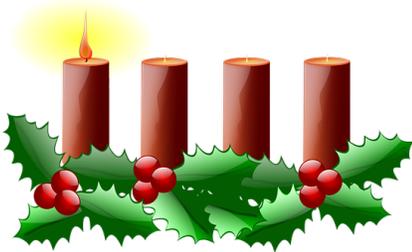


Advent Devotional (Week 1): Faith



Week One focuses on how waiting on God can strengthen our faith in God and His promises

by Matt Tullos

SCRIPTURE READING

"Wait for the LORD; be strong and courageous. Wait for the LORD".

Psalms 27:14

"Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him."

Hebrews 11:6

DEVOTION: WAITING AND FAITH GO HAND-IN-HAND

What's the longest you've had to wait for something?

I imagine almost everyone has a memory of Christmas Eve as a child; squeezing your eyes shut, trying with all your might to go to sleep on Christmas Eve. For those of you with orthodox parents, you knew that even opening one present before Christmas morning was akin to high heresy.

And so you counted sheep and waited.

Waiting is still difficult. We expect everything to be at our fingertips the moment we have the desire for it. It's a world we're growing into and it's addicting. We live in a world of easy downloads, instantaneous email, on demand and food prepared in a few minutes. Yet God finds ways of making us wait. Waiting and faith go hand-in-hand.

- We wait for the baby we've dreamed we'd hold in our arms.
- Some are waiting for their prodigal son to come to the end of himself and return home.
- Many of us are waiting for the phone to ring so we can return to a job with a normal salary and benefits.
- Others are waiting for an eye-opening spiritual breakthrough.

Waiting is the embodiment of faith.

In Hebrews 11:13 we are reminded that faith involves trust in God's promise even if the promises of God are fulfilled long after we're gone. The writer says, "These all died in faith *without* having received the promises, but they *saw them* from a distance..." (Emphasis added.)

APPLICATION: REMAIN FAITHFUL IN YOUR WAITING

Advent is about faith and waiting. What are you waiting on God for this year? Remember the years of silence as God's people waited for the Messiah. Take time today, right now, to reflect on the fact that God's timing is quite different from ours.

The story of Jesus' birth gives us assurance and joy because even though the waiting lingered for decades, God broke through at just the right time.

Are you struggling with a lack of faith? That's OK. It doesn't take much faith to get God's attention. Jesus encouraged his frustrated followers this way: "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).

Most of us try to grow a forest in one day. Jesus, however, invites you to begin with a tiny seed. Watch it grow and wait for it to become all that you dreamed it would be.

- An entire nation waited centuries before their eternal king appeared.
- Mary wasn't given a full-grown son.
- The Wise Men from the east didn't see the Messiah appear at their front door.

Are you willing to plant faith and wait upon God? Nothing seems to be appearing on the horizon today, but just wait! God always keeps his promises, even to those who have little faith. Just wait.

TODAY: HOW WAITING AFFECTS YOU

Share: Share with a friend or family member something you are waiting for.

Encourage: Encourage someone you know who is weary of waiting. Remind them of God's promises.

Evaluate: Take inventory of your relationship with God. Are you struggling with His silence?

Pray: *Lord, I remember the years of waiting for a Messiah. I'm often impatient with my life. Please teach me to enjoy You and not just the blessings I see in Your hands. Fill my days with laughter and joy through hardship and uncertainty. Remind me that when I think I'm waiting for an eternity, it really isn't. Life on this earth is infinitesimally smaller than a second in the light of true eternity.*

Express: Create a decorative graffiti poster of things you have faith God will do for you, your family, and your church in the coming year. If you have kids, invite them be a part of the project. This is a great time to teach them about the concept of faith. Display it in a prominent place in your home.

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