thanking Him for these incredible blessings.

DAY 5 CONTENTMENT and WAITING

Scripture: [Hebrews 13:5](#), [Philippians 4:10-14](#), [Romans 15:13](#), [James 1:2-4](#), [Habakkuk 3:17-19](#)

Reflection: To truly find contentment, we must first look at where we place our hope. If we place our hopes in material desires, we will find ourselves lacking contentment and consistently seeking and searching for "more". On the other side, if we place our hope and prayers in Jesus, we will feel contentment more often. Contentment is the feeling of satisfaction that comes over us when we know that seeking and following Him is all we desire. We have peace knowing He is with us in all things always; therefore, we have obtained the main desire of our heart.

When you find contentment in our circumstances, knowing God is with you, you cannot help but be filled with joy. And when joy bubbles up from within, it cannot help but spill out of us. Contentment comes from knowing that you do not need to be in control of all things and joy comes from the knowledge that God alone is in control. That weight is lifted from your shoulders! You need to do nothing more than trust Him, and He will show me the path He has created for you. When your contentment and joy are rooted in Jesus, your foundation is secure.

Ask Yourself:

- How content are you in this season?
- What are the things that steal your joy?
- What things bring you joy?

Pause to Pray: *Lord, I choose joy today. Even if it rains. Even if today my waiting does not come to an end. Even if I fall or fail. Even if it all goes wrong, "yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength" Amen.*

Final Thought: In the waiting, contentment is often the hardest place to find rest. If you're single, it can feel like everyone around you is getting married. If you're childless, it seems that everyone else is having children. If you haven't yet found a good job, it can feel like you're a failure. It can feel downright exhausting and uncomfortable because people will ask questions and you do not have those answers to when and where and how the waiting will end! God sees you. He loves you. He knows every step of the way you take. Choose trust. Choose hope. Choose contentment. Choose joy.

Consider memorizing James 1:2-4 *Count it all joy, my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

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