

# Waiting: Introduction

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Date: 03 February 2019

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, good morning, Bremar Baptist. My name is Kent Dixon, as you gathered, and it's my great privilege to be taking this position as your lead pastor.

Can people move forward? I don't want to freak anybody out, but I was saying to somebody jokingly, Leah, I think that the front three rows feel like a splash zone at SeaWorld.

But anyway, we don't have to do it right now, but I'd encourage you to move forward because I don't bite hard. So, I want to apologize for the weather this morning.

I believe it is my fault because I was born on the coldest day of the coldest January that Edmonton has ever had, and that date still holds the record. So, in some way, I think today is my fault, so I apologize.

As a new teacher or a new person in front of a group that doesn't know them very well, do you remember being a kid? I remember switching desks.

[ 1 : 08 ] I remember switching name tags. I remember all those kinds of things. So, as your pastor, I thank you for not messing with me too much. That's kind.

So, this morning we're going to be starting a brief series called Waiting. And I say brief, but the more I've been reflecting and praying about this, the more I'm considering extending the series a bit.

So, stay tuned on that front. There are so many different ways that we can look at this idea of waiting and what it means for us as we walk with Christ in our own lives and walk together as a community of people who are seeking God's will together.

I don't know about you, but I'm not a big fan of waiting. Who's a big fan of waiting? Put up your hand. Nobody. But it's really a fundamental part of the human condition, isn't it?

Have you ever thought of that? We wait. We wait as spouses. Oh, do we wait. We wait as parents. Oh, do we wait. We wait as employees.

[ 2 : 19 ] We wait as employers. We wait as students. We wait as teachers. All of us wait. It's so much a part of the human condition and what it means.

We begin waiting as children, don't we? We begin with hearing things like, wait a minute, mom and dad are talking. You have to wait until tomorrow to open your presents. Oh, really?

Just wait until your father gets home. That one's not used as much, but it was used. I'm not scary, but it was used the odd time in our house. But it doesn't end there.

Not even close. We wait in traffic. We wait in line, on hold, for our turn, for test results, for events, for appointments.

Oh, this past week, God was messing with me because he knew that this sermon was on my heart and this series was on my heart. And he made me wait this week over and over and over.

[ 3 : 21 ] Friday, I had some errands to run. Thursday. Thursday? I can't remember. One day this week, I had errands to run. And I'm very strategic. I'm very logical. So I had all my errands planned.

So I went to the tailor, took a couple of pairs of pants in, and I was going to get them hemmed.

Short legs always have to get pants hemmed. So I went into the tailor. I had tried on all these pants. I tried one pair on, and they didn't fit right.

They fit differently than the exact same pair I thought I had purchased. So then I thought, oh, for crying out loud. So then I had to go back to H&M; in West Edmonton Mall, which is never necessarily my favorite place to go.

Go back to the store. Exchange the pants. Go back to the tailor. Get the pants tried on again. Get them measured again. Then go. And then I had to go somewhere else and wait in line again. And the whole time in my head, I was thinking, I'm waiting again.

And I try to be patient. I try. Lord, you know I try to be patient. But it doesn't always work. Do you get exasperated when you're waiting? You feel like you're standing in a lineup, and you think, there's one till open.

[ 4 : 28 ] Don't they see 82 of us standing here? Open one more till. Not a bad idea. But I get it. I get why it happens. But even things that we're excited about involve waiting.

Birthdays, vacations, retirement. Even the weekend. You feel like you're waiting for the weekend. And in our culture of instant gratification and entitlement, the entire idea of waiting has developed a really negative connotation, hasn't it?

Microwaves, text messaging, many other inventions have been designed to help us avoid it because we can't stand waiting. We have common expressions that focus on it.

Just a sec. What are you waiting for? Do you do that in traffic? I do that in traffic. Do you want a signed invitation? It's green. That took forever.

It's about time. What took you so long? I do that every Sunday morning before we're coming to church. Doctors are so focused on the idea of waiting, they have entire rooms dedicated to it.

[ 5 : 41 ] The person who took your order in a restaurant even used to be called, think about it, a waiter. Not because they're waiting on you and tending to your needs, but because they have to stand there awkwardly.

Well, you spend 10 minutes making up your mind at Kelsey's. That's probably why they changed the name to server, because then it's less inherently frustrating for everyone.

But the idea of waiting for anything can cause us to be impatient and anxious and doubting, can't it? Waiting often makes us feel like either we've lost control or our circumstances are just simply beyond our control. I'm not sure if any of you have reflected on all the things that have been at play in the last little while for both our family and Bramard Baptist Church.

As the church around the world, we just experienced Advent, celebrated the end of the time period leading up to Christmas.

[ 6 : 49 ] As we anticipate the nativity, the birth of Jesus, and all that represents for us. And you, as Bramard Baptist Church, you've been waiting.

You've been prayerfully seeking God's direction for the person who will serve alongside you as your next pastor. And I've personally been waiting.

I've been waiting for God's direction for me specifically as to what his plans are for my life. And a friend of mine just last night who's a pastor texted me and he said, Did you realize that not only this part had hit my radar, that Advent marked the end of my waiting period and yours?

Gertie phoned us on December 23rd and gave us probably one of the best Christmas presents I've ever had to extend the offer for us to come here.

And so there was a sense of peace and a sense of closure and a sense of our waiting period ending to some extent. But then a friend of mine also said, Did you realize that your appointment, your calling to Bramard, was not only a Christmas present on one end, but he said, Your actual start date was practically a birthday present.

[ 8 : 20 ] Pretty cool. I don't know if that just hit me like a ton of bricks. But I hadn't thought of that. But as you can imagine, I've spent some time thinking and praying about how I'd like to begin my ministry here at Bramard.

And I've been encouraged by many people to share my story with you. So I'm going to do some of that today. I'm not one of those people who knew all along that I wanted to be a missionary or a Sunday school teacher.

Lots of people feel called to that. Or a pastor. But I did feel from a very early age that God definitely had a plan for me. After an underwhelming performance in elementary school, junior high, and high school, aside from English and drama, not surprisingly, I managed to graduate high school.

I didn't get the full diploma that you need. I got, yeah, we better let him out of here before it takes any longer. So I got a grade 12 diploma. So I do have that.

I pulled it off. And thankfully, I was able to recognize that not only was I not ready, but I was not mature enough to go to university. So you know what I did?

[ 9 : 38 ] Say it with me. I waited. I finally found my niche in an English degree, followed by further education in public relations, before I began a career in marketing, media relations, and communications.

That is my old life. So you may be thinking at this point that I sound like someone who had it all together, like I knew where I was going and I had a purpose. But you know what?

I was continually striving. I was always looking for something. For approval, for affirmation, for something more. I was enjoying a successful career, and God was blessing me, no question. God blessed us in the way that I was able to provide solely for our family so that Michelle could be at home raising our kids. That was a dream. That was our wish. And God provided.

God blessed us in the way that I was able to provide us. But somehow, always looking in the background was the idea for me that I was meant for more. Now, it's not surprising that the Bible has a great deal to say about what it means to be human.

[10:50] And so this morning, I'll be weaving scripture in as I tell my story. So let's take a look first. Kevin, don't advance the slide just yet.

Let's take a look at what Psalm 37, verse 4 tells us. So go ahead and look it up for yourselves if you'd like. I'll wait. All right.

So do we have the verse slide? Psalm 37, verse 4 tells us, Take delight in the Lord. I got the translation wrong in my manuscript verses on the screen.

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. I'm sure that verse is familiar to most of you. But have you ever thought about the ways that we may choose to interpret that verse?

Do you ever make a good decision or try to make a good decision or choose a path for yourself only to thank God for the result after the fact?

[12:00] Do you make your own plans and then say, Oh, Lord, thank you for blessing me. Do you ever find yourself seeking God's blessing for the desires that you have for yourself rather than stopping and, as this verse tells us, delighting in God first?

Friends, we have an infinitely patient and loving God who is full of grace and patience for his children. How's your patience?

Michelle, my wife, calls me need-to-know guy. You'll get to know that side of me, probably. Some already do, right, Gertie, Wendy?

And Shailen? And Rita? She claims that I always need to know the details and plans well in advance, and that I'm not a huge fan of surprises. Michelle threw a surprise party for me a few days ago, and I awkwardly stood in the middle of everyone feeling embarrassed.

But it was awesome. But I have to grudgingly admit that she may be on to something. It's interesting to me to recognize that God brought Michelle into my life to test my patience.

[13:25] But mainly in the best ways. She reminds me to wait. She reminds me not to push myself.

To grant myself grace when I mess up. Because, you see, at the time in my life when I was focused on my career and was in my early 20s was also the time when I really, really, really wanted to be in a relationship.

Hear this, young people. There is no rush. My mom gave me one of the best pieces of advice an impatient single male could ever receive.

She sat me down one day and said, God saves his very best for those who leave the choice to him. So I stopped looking. I stopped striving. My gosh. Talk about your wife and it makes you cry. I stopped striving.

[14:37] And one day at a college and career event at our church a certain brunette and I locked eyes. And it was one of those eye locks that was just a little bit too long.

And there were sparks. And God continues to bless me every day through her. Yet despite that happiness and that incredible settling in one area of my life I was still very restless.

And if you were here on December 6th when I preached I talked about how we humans are always looking for the next thing. I moved from job to job chasing after better titles and bigger salaries.

My intentions were always good though as I was the sole provider for our family as our children grew up. But my delight was not on God first.

I was not seeking him first. And I'm convinced that's where the hunger came from. So he was always definitely a primary focus in my life but I kept getting caught up on seeking and forgetting that my first best identity was as a child of God.

[15:56] Not as a person with a specific title or a position or a salary. Think for a moment guys especially of any age you can relate what is one of the first if not the first question a man will ask another man as adults when we meet for the first time.

Hi my name is Kent what do you do? Am I right? I'm not saying that's a bad way to make connections with people but I'm saying it does reveal pretty clearly how our identity is struck in our own minds.

what I do what I know who I am in ourselves. It's not the way it's meant to be. The words of Galatians 2 verse 20 serve as such a powerful reminder of our true identity and we heard it this morning.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. the life I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me I'd say loves because he still does and gave himself for me not just one moment 2,000 years ago but for all time he gave himself for us for all of us.

have you ever stopped to let that message sink in? Very often we'll read verses of scripture and they they're just words they hit our head but not our heart.

[ 17 : 42 ] Let that sink into your mind not only your mind but your soul because our identity is not in who we are in this world but who we are in and through and for Christ because we are undeserving sinners in and of ourselves our only salvation comes through our personal relationship with Jesus Christ but as sinners we are still special and precious to him just the way we are God doesn't expect us to have titles and status in fact as I read scripture it's quite the opposite the first shall be first no we live with a glorious and divine calling and purpose and it's up to us to choose to step into that calling and live to our full potential and so as

Bram our Baptist as a church we're going to be looking to step into what God is calling us to do to step into our identity that God has for us in this season not just winter but season our lives are not our own our days are not ours to spend wandering aimlessly in the mall or scrolling through Netflix for hours have you done that I've done that no no no no no no oh it's 11 I should go to bed we live only through the power of the spirit within us so we cannot waste that power returning to my story not surprisingly God continued to be at work in my life in March 2015 I'm not going to go day by day so don't panic in March 2015 we were at church one Sunday and I suddenly received a very simple and clear message from God God doesn't speak to me in words

God doesn't give me pictures in my head that day I got both all in that was it I also received an image of myself sitting at a poker table and for a kid that was raised in a Plymouth Brethren church yikes an image of myself sitting at a poker table with a big stack of chips in front of me there it is pushing all the chips into the center of the table this isn't exactly what it was but it was so close to that image I was overcome with emotion shocking for me right and as I turned to my wife she looked surprised and said what is going on and I told her what had happened now we've got double mic two mics no just one oh is it oh sorry I'll lean in lean in this one's dead it's sad so I told Michelle what had happened

I told her how clearly God had grabbed a hold of me there's something about me preaching in this church and causing technical difficulties am I right flashing lights sun candidate and sunday dead microphone buckle in folks she asked me Michelle asked me if I knew what that might mean all in and I said I wasn't sure but that I thought it might mean seminary and she was immediately all in as well but she looked at me and she said yes this is a girl who went to Bible school she was excited she was pumped I was going no this means student loans and I'm in my 40s this is the wrong kind of midlife crisis to have but she was all in so I continued going to work at the toxic government job I was at assuming God would open my eyes to that new path and direction when he saw fit you guys are rocking this thanks Kevin everybody give Kevin a hand for the great job he's flying solo back there

I'm just looking at the sweat running down his forehead but working at that job continued to be both terrible and toxic and one morning in April 2015 Michelle came out of our bathroom saw me lying on my side of the bed looking defeated and stressed and she said I think you should quit today I was obviously shocked and she said that God had simply said to her enough is enough with no clear options for other employment I was a bit stunned but I could also see how serious she was having worked at toxic jobs in the past that literally threatened my health she and presumably God did not want me to go through that again

[ 22 : 55 ] I got to work that morning being a communications guy I wrote my resignation letter but I felt completely unable to hand it in I asked God I begged God make it clear father make it clear because I'm not that smart make it really clear I went for a walk and lunch and I earnestly cried out to God again please hit me over the head and tell me what I have to do but there was only silence I

called Michelle to tell her I was unable to make the decision myself now this doesn't make me under my wife's control although I largely am but I'm not saying I'm incompetent I'm saying this was a tough call that I knew would affect my family and I just couldn't do it on my own and I wasn't hearing anything from God

Michelle very calmly responded to her panicked husband and said that God had told her again that morning since she'd been at work enough is enough but that it was ultimately my decision great I believe God used Michelle's faith gifting which is amazing by the way you'll experience it she he used her faith gifting to speak to me and has used it to speak to others throughout our lives so with that in mind I decided to make a seemingly illogical decision based solely on my faith in God my trust in my wife and my belief that God was speaking to me through her so I quit and began working for a landscaping company to provide for our family I wrestled with God

I had faith that God had called me out of my career and into something specific but I was continuing to try to make sense out of that calling on my own you see I had surrendered to God but I continued to be terrified by the desert of the unknown into which he seemed to be calling me I felt sidelined and lost and forgotten by God but in all that Michelle continued to encourage me with her amazing faith gifting that we were on the right path I don't know if you counted but I'm sure I said it many times many days many weeks are you sure I should be in seminary are we sure this is the right decision she said yes I'm sure or most times she would just nod or she would leave the room because she heard it more than once in one day and during that time

I also sought to return to my former career and you're thinking what are you crazy and there were opportunities that would blow your mind there were opportunities that people kept telling me were sure things I worked for the Alberta Motor Association for four and a half years I applied to go back I still have friends that are there if you call AMA and get put on hold you'll hear my voice and no I'm not kidding so people were excited that I could come back they said Kent Dixon come back to AMA that's the easiest decision this organization will ever make it got down from probably 100 applicants to two did I get it no little discouraging I applied to return to star catholic st.

thomas aquinas roman catholic school division where I was their communications manager where I was loved where I shared my faith with so many people where God was using me and allowed me to engage in my faith in my career in my gifting again tons of applicants down to two people I been there I was loved did I get it no little discouraging but hindsight is pretty neat because whenever I would stop to listen which I wasn't doing very well as you can tell that still small voice kept telling me that seminary despite all of my logic was God's plan for us and there's many many more ways that God acted to close doors and change our path during that seminary journey but those stories alone would take a lot of time to tell so one day throughout my entire seminary journey

[ 28 : 01 ] I never had a sense that God was calling me to be a pastor in a church but over the past few years I've been affirmed by God in that through so many people in so many areas of my life that even this stubborn Scottish Irishman ultimately got the message that's me by the way over the years I've asked God many times to make his path for us completely unmistakable and so obvious that we couldn't possibly miss it and since graduation from seminary many other ministry doors have closed but this past December God opened a door so clearly and so widely that we walked right through and I also have asked him to make this whole journey over the past several years the kind of story that will bring glory to him and here we are

Woodrow Wilson who was the 28th president of the United States once said all things come to him who waits you've heard that part before but the rest of the quote says provided he knows what he is waiting for or perhaps more correctly my writer editor brain says for what he is waiting but you can't say it that way because it doesn't work but as you can gather from my story since God called me to be all in I had precious little clarity as to what God was calling us but I had faith that he was calling I didn't have clarity about what I was waiting for but I knew that God was asking me to trust and obey I had many friends and colleagues and seminary professors and family members telling me over and over oh my gosh you're such an inspiration during this time and I said what?

I said I'm terrified and they said but God has distilled you right down to what you need to do you are faithfully putting one step in front of the other as a guy who used to need to know 50 steps down the road to next week to next month to next year God made one step at a time good enough and all he was willing to give me I've had doubts in the choices that I was making or the steps that I was taking but I continued to surrender them to the one I knew had called us and I was stubbornly determined not to make my own way again not to create something of my own making that was not first the

desire of God's heart for me so my question for each of us this morning is this what are you waiting for because what you are waiting for reflects the nature of your character and I don't want to make you feel bad as you sift through those thoughts in your head

I don't want to make you feel guilty but I do want you to think about it where where are your priorities lying in terms of what you're waiting for what causes you impatience think of your perspective as you wait for things because also what you're waiting for reflects the nature of the things that you value most in your life and for each of us that may mean something very different because we're all at different stages and points in our lives just looking out amongst us we've got diversity here right now this morning and we may value different things and that's fair we may have different needs we all have different personalities different upbringings different backgrounds that affect our individual expectations they're called filters and that's normal but know this that we are all waiting for something and so in the coming weeks we're going to begin to explore the concept of what

I'm going to call waiting well and we're going to dig deep into scripture because together we'll unpack some of the practical ways we can change our perspective on waiting and begin to see it as something positive and even transformative my story recently has been about waiting and your story has been about waiting and in some ways our waiting is over but now together we'll begin to seek we'll begin to practically seek what it means to me for me I should say to be your pastor for us to care for one another and we'll begin to prayerfully seek continue to prayerfully seek how God is calling us to engage with our community right around us in the city of Edmonton in this new chapter for

[ 34 : 05 ] Bramard Baptist Church and so this morning the table in front of us gives away what's next one of the ways that we recognize our dependence on God while we wait is by celebrating communion together since Jesus first broke bread and shared wine with his disciples this act has served as a reminder for us that we are waiting for Jesus to return you can amen that and for God's kingdom to come here on earth and this morning we also recognize that we do not wait in isolation but in community we wait not as a person but as a people this morning as we prepare to receive communion together this is the Lord's table but he welcomes us as family not as guests and this table my friends is not a

Bramard Baptist Church table but one for those who believe in Jesus Christ and have a personal relationship with him so before I ask the servers to come forward and pass we pass the elements this morning I want to share my personal view on communion don't nobody panic our previous pastor had been my pastor for about 17 years and we all know that in most Protestant churches communion is Welch's grape juice and the marketing side of my brain says if I were Welch's I would brand myself accordingly however but we know that it's Welch's we come from a tradition where that is what it is but I would constantly give my pastor a hard time and try to get him to stop saying juice because he would say the bread and the juice juice and so

I get it but you'll find and to me let's be clear they're symbols they're symbols of Christ's body broken for us and his blood shed for us but I would argue that they are also mysteriously more than that as well just juice doesn't really cut it for me so you'll refine you'll find that I will prefer to refer to it as the bread and the cup it may not be a cup we use the little containers and that's what everyone does but you'll hear me refer to it as the cup because I believe that conveys a sense of respect and reverence that the word juice just doesn't quite capture so hopefully you'll allow me that little indulgence but let's take a moment now to silently reflect in personal confession and conversation with God as we prepare our hearts