

# Waiting

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We spend much of our life waiting. Students anxiously wait for school vacation. Teenagers anxiously look forward to the day they can get their driver's license.

We count down days to graduations, marriages, owning a house. We wait for more mundane things. Packages, lunch, the doctor to finally come into the examination room, the preacher to wrap things up.

So, the average person in their lifetime spends five years waiting in line. That includes six months waiting in traffic. The ability to wait is an important life skill.

In fact, the inability to wait can result in rushed decisions that can be problematic to downright disastrous. It should not surprise us then that the ability to wait is important in our spiritual lives as well.

Advent, a time of eager anticipation, serves as the perfect backdrop for us to look into the lessons we can glean from waiting. Not just for the birth of Christ, but also for the fulfillment of God's promises in our own lives.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] What is waiting? Waiting isn't passive idleness. It's active engagement with faith, patience, and hope. Psalm 33 20 tells us, We wait in hope for the Lord.

He is our help and our shield. Our waiting is not in vain when anchored in God's promises. Advent beckons us to reflect on the anticipation surrounding Christ's birth and to eagerly await his glorious return.

It's a season to ponder, to prepare, and to draw near to the heart of God. Romans 8 25 assures us, But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Today I want to look at four biblical examples of those that have had to wait on the Lord and lessons that we can learn from their experience. I'm going to be jumping around an awful lot. I'm going to give you references. You don't have to look them up.

You can write them down, look them up later, or just listen. So I don't want that to be a distraction, but I'm going to start with Abraham. And I mean, there's like, I don't know, nine or ten chapters in the Bible just on Abraham.

[ 2 : 2 1 ] So we're doing some jumping around. But let's start in Genesis 12, 1 and 2. Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

And I will make of you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. Abraham's probably 70 or 75 years old here already.

No kids. But anyway, God makes this promise. Abraham doesn't seem to question it. Jumping over to Genesis 15, 1 through 6, a little bit later in Abram's life.

After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. Fear not, Abram. I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great. But Abram said, O Lord God, what will you give me?

For I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eleazar of Damascus. And Abram said, Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.

[ 3 : 3 0 ] And behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you are able to number them.

Then he said to him, So shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. So Abram is still waiting on the Lord to deliver on this promise of a biological heir that will carry on his seed and become a great nation.

A little bit later, next page, we see in Genesis 16, 1 through 4, Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar.

And Sarai said to Abram, Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go into my servant. It may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram listened to the voice of Sarah. So after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarah, Abram's wife, took Hagar, the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram, her husband, as a wife. And he went into Hagar, and she conceived.

[ 4 : 41 ] And when she saw that she conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. So at this point, actually jumping over to verse 16, we see that Abram is now 86 years old.

Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. So it's been like 11 to 16 years that Abram had been waiting for God to fulfill this promise.

And, well, he had a little glitch, right? He didn't wait well in this instance. But the point being, we often have to wait on God a lot longer than we'd like or we'd hope or what maybe even makes sense to us.

Nevertheless, God is faithful. In Genesis 17, 1 through 8, I'm not going to read it, but God renews his covenant, changes Abram's name to Abraham, and Abram is now 90, still no biological heir, still waiting on God.

By Genesis 17, 24, Abraham is now age 99, still waiting on God to fulfill that promise.

[ 5 : 54 ] By Genesis 18, God appears to Abraham and explains to him that he's still going to have an heir.

And Sarah laughs. I don't know if you remember that account. You can look up Sarah laughs in the tent when she overhears, right? They're still waiting. They're very old. Nevertheless, in Genesis 21, 1 through 3, we see that God is faithful and he does deliver on his promise.

The Lord visited Sarah, as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah, as he had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him.

Abraham called the name of his son, who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.

So God was faithful, but Abraham had to wait a lot longer than he thought or expected.

We can learn from this. Waiting often reveals the condition of our hearts and our willingness to surrender to God's timing. It's a test, many times.

[ 7 : 09 ] Another prominent Old Testament figure that had to wait a lot was Joseph. If we flip over to Genesis 37, 2, we see that Joseph is 17 years old.

A few verses later in 37, 28, he is sold as a slave into Egypt. Age of 17, sold into slavery. A little while later in verse 39, 20, we see that Joseph is thrown into prison.

But God has a plan, right? Joseph is waiting. Joseph had previously had these dreams, right?

Where God had told him about how he was going to be elevated, right?

Be a ruler, rule over his siblings, which actually kind of resulted in their disgruntlement and why he was sold into slavery. But nevertheless, God has a plan.

Joseph is sold into slavery, thrown into prison, but God uses that. In Genesis 40, we see that a couple of his cellmates, for lack of a better term, in there with him.

[ 8 : 36 ] The Pharaoh's butler and the Pharaoh's baker have dreams. And Joseph tells the butler, he interprets it and tells the butler, you're going to get out of here.

You're going to be restored to your position. Please remember me when you are. Tell Pharaoh about me. I've been unjustly incarcerated here. He tells the baker, sorry, you're not going to make it. The king's going to execute you, right? So anyway, he interprets these dreams, tells these guys, and it comes true. So the butler's restored to his position, but we see in 40, sorry, verse 40, 23, the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

But God hasn't forgotten him. Joseph is still languishing in prison, waiting on God. I can't imagine that Egyptian prison at that time, or even today, was very pleasant or comfortable.

But he's waiting on God. And now, at the age of 30, we see that God decides it is time.

[ 9 : 56 ] Chapter 41, verses 42 through 46. Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments of, oops, sorry, I jumped ahead.

So Pharaoh has a dream. And it has him very upset, very worried. He can't understand what it is, right?

These seven cows come out. They've come out of the Nile River. They're fat. Seven lean cows come out, devour the fat cows. He's like, what does this mean? This is very upsetting.

I have no idea. This must be important. And the butler finally remembers, oh, yeah, there was a guy in prison. He can tell you what that means. So he tells Pharaoh.

Pharaoh has Joseph brought out of the prison. Pharaoh interprets the dream, says you're going to have seven years of prosperity, followed by seven years of famine. And Pharaoh says, this is amazing.

[10:59] I want you to prepare us for this. And he elevates Joseph. And that's what we see happening here in chapter 41, verse 42. Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck.

And he made him ride in the second chariot. And they called out before him, bow the knee. Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh. And without your consent, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zephanath Paneah. And he gave him in marriage a daughter, the daughter of Potipharah, priest of On.

So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt. So in God's timing, God delivered on his promise to Joseph. But it was kind of a long, rough journey, which waiting often is, right?

When we don't know what's going to happen. Joseph endured years of false accusations and imprisonment, but remained faithful to God. In God's perfect timing, he was elevated to a position of great influence in Egypt.

[12:10] He had the additional test of thinking, hey, the butler's getting out. He's going to tell Pharaoh, I'm finally at the end of my time here, at the end of my suffering. Nope.

Still had to wait two more years before that occurred. Waiting refines our character, molding us into vessels fit for God's purpose.

Right? That's why Joseph was in prison. God was working on him, developing his character, making him into the leader that he would elevate him into. Some other people that had to wait in the Old Testament are the Israelites.

Right? God brought them out of Egypt. If we go over to Exodus 16, 1 through 7, we read, They set out from Elam, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elam and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt.

And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the people of Israel said to them, Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full.

[13:30] For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Not waiting very patiently. Then the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.

On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily. So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against the Lord. For what are we that you grumble against us? The people of Israel were waiting on the Lord to deliver them, to bring them to the promised land.

They were impatient. But during this period, what did they learn? They learned that God can and would provide for them, which he did.

Waiting nurtures the dependence on God and reshapes our perspectives on his goodness. Moving to the New Testament. Simeon and Anna.

[14:50] Luke 2, 21 through 38. And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord, and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord.

A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the

child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. And his father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

[16:12] And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed. And a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phenuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was 84.

She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and to speak to him. Speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

So Simeon and Anna had been waiting their whole lives for this moment to see the Messiah. And God was faithful to them as well.

But what a wait, waiting. How many things are we willing to wait our whole life for, right? Don't we often want quick results? But often that's not the way God works, because he is teaching us about him and about ourselves.

[17:27] Waiting challenges to be, excuse me, waiting deepens our connection with God. The last one, Matthew 25, 1 through 13.

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 and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.

But at midnight there was a cry, Here is the bridegroom, come out to meet him. Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.

But the wise answered, saying, Since there will not be enough for us for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves. And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came. And those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.

[18:32] But afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered, Truly I say to you, I do not know you. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The wise virgins exemplify preparedness and vigilance while anticipating the bridegroom's arrival. Waiting challenges us to be vigilant and ready, cultivating a heart that is sensitive to God's timing. So why wait? Waiting teaches us about ourselves and God. Waiting reveals our trust in God's sovereignty and our willingness to surrender our desires to his perfect will.

Waiting exposes our impatience, fears, and doubts, inviting us to lay them before God in humility and vulnerability. Waiting teaches us the art of perseverance, fostering spiritual maturity and resilience in the face of uncertainty.

In conclusion, as we navigate the seasons of waiting in our lives, let us not merely endure but embrace this time. Waiting well involves not just waiting for something but waiting on someone, our gracious and faithful God.

[19:54] Waiting should be a journey of self-discovery, drawing us closer to God, allowing us to emerge transformed with a deeper understanding of his love and sovereignty.

As we embark on the challenge of waiting well, let us remember that waiting is not a passive state, but an active, transformative process. Let our waiting be a testimony of our faith, patience, and trust in a God who is not bound by time, but is working all things together for our good.

May we declare with the psalmist in Psalm 130, verse 5, I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. Amen.