

W H I L E W E W A I T  
A D E V O T I O N A L

# DAY 1

*In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."*

*"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"*

*The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative*

*is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."*

*"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.*

I often wonder how Mary felt during the months she waited for Jesus to be born. She must have had fears and worries beyond our wildest imagination. As we go through the weeks of Advent, you will read personal stories about waiting. As you read, I encourage you to think about your story of waiting:

- What is your story of waiting?
- How do you let God into your life when you are waiting?
- How can you help someone who is lonely this Advent season?

*Dear God, As we go through this Advent season, we ask you to open our hearts to all those around us who are waiting. Whatever our story, please be with us in the midst of the Christmas season. Amen*

- Mallory Jensen

# DAY 2

## Safely Home

*“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the law required, Simeon took Him in his arms and praised God, saying, “Sovereign Lord, as you promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel.””*

*Luke 2: 25-32*

Simeon was an old man who had waited many years for the promised Messiah whom he’d read about as he studied Scripture. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would see Christ before he died.

Have you ever waited for something or someone?

I can remember vividly my mother peering out the upstairs window watching for Daddy. It was harvest time, and Dad would combine long after dark (dew prevented early morning harvesting). Mom would watch for the headlights on the combine to be sure they were moving because if they were, that meant her husband was okay. She was anxious until he came safely home.

When Jesus’ work of redemption was complete, He promised to return and take all believers to Heaven to be with Him. He asked that while we wait, we “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything” (Matthew 28:19-20).

*Dear Jesus, thank you for leaving Heaven to be born a human baby and grow up experiencing all the things we do, sharing your love for everyone and demonstrating how to love and forgive, even those who crucified you. Thank you for dying for my sins and rising again to proclaim victory over sin and death. Thank you for your promise to come again for us. May we share your mission bravely. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

- Helen Duncan

# DAY 3

## Disguised Opportunities

Where are some of the places you despise waiting?

Is the DOT office one of the places you dread waiting to renew your driver's license? There isn't any music playing, so you can hear everyone coughing or talking too loud on the phone... can't they take that call outside? Or how about the doctor's office? They ask you to show up 15 minutes before your scheduled appointment, and then when they bring you into your exam room, you again wait for the doctor, who is running behind schedule. Now since the door is closed, you ponder if the nurses even remember if you are there. What about when you're driving down the highway? You are listening to your favorite song or podcast, and some person won't get out of the fast lane and refuses to pass the guy in the right lane, so now you're stuck behind two cars. How annoying...and now you've got road rage!

Do any of these scenarios bring up some angry emotions? If so, how often do you stay quiet about it? Do you end up being the next loud person at the DOT office on your phone, calling your friend just to talk louder than the last person and share your annoyance out loud with them, knowing the DOT tellers can hear you? Have you ever stepped outside the doctor's office room, waved nicely at the receptionist at the checkout desk and gently said, "Hi, I've been waiting for 20 minutes for the doctor; is everything okay?" She smiles and explains the doctor is running behind due to an unforeseen circumstance, and will be with you shortly. Or what about that road rage? How quiet are you? When you finally pass, do you show your distaste by speeding off, and making sure to glare at the driver as you go by?

How quietly do you wait? Have you ever wondered how quietly God has to wait for you to see He is right there with you? Do you think He ever gets road rage or impatient with you? Lamentations 3:25 says “The Lord is good to those who seek Him, and who has hope in Him.” I know I struggle to wait patiently sometimes, and even more so, I struggle to wait quietly. Being as opinionated as I am, and having a voice that carries in a crowd, I have never been accused of being quiet or shy. I can’t imagine believing someone as powerful and amazing as God can be patient, understanding, and quiet while He waits. He waits for you to come to Him with your problems, with your uncertainties, your insecurities, and your questions. He waits for you to welcome Him into your life, to share with Him your joys and your dreams, your passions and desires. He waits quietly to show you paradise.

I’m not saying we can all be as good at being patient, understanding, or as quiet as God is for us every single day. However, I do invite you to try. I invite you to try taking moments of waiting, when elements of life are out of your control and you’re being forced to wait on others, and use those moments to pray with God. Take those extra 5 minutes to pray and ask Him for more patience. I challenge you to extend a hand or start a friendly conversation with someone who is also waiting, and maybe the conversation will lead to a conversation about Jesus. Waiting may sometimes be disguised as an inconvenience to you, but it could be an opportunity to share God’s love with someone else.

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.

Lamentations 3:25-26

- Terri Packard

# DAY 4

*“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Romans 12:12*

The day I found out I was pregnant, my doctor put me on bedrest.

“We will re-evaluate weekly,” he said. “But you may have to stay on bedrest the entire pregnancy.” It was then early January; the baby wasn’t due until mid-August.

The situation was impossible, unworkable, insane. I had four other children, the oldest, just four years old. Plus, my husband, Ken, worked more than full-time and travelled overnight one or two nights a week.

Nevertheless, that was the decree. My activities were restricted to a weekly visit to the doctor’s office. Otherwise, I was to stay in bed.

I couldn’t control the circumstances and I had to do the best for my family and this baby. All I could do was accept the situation, pray about it, and hope it would work out. And wait.

If I couldn’t be fully taking care of my children, I could still read to them, play games, snuggle with them. If I couldn’t lift laundry baskets, I could separate and fold laundry. If I couldn’t shop or cook, I could still make grocery lists and plan meals. And eat well for the baby. (Did I ever! Eight months in bed, no exercise: I was the size of a linebacker.)

I could, and did, find sitters. I could write thank-you notes to all the wonderful people who brought

dinners, took my children on outings, to preschool, etc. I could finish projects I hadn't had time for before; I finally finished my thesis.

Patience has to be the most difficult of the Heavenly Virtues, as it involves WAITING! But I could not hurry my pregnancy along, and pretty soon I did not even want to.

As there is only so much time in every lifetime, wouldn't the real shame be not doing my best with any given time? Besides, time will move no faster wishing it to, any more than a child hoping for Christmas hurries Christmas coming. I was never that kind of kid anyway; I might still have unopened presents from Christmas's past if I'd had my way. I loved anticipation. I prayed to think of this situation the same way.

So, from my bedroom window I watched first the blizzards rage, then the snow melt into green spring, next the summer blossom. The time I spent on bedrest became joyful--not all the time—yet a time of anticipation.

If Christ had asked me, "Did you look upon the beauty of My world as you waited?" I could answer that I did, from my window. Then, "While waiting, did you do anything worthwhile?" I'd be able to tell Him I tried to do all I could. And if He asked, "Did you think of Me?" I could answer wholeheartedly: so many times, every single day, praying, especially for my family and for a healthy baby.

Our daughter, Victoria, was born August 10th, beautiful and healthy. We, for every reason, rejoiced!

*No matter the circumstances we find ourselves in, or the difficulties we face, may we use our lives to glorify You, moment by moment, as we wait.*

- Amy Lockard

# DAY 5

## Not Done Yet

*“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always praying joyfully in every one of my prayers for all of you because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”*

*Philippians 1:3-4*

At a Lutheran You Gathering, participants were all given a button and a pin that had this message: PBPGIFWMY. As we wore the buttons in public, the message caught people’s attention. When asked what the letters meant, our response was this: Please Be Patient. God Isn’t Finished With Me Yet.

One of my favorite treats from a garden is watermelon. Gardeners who grow watermelons learn to have patience. Soon after blossoming and pollination by bees, a small watermelon is formed that grows quickly into a large fruit. Size is not an indicator that the watermelon is ripe. Many gardeners have picked a large watermelon and upon cutting it open are shocked to discover that the inside is green and inedible. Seasoned gardeners know watermelon takes time and patience to ripen.

People also require patience. The prayer for patience can be for people who in their own minds want us to be a finished disciple of the Lord. The prayer of patience can be internal, that we might have patience with ourselves as we live one day at a time for the Lord. Sometimes, I hear people state, “I am done.” But, we are not done until our last day here on Earth. Until that time, the God who began a good work in us in Christ will continue to work in and through us, so that the light, hope, and love of Jesus shine and be poured out to others around us, to God’s glory.

While we wait is a great theme for the Advent season as we together pray, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Christmas was quite an event for the world in the coming of Jesus. His coming brought light and salvation to the world. But, God isn’t done! The One who began a good work in Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension is still at work to the end of time to create and multiply faith, hope, grace, and love. The One who created and redeemed you isn’t finished. God desires to work through you and me until our last day for the purpose of reflecting God’s gift of light and hope to a dark world – this is the Gospel of Jesus. We are not done yet! Thanks be to God.

*Stir up the wills of all who look to You, and strengthen our faith in Your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in Your way all the days of our lives. Through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with us, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

- Pastor Denny

# DAY 6

## Waiting for Answers

*“But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not be faint.”*

*Isaiah 40:31*

Waiting for a present or a trip can always be hard and exciting. Today, I want to talk to you about a different type of waiting. Waiting for God to heal my heart from loss. December of 2012 was a tough month. It was the end of the month, just after Christmas, when I was talking with my mom on the phone for over 2 hours.

We chatted about nothing in particular, just catching up on life, work, the Christmas season, the weather in Iowa versus Florida, and how excited I was to come see her the next month as she had moved to Florida earlier in the year. Little did I know that this would be the last time I would ever hear her voice.

I was awakened the next morning by my dad pounding on the townhome door. He needed to let me know that Mom had passed away last night. It was later discovered that she took her own life. I often think of that day and how God was allowing me one last chance to talk with Mom.

The waiting for healing took me quite a while. I had to allow myself time to grieve, to ask myself all the questions. I was 24 at the time. Why did I have to lose my mother at such a young age? The waiting for answers as to why and what next were slow, too, but each day I would pray to God to give me the strength to live my life and continue to honor my mom with the lessons and traits she taught me, especially her infectious smile.

We waited to have the service until the spring when we would be able to have a celebration of life service and then a private graveside service. The cards, messages, calls, and visits meant so much, but what made more of an impact were the people who attended her celebration of life. We thought that since it had been over a year since she had left Iowa, it would be a small service held in the Larsen Chapel. It was just the opposite!

The pastor had to pull my family away from the line of people giving their condolences so that the service could begin. The service was so full that some had to stand. My mother had truly made an impact in the lives of many over her short years, and so many were glad that we waited to have her celebration and could bring her home to Cedar Falls so they could be part of it.

The waiting for my heart to heal on Earth is ongoing, but I know that my mom is no longer struggling. I know that God needed a special mom to take care of all the children in Heaven.

Will you pray with me?

*Dear God, we live in a world of rushing and impatience. We do not like waiting. Please open our eyes and hearts to the beautiful blessings in our lives. We are not promised tomorrow, so please help us remember that if we wait and trust in you, you will never leave us or forsake us. You are an all-loving God, and I love you! Amen.*

- Kyle Brown

**"I would pray to God to give me the strength to live my life and continue to honor my mom with the lessons and traits that she has taught me especially her infectious smile."**

# DAY 7

## And We Wait

*We wait in hope for the Lord. He is our help and our shield. Psalm 33:20*

In 2006 I was admitted to Allen Hospital with severe pain in my abdomen, due to Crohn's Disease. While there, I had multiple tests to determine why the pain could not be controlled by the morphine they were giving me. I was put on a liquid only diet, thinking that might help settle the colon down and ease the pain. So, we waited, hoping this was the answer to our prayers. Unfortunately, it didn't help, so the next step was to send me, by ambulance, to the University of Iowa Hospital.

My wife and I felt hopeful that we would get answers there. So, for the next 10 days, I went through multiple tests and medicine changes, and we waited. On Day 11 the doctor came in and told us that I had severe inflammation in my colon that was not responding to any treatment they had tried, so I had two options. I could try an experimental drug or I could have my colon removed. He explained the pros and cons of each, and I chose to have my

colon removed. I told him I was tired of waiting, tired of trying to be patient while nothing they were doing was helping. I also asked him if I could have the surgery the next day.

On Day 12, the surgeon came in. For the next 30 minutes, she talked to us about what my future would look like after removing my colon. She explained that this was major surgery that would take 4 to 6 hours. She looked at me and said, "So, do you still want to go ahead with the surgery?" My response was, "Yes, and as soon as possible!" She looked at her schedule and said her first opening was in 8 days. We had no choice but to wait.

Pastor Doely came to visit me during that time, and he brought a message from the Lord: "The Scripture tells us that all things happen in God's time, not ours."

*Lord, help us to learn to be patient and to trust in the knowledge that all things happen for the good of those who love you. Lord, help us to see those times as an opportunity to grow in our walk with You. In Jesus we pray, Amen.*

- Vern Oltrogge

# DAY 8

## While I'm Waiting

*"I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry." Psalm 40:1*

If you haven't heard the song "While I'm Waiting" by John Waller, I encourage you to pause this devotional and listen to it.

This song was one I listened to, and continue to listen to, in times when life became too overwhelming. I first heard it when my mom and I watched Fireproof (a must-see movie) and she started "The Love Dare" during a tough time in her marriage. At that time I was too young to realize why she was watching the movie. Years later, I was struggling in my marriage, and my mom encouraged me to watch the movie and start "The Love Dare."

Waiting for answers from God initially was so hard, and it was because I wasn't looking to God; I was looking to my husband for answers to my hopes and prayers. I didn't even know it. It wasn't until I was almost done getting divorced that I realized where I was going wrong. I was putting my trust in the wrong place. I

could no longer hope my husband would fix the problems in my life because he wasn't the answer – God was.

I went back to church and started listening to Christian radio stations in the car. I heard "While I'm Waiting" and started playing it over and over and over again. And I waited. And I became hopeful. And I made it.

Eventually, the divorce chapter in my life ended, and through God, more doors opened. So while you wait, think and check: where is your hope? And remember these lyrics:

*I will move ahead bold and confident  
Taking every step in obedience  
While I'm waiting I will serve You  
While I'm waiting I will worship  
I'm waiting; I'm waiting on you Lord*

- Terri Packard

# DAY 9

## Good Grief

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matthew 5:4

I was raised in the small farming community of Arlington, Minnesota. I have always believed in God – His love, forgiveness, and mercy. My life’s work has been that of a Registered Nurse. I married the love of my life, Jerry, on August 16, 1975. We were blessed with three wonderful children, and I vowed to raise them in the Catholic faith. I am grandmother to three adorable grandchildren.

Our worlds came to an abrupt halt early last September when my husband Jerry died. He was an avid bicyclist, biking 6,000 miles every year. I had retired from my 46 year career in nursing. Jerry was an Optometrist who was continuing to work part time in Cedar Rapids and Waverly.

On September 6th, Jerry was biking at George Wyth State Park. I received a call from EMS telling me that Jerry was having chest pain. I immediately called Jerry, and he very calmly told me that he thought he was having a heart attack, but not to worry because the park ranger was there, and she was helping him get to the ambulance. I rushed to Unity Point Hospital and was greeted by the hospital chaplain. In a very short while, I met with the ER physician who escorted me to the room where a team of physicians, nurses, and many hospital staff were trying to revive Jerry. I thanked them and calmly asked them to stop the code. I was able to tell Jerry that I loved him and told him to go to Heaven to be with God, his family, and loved ones.

Calling our three children who all live a distance from me was the hardest thing I have ever done. We were able to plan a memorial service and were pleased with all the family, friends, and community members who were able to attend in spite of Covid 19. But, I realized life would never be the same.

I started visiting Nazareth Lutheran Church, wanting to go back to my Christian roots. I took note of everything I liked about Naz. The sermons were inspiring. God's goodness and mercy shown thru. We did all wear masks, but there were friendly people who cared about one another, and I genuinely felt God's guidance. So I became involved at church in several ways. I joined a book discussion over The Good and Beautiful Life. This group was very meaningful to me. In the Belong Zoom class led by Lori Fegley, I learned much more about Nazareth Church, including core beliefs and all about mission work. Pastor Ericson was gracious enough to direct me to a grief support group.

On May 2, 2021, I joined Nazareth. I feel part of a very strong and faithful community church. I feel blessed and I continue to participate in many activities, including an ALPHA class, the prayer shawl ministry, Andy Walser's study on the book Good Grief, and I've enjoyed meeting and working with Barb Burbridge who leads our hospitality staff. I have felt God's comfort.

- Sandy Tempel

**“Blessed are  
those who mourn,  
for they shall  
be comforted.”  
Matthew 5:4**

# DAY 10

## Never Alone

*“The eyes of the Lord are everywhere.” Proverbs 15: 3*

For our 15th anniversary, my husband’s family gifted us with a trip to Hawaii. So, we packed our kids during their Christmas break and took a breathtakingly beautiful trip of a lifetime.

When it came time for us to return home, all went smoothly with our first flight from Hilo to Honolulu. Our second flight – an overnight flight from Honolulu to Denver – was on time as well. However, when we landed in Denver early the next morning, mayhem had taken over. Due to blizzard in the area and across the country, hundreds of flights were cancelled or postponed. Our flight to Cedar Rapids was no exception. By that time, our kids were exhausted. All they wanted to do was get home.

We waited at the first gate where our flight was supposed to depart from. As the day went on, we moved from gate to gate, chasing standby seats on flights to any airport in the Midwest. But, we missed flight after flight because everything was already full. All we could do was wait.

Our kids cried and cried every time we didn’t get on a plane that day. And, in my own overwhelmed state, when we were only two seats away from getting on the fifth flight we had tried to board, I added my own tears to the river. By that time, it was 10:00 p.m., and there was only one flight left for us to try. It was a flight to Des Moines. As the plane began to board, our names moved higher and higher on the standby list. We waited and wondered. And, as we sat there, we noticed two men talking to the gate agent. Watching the encounter, it became clear they had given up their first-class

seats to an elderly woman in a wheelchair and her husband.

After the two men took their economy seats, our names were called. After 14 hours of waiting, we were finally on our way home. Well, to Des Moines, at least. Our next step was to get a rental car from the Des Moines airport to the Cedar Rapids airport, where our own vehicle was parked. We discovered we were not the only ones who needed to rent a car. So, we waited in that long line, too. The two men from the plane, Rich and Andy, were right ahead of us in line. When they got to the front, we heard the car rental employee tell them that they were getting the last car. We would need to wait again.

Stranded. Our hearts sank. But then, something unexpected happened. Rich and Andy turned to us and asked if we needed a ride to Cedar Rapids. The vehicle they rented had plenty of room, and they wondered if we might like to ride with them. Our wait was over! Rich and Andy drove us from Des Moines to Cedar Rapids and mysteriously disappeared into the frigid winter's night. To this day, our kids are pretty sure those two guys may have been guardian angels in disguise. Or, maybe there were just kind-hearted businessmen looking to help a weary family. Either way, they were a good reminder for us that God was with us every second during that long day of waiting.

Sometimes we forget that the eyes of the Lord are everywhere – He is always with us. What a blessing it is to remember, though, in the waiting for the little things or the big things in our lives, we are never alone.

- Laura Sohl-Cryer

# DAY 11

## Waiting to Go

*“Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in Him.” Psalm 62:5*

Last summer and into the first months of fall, my husband Ron’s mother, Sylbe, was waiting to die. Sylbe suffered from congestive heart failure and chose palliative care instead of a myriad of doctor appointments, hospital stays, and pacemaker surgery, compounded by the fact that she would face these trials mostly alone because of the Covid 19 pandemic. Our family was afraid and heartbroken, but we didn’t blame Sylbe for her decision. So we waited with her. God waited, too.

We felt His presence right from the start of our journey. By the grace of God and with the generous help of extended family, we were able to set up a spacious apartment on a month to month basis. A schedule of care fell into place for Sylbe, who continued to be the caring

mother of our hearts. And then, the fun began! The apartment became a hub for our family, with brothers and sisters, grandchildren and friends stopping in for visits. We played games, shared memories, cooked and ate meals together. We laughed, a lot! Ron’s sister Janine even sewed quilts from Sylbe’s vast collection of material, which was a delight for Sylbe, especially as she had sewn many quilts for family and for her church. Though she was confined to a recliner, Sylbe shared her gifts as a seamstress. As a family, we spent more time together than we had in years, and it was a joyful time. God blessed us in this season of waiting.

Of course, Sylbe’s decline was hard. Days and nights were sometimes challenging as none of us who were caring for Sylbe on a daily basis were medically trained. We were so thankful for support from our daughters and my sisters who are nurses and for Hospice care workers. But, Sylbe was ready to go home to Jesus, her Savior. Her hope was in Him. She wondered why it was taking so long - why did she have to wait? In those

times, when breathing was labored and fear and panic set in, we leaned into the Lord for strength and comfort and patience. God offered all of those through the loving touch of human hands, Bible readings, beautiful hymns, and the peace of knowing that He was waiting with us. Sylbe's faith sustained her, and her faith washed over all of us and helped ours grow. God is so good!

On the sunny October morning of Sylbe's last day with us, she woke up with her usual and cheerful, "Good morning!" She also said, "There are angels all around! Should I wait to go?"

Janine replied, "No, Mom, don't wait. You can go."

Ron agreed, "It's OK, Mom. Don't wait. You can go." And, she did.

*Dear Lord, thank you for holding us in your ever-constant love. Draw us closer to You in our times of waiting. Amen.*

- Teresa Martin

**"Don't wait,  
you can go"**

# DAY 12

## So Why Wait?

*“So that we might live sensible, honest, and godly lives in the present age as we wait for the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus the Messiah.”*

*Titus 2: 12-13*

If I am being honest, I hate waiting. In fact, there are few things in my life that I find more frustrating than counting down the painstaking, soul-sucking seconds to something that I am really excited for. I can recall far too many instances in my life of waiting: like waiting to get through security at the airport, waiting for the server to bring my food at a restaurant, and worst of all, waiting for those commercial breaks to end during a suspenseful football game.

Waiting ... Waiting ... Waiting ...

Sometimes I wonder why I hate waiting so much. Maybe it's because I'm excited, or maybe it's because I was taught at a young age that it's disrespectful to not be on time to meetings and events. Maybe it's because I only get so many minutes in this world before I'll “kick the bucket” someday. As Morgan Freeman's character Red puts it in the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*: “You either get busy living or get busy dying.”

So why wait?

It may come as a surprise to us, but waiting is an important part of discipleship. Consider Abraham and Sarah. It wasn't until they were both old (and after they had tried to take matters into their own

hands) that God finally blessed them with their son Isaac. The same can be said of the Israelites who had to wait FORTY YEARS in the desert until they were finally able to enter into the Holy Land. Waiting doesn't play any less of a prominent role in the New Testament. Think of Simeon and prophetess Anna, who waited their entire lives just to see the boy Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem. Think of the paralyzed man in book of John who waited next to the pool of healing for THIRTY EIGHT YEARS before Jesus healed him. If you're still not convinced, consider the beginning of Acts. After Jesus ascends into Heaven, the disciples don't immediately go out to the ends of the earth as Jesus foretold. The first thing they do is go back to Jerusalem and WAIT for the Holy Spirit.

It's true. I don't like to wait. But, if there is anything worth waiting for this Advent season, it's the coming of Christ into our lives.

- Taylor King

# DAY 13

## Waiting for Answers

I'd never had to be a patient person. My "waiting" for most of my young life was not a true wait. I was lucky. But, as all things do, that aspect of my life came to a close. My time of not having to wait stopped abruptly during my junior year of high school.

To give context, my life, identity, and family were tied into track and field. That was what I was known for. I lived, breathed, and ate for running. So when I started having unexpected medical problems and running was taken away from me, I didn't know what to do.

I would get what we called episodes. It was basically a slow process of passing out. I had dark spots in my vision, muffled hearing, and a numbing feeling in my hands, face, and feet. I would lose track of everything for 30-50 minutes. This could happen at any moment in the day: during class or often and specifically when I was running. We started going to a few different

doctors to figure out what was happening. Sadly, all that happened was me being tossed from professional to professional with doctors stating, "This isn't in my field. You'll have to see someone else."

We traveled around Iowa and Minnesota trying to find doctors to give us some insight. However, the more we went to doctors, the more we were confused. We just wanted someone to give us answers. Yet, they never came. All throughout college, I had episodes multiple times a week. This changed my college experience drastically. We couldn't find the answers we were looking for, but I believe God was answering a different question for me. The question of who I was.

Years later, we still don't have definitive answers. Yes, there is a feeling of peace. God showed me where I was placing my identity, and sadly, it wasn't in Him. I was reminded of the verse from Romans 1:25: "They worshipped and served created things instead of the Creator." Everything in this life will crumble, except Him. So if you have Him as your foundation, you will never fall.

- Emily McCalla

# DAY 14

## Silent Night, Holy Night

The angel told Joseph: “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people.” (Matthew 1:21)

This beloved Christmas song was first heard on Christmas Eve in 1818 in a church filled with boat builders and shippers. The small congregation was reeling after years of war. It was cold. People were living in poverty – failed crops, endless storms, widespread famine. This was a song about peace in the midst of suffering, hope in hard times, about comfort and calm. It’s a song that has been sung millions of times over the years, and its message still rings true today. No matter the wars, the sickness, the storms, political unrest, or whatever comes our way, we have a God who is always on our side – a God who came to us in the form of a still, small child.

As a parent, I remember the first time I held my newborn son in my arms. I looked at this small being, this amazing new life. Tears welled up in my eyes as I thought about the great gift of God’s Son, and the great sacrifice He made for us. How unworthy I felt in that moment. How unworthy I am.

Each time I receive Communion, I am reminded again of that moment. I am reminded that I am so unworthy, but because of Jesus, I am set free. On a silent night, a holy night, long ago, a child was born. This child would be the reason for our peace and our comfort. This child would be the reason for our hope. We don’t have to wait.

*Heavenly Father, as we prepare for the celebrations of our Savior’s birth, we pause to remember that night long ago. We remember the meager beginnings of our Lord. We remember why You sent Him to this place. It is with humble gratitude that we come to You, ever thankful for the gift of life and ever thankful for Your forgiveness. Amen.*

- Darlene Taylor

# DAY 15

## For Those Who Wait

### "A Word to the Wise is Sufficient"

*"Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah."*

*Luke 2:25-26*

"A word to the wise is sufficient." This is a phrase that, I'm sure, is familiar to all of us and that we most likely have heard or used, depending on whether we've been on the giving or the receiving end. And I'm sure we've been on both.

· Maybe we've been pressing our luck in a relationship with another person. We tease them in a joking manner, not once but many times.

We finally get to the point where they've had enough, and they let us know. They say, "A word to the wise is sufficient!"

· Or maybe we've been on the giving end. One of your children is reaching towards a hot iron, stove or bake dish and instinctively you shout – "No!" And your child has learned from previous experience to trust your word and realizes you usually have very good reasons for one-word commands. In such instances, "One word – to the wise – is sufficient." Your child follows your instructions.

This phrase didn't come into being by accident. Its truth has been borne out in the experience of many. One word, one comment, one bit of instruction or encouragement, to the wise, to the person who is aware of his/her surroundings, of what is going on around them – one word is sufficient to produce the desired results or response. And such was the case for wise, old Simeon. Except for Simeon the word that was sufficient was not one of warning, but one of promise and hope.

All Simeon had to go on was a word – a promise from God. The Holy Spirit revealed “that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah” (Luke 2:26). Can you imagine the questions that must have swirled around in Simeon’s head? He didn’t know what was in store for this baby he was holding in his hands. He wasn’t privy to Jesus’ teaching, his miracles, the saving work Jesus was going to accomplish by his death and resurrection. And yet, the Holy Spirit imparted to Simeon the same realization as was penned by the Apostle Paul. “For all the promises of God find their ‘Yes’, (their fulfillment) in him (in Jesus)” (2 Corinthians 1:20a). And that was enough.

So also is it for us. None of us knows what is in store in the coming year. As we are faced with challenges or encounter difficulties, our minds might also be flooded with many questions – How is God involved this event? What is the meaning of this tragedy? What is God’s purpose for my life now? Where was God when this happened, and when that happened?

Like Simeon, we wait. We wait to see what is

in store in the coming year. As we wait, God gives us a promise too. “My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Just as a promise from God was sufficient for Simeon to live each day in peace and with purpose, so may it be for us as we go into the coming new year. For those who wait, a word, a promise from God, is sufficient.

*Heavenly Father, enable me to trust that the promises you give me in Christ will always be sufficient for my every need. Amen.*

- Pastor Bob

# DAY 16

## Pound the Rock!

More than ever over the past few months, I have come to realize we live in an instant culture. We've been conditioned to expect fast food, fast travel, and fast internet. We've also mastered multi-tasking, so we don't waste a nanosecond. Impatience rises up when we are forced to wait. Unfortunately, this fast-paced, calendar-packed attitude carries over into our daily walk as we not only have had to deal with the pandemic, but any number of other challenges that may come our way.

I recall hearing the expression this past summer "they are really pounding the rock" as I watched my Atlanta Braves beat the N.Y. Mets 22-2. That's an expression that for me goes way back to my playing days when we referred to a hitter who was hot, saying he was really "pounding the rock!" Unfortunately, I then had the opportunity to catch my Braves getting defeated by the Baltimore Orioles 14-1 a few days later... Kind of like life isn't it? We can be joyful one day given circumstances and face the polar opposite waiting just around the corner.

When I heard the expression "pounding the rock," it not only brought back memories of my baseball playing days, but also reminded me of a saying which has become known as "The Stonecutters Credo." It's often been used over the years as a catchall phrase that speaks to continuing your effort regardless of your circumstance(s).

It's not just applicable to baseball or sports. It works for every situation, because it's about focusing on the process and continuing to put forth effort each and every day, even though the result might seem far away. Because, even when you don't think you're making progress, or you're frustrated by how long it is taking, you never know when the next step might lead to a breakthrough.

I have been in that situation over a long period of time as I tackle several ongoing side effects that cancer treatments have created for me. I bring my sledgehammer and lunch bucket to my life's journey each day trying my best to "pound the rock" to find a solution. As I hammer away, my mind keeps wandering to the ongoing challenges the treatment side effects challenge me with. Whether it's the pain, the drastic swings it creates in my system or just the uncertainty of what's next, it's frustrating.

I ran across a verse from the 3rd chapter in Lamentations sharing how the prophet Jeremiah felt about the afflictions and struggles he and his people were facing as the Babylonians were destroying the city of Jerusalem. My concerns pale to what he and his people were facing, but his cry for help resonated with me... It reads: "You heard my plea: 'Do not close your ears to my cry for relief.'" - Lamentations 3:56

I think anyone who's suffered long-term pain can relate to the sentiments of the prophet Jeremiah in that verse from Lamentations. God does hear and answer our prayers, but His answers don't always look the way we want them to or happen in our time. I've found over time that I generally take things for granted until they are taken away... Good health and living pain free is certainly one of those things. Why does human nature have to be that way? I'm certain God designed us and did so perfectly... to NEED Him. There's a lot of life He will withhold the answers to, and I know I don't have the capacity to understand even if He explained them to me!

I often pray to hear God's voice through the discomfort and feel His presence through the frustration. That is when I need to hold onto

the hand that was nailed to the cross. That hand knows pain like none other and my hope is in Him. That is when I need to remind myself that when nothing seems to help, I go look at the stonecutter hammering away at his rock perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred and first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not that blow that did it, but all that had gone on before.

It gives me HOPE to think of challenges this way! I've found that for me, sharing my weaknesses, not my strengths or talents provides me a way to process those challenges and may offer some hope for others who may also be experiencing similar "bumps in the road". We need to employ both patience and faith which will allow us to be strengthened and to endure. Simply put, patience and faith can be our hope in these challenging times.

*Dear Lord,*

*As we each face the challenges that may require us to "pound the rock" in our daily lives, we pray that we can be joyful with hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer.*

-David Welter

# DAY 17

*“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*

*Isaiah 40:31*

Webster says that “Waiting” means to stay in place in expectation. It can also mean to look forward expectantly or to hold back expectantly. I would like to share my experience of holding back expectantly and in the process found that I was at a place where I would realize how much I needed God in my life and at this very moment, I was meant to be nowhere else.

March 24, 2021, I had my routine physical and my doctor decided to order a carotid artery and aorta ultrasound. Because of my age, she wanted a record of having performed these tests. The day after the ultrasound, I received a call saying that something showed up on the test and they felt that I needed to see a specialist at Mayo Clinic. On the 31st of March, Alan and I spent the day at Mayo meeting with a doctor and going to many appointments for various tests. The next day we got enough results back to indicate the need for surgery that would be scheduled on April 16th. They explained everything in detail and told us they would know more after starting the surgery regarding what they might find and how they might have to proceed. They also said it was possible that they would find cancer but again, would know more after surgery. I would not be honest if I said that I wasn't overwhelmed.

There were two particularly important things that really helped me in the days before I was scheduled for surgery. The first, was taking an Alpha Class at Naz and downloading the App. YouVersion Holy Bible. The second, was joining the Lent Bible Study at Naz and over the course of the class, developing an amazing bond with the people in our study.

First, let me explain how the YouVersion helped me. You can go into this app. and pick different plans. One of the plans that I picked was: “How to Stop Worrying”. Part of each plan is a devotional and several Bible verses. So at night when I went to bed and the house was quiet, I would read the scriptures and the devotional. One of the devotionals that I found particularly helpful was: “Jesus taught that worry is futile. It produces no fruit. There is absolutely nothing that comes from it. Worry would make sense if it was productive. But it isn’t. Worrying about a situation doesn’t prevent it from happening”. After an hour of reading and being prayerful, I would fall asleep and wake rested. Every night it became my ritual and really made me feel at peace with all that was happening. I realized that I needed to trust God. Worrying about what would be found during surgery could not consume my thoughts. God brought me to this moment to trust him and to walk in faith.

The second event that was helpful was the Bible Study group that met every Wednesday. As I said before, a bond was formed and the prayers and expressions of love provided Alan and I so much comfort before, during, and after surgery. Listening to Andy Walser talk in a September sermon about developing “family radar”, I realized that this small group had become family. I certainly felt God’s presence from this group and so thankful we were brought together as a family in Christ.

Because of my hope in the Lord, my strength was renewed. Instead of waiting expectantly, I am now actively waiting “to gain new strength” because of my renewed relationship with Christ.

*Dear Father,*

*Thank you for giving me the opportunity to renew my faith in You and to realize that where I am, is where I am meant to be and that you will always be with me on my Journey.*

*Amen*

- Jean Clausen

# DAY 18

## Waiting In the Word

*“The Lord is my Sheperd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leadeth me beside the still waters. He  
restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the  
paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of  
the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for  
though art with me; Thy rod and thy staff  
they comfort me. Thou preparest a table  
before me in the presence of mine enemies;  
Thou annointest my head with oil; my cup  
runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy  
shall follow me all the days of my life; and I  
will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”*  
Psalm 23 KJV

I love the twenty-third Psalm and its transforming peace. It is my go-to whenever worry and stressful life situations have threatened to overwhelm me. I distinctly the night God placed this Psalm on my heart to calm my soul through a long, difficult wait.

We were in the early years of our marriage, and my husband’s work required frequent travel. Since cell phones weren’t invented yet, and long-distance calling was expensive, it was his practice to call once during the week to give me a heads up of when to expect him home. On this particular day he said I could expect him around 8:00 p.m.

I didn’t get concerned until it got to be 10:00 p.m. and worry set in. I know we aren’t supposed to worry, but I don’t wait well, and the later it got the more I was convinced something bad had happened. I started imagining he had been in an accident, and my mind accelerated to the worst place, that he had been killed in a car accident. The later it got, the more and more convinced I was that he wasn’t coming home.

It was in this place of worry and anxiety that God put the Twenty Third Psalm on my heart, and I got out my Bible and started to read. I made myself read it slowly, taking in its message. Each time I read it I became calmer; but the minute I paused the

worrisome thoughts crept back in so I would quickly read it again. For the next four plus hours, I literally read and eventually recited from memory these words of promise and peace over and over and over. Each time I came to the end, I was reminded that no matter what the outcome of the night, The Lord is my Shepherd, and He would not leave me wanting this night or in the days ahead. He would restore my soul and He would be with me through it all. No matter what, I had God's promise: we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Between 2 and 3 a.m. I heard the door open downstairs and it was my husband arriving home safe and sound, apologizing for the lateness of hour and for making me worry. The Lord had brought him safely home and He had carried me through the hours with His precious Word. "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want."

*Precious Jesus, thank you for carrying us through our darkest nights with your Word.  
Amen*

– Becky McBurney

**"The Lord  
is my  
Shepherd.  
I shall not  
want."**

# DAY 19

**“Wait on the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”**

**Psalm 27:14**

It was a cold winter Saturday night in January 1987 when the phone rang. It was my brother. He doesn't often call so I knew something must have happened. He asked me to sit down and then told me that our parents had been in a serious car accident driving back to Pella from Des Moines. He was with them at the hospital. I wanted to jump in the car and immediately head to Des Moines. He told me no, to WAIT until morning and then come.

It was a long night of waiting. My mind was racing with the what ifs and the what needs to be done for my parents, as well as my responsibilities as a mother, wife and kindergarten teacher. But little could be done until I knew more. What I could do was to pray and WAIT on the Lord.

Upon arrival at Methodist Hospital in Des Moines the next day, we learned more. My dad had fallen asleep at the wheel. The car had missed a bridge, flipped 3 times and landed right side up in a deep ditch. No other car was involved and because it was still light, other cars had seen it happen and called 911 and WAITED for the ambulance to arrive. Upon their arrival, they did not expect to find survivors. The first paramedic on the scene not only found survivors, but also realized he knew the survivors. He was the son of some of my parents' closest friends.

At the hospital, my parents were taken to different areas of the hospital. They were each told the other had survived, but they would need to WAIT to see each other.

My mom was paralyzed from the neck down when she was pulled out of the car. The bones of my dad's entire facial structure had been crushed to powder. I was told his face was at least double its normal size and black and blue. He was connected to lots of medical equipment.

I WAITED to compose myself and find the courage to walk into each room.

Seeing my parents in this condition was extremely difficult. I worried how our daughter Allison, age one, would react. She did better than me, walking into each room with her smile and a "Hi Grampie!" and then "Hi Grammie!"

We returned to Cedar Falls on Sunday evening, going back to our jobs and responsibilities, and WAITING for daily updates and making plans to return to the hospital each weekend. During the recovery, my dad had a 16-hour surgery to rebuild his face with metal pieces as we WAITED nearby. We WAITED for improvement as my mom spent 4 months in Younkers Rehab, learning to string beads, push up her glasses, feed herself, and with time, walk again.

It was a long journey as we WAITED on God and trusted in His timing for healing. My parents not only survived the accident, but God blessed us with 21 more years with my Dad and 27 more years with my Mom. Their recovery was a season of WAITING for all of my family. We knew whatever the outcome, we would be okay because our God is a God who loves and cares for us. We were reassured of this promise by a road sign at the scene of the accident, JESUS NEVER FAILS. WAIT on the Lord in all circumstances of your life as He never fails.

*Heavenly Father, thank you that we can wait on you and trust you because you will never fail us.*

– Lori Fegley

# DAY 20

**“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.’”  
— Jeremiah 29:11.**

I have participated in many Alpha studies, and often a question will come up asking if you have had a defining moment in your life when you accepted Christ as your Savior? I, like so many in my small groups, tend to answer that question with an “I’ve always been brought up in the church and believed in Christ as Lord and Savior.” While this is true, there is a defining moment when I felt the Holy Spirit

enter my life, and change my relationship from one where I believed in Christ, to one where I would begin to walk with Christ. That moment happened for me in what felt like a very lengthy period of waiting.

I like a plan! I like to know what’s next! I like to have predictability and stability! Many years back when my kids were very little, I didn’t feel like I had control of what was next. I had this emptiness inside despite having wonderful things all around me. I wanted to do something more with my life, but I didn’t know what it was or where I was supposed to be. In those moments I would find myself reaching out to God and sternly stating to Him what I needed, and then getting very frustrated that the answer was no.

Then, one Sunday as I was walking through Fellowship Hall, I stopped at Naz Next Steps. All I wanted was a devotional to read on my own. However, Jenny Nelson didn’t let me off the hook. Nope, she signed me up for her small group on Wednesday nights during Lent! I went to work that week

and grumbled to my co-workers that I had to do this “small group thing.” They would ask me why I was doing it, and I would tell them I didn’t want to let this girl at church down because she seemed excited that I was going to join.

When that first Wednesday night in Lent came, I joined the small group with a few other women I had never met. I honestly don’t remember anything about the conversation, but something happened that evening that changed my life. When I got home, I felt an abundance of joy and happiness. Every Wednesday I attended the small group, and the same thing would happen. I was happy! I was content! I was alive! It was then that I fell in love with the power of small groups. The Bible says in Matthew 18:20 “For where two or three are gathered, there am I with them.” From that moment on my life has been entirely different. Sure, life gets hard and I still experience the hardships life throws at me. However, I’m not empty when I face these things. I feel God right there with me, and I still find joy in the process.

Waiting isn’t fun. But waiting is what has allowed the Holy Spirit to enter my life. God’s “no” eventually became a “yes”. He just needed me to open the door and feel His love first.

*Heavenly Father,*

*Many of us are waiting, and waiting is hard.*

*Lord, we know you have plans for us. As we wait, fill us with your spirit so we may follow you to where you need us to be.*

*Amen*

- Mallory Jensen

# DAY 21

I have never been a patient person, but have always admired people who are. My mother was the epitome of “patience”. She was the kindest, most giving and patient woman I have ever known. I strive everyday to be more like her, but fail miserably. I tend to take after my father a bit more – feisty and quick to react. I struggle with this on a daily basis. But I’m making progress!

Throughout my life, God has gently nudged me to be more patient, and wait on Him. When I was younger, I thought that I always knew best, and I could do everything on my own and in my own time. Over and over again, He has reminded me to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths”. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

One of the times that I recall when I was truly tested on “waiting” for God, was with my husband’s career. We moved several times (from Texas to California to Iowa) and we were always waiting for the “next” promotion, and trying to rush life and make our own decisions on what “we” thought was best. We wasted many years worrying about things that never happened. We would turn to God in times of need, but would not always remember to thank Him for the unanswered prayers that we experienced. We have learned in our almost 40 years of marriage, that God is in control; not us – and He has our life figured out and He knows when our last day on this earth will be. We can worry all we want, but that only harms us – it takes a toll on our physical health, as well as our mental health. I have learned through many trials and tribulations to “trust in the Lord with all my heart”. Some may say, I have been a slow learner – that would be an understatement!

The other time that I would give as an example on “waiting for the Lord” would be when I

experienced heart surgery and breast cancer. My life, in both of these instances, were in His hands. I had to slow down and wait for healing and not rush my agenda. I wanted nothing more than to be “o.k.” and healthy and do things for my family. I felt like they were not able to cope without me. But of course, they were very capable! It was a wake-up call for me that “life is short” and I’m not in control. That is why, since both of those life altering events happened to me, that I lean on God more than I ever did, and I ask Him to guide me in all my decisions – I no longer rely on “myself” for the answers. I live each day to the fullest and do what I can to make other people’s lives a bit happier. Again, I fail plenty, but I strive to be more patient and more giving.

As I mature and now have adult children of my own, I try to impart on them some of life’s lessons, that I learned the hard way. Do not fret over things that are not in your control; pray to God for wisdom and guidance; and do not ever be afraid or ashamed to ask for help. If only everyone could learn these lessons at a younger age, it would save so much heartache and anxiety. Faith, above all, is the answer to many unanswered problems – especially in today’s world. God has this! Trust in Him! Wait on Him!

Blessings,  
Julia Voss

**“Do not fret over things that are not in your control; pray to God for wisdom and guidance; and do not ever be afraid or ashamed to ask for help.”**

# DAY 22

**“The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”  
Zephaniah 3:17**

In May of 2021, I bought my first house. It’s a cute house with navy blue shutters, a little deck out front, a white shed with green trim in the backyard, and a newly painted yellow front door. To be honest, being a new homeowner is very daunting for me. I’m not exactly what you

call “handy”, nor will you find me starting a new house project very often. Instead, you will usually find me on my big brown couch looking out my large picture window at the tree in my front yard (which is currently bright orange).

A few weeks after I moved in, I found myself sitting on my couch waiting for the mail to be delivered to my mailbox. For whatever reason, being a new homeowner (with my very own mailbox) made waiting for the mail to be delivered that much more exciting, with greater anticipation of what was to come. Once I saw the mail truck drive by, I would get up off the couch, open my yellow front door, walk across my front lawn (usually barefoot), grab the mail, and walk back inside with the awareness of the sun streaming down my face.

I’m not really sure why, but waiting for and retrieving the mail each day started to become this really Holy experience in my life. It’s a moment that I pinpointed each day where I slowed down, waited, felt the

grass beneath my feet, and recognized God in the little things.

Waiting doesn't always have to be long, or confusing, or lonely, or exhausting, or full of anxiety. (Although it certainly can be!) Waiting for the mail at my new house revealed to me that waiting can be an opportunity to slow down and experience God when I might have otherwise missed what He was doing right in front of me. If I never had to wait for the mail, I may have never experienced God's quiet love through grass under my feet, the sun against my face, or the orange tree in my front yard.

When I think about this Holy moment, Zephaniah 3:17 comes to mind. It says, "The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by his love; He will exult over you with loud singing."

Each day there are little moments of

waiting. Waiting for the mail to come. Waiting for your coffee to be ready. Waiting for your kids after school. Waiting for Christmas morning. I'd encourage you to use these moments of waiting to slow down, be aware of God in your midst, allow Him to quiet you with His Love, and see what Holy moment He has in store for you.

*God, Thank You that You are in our ordinary moments of waiting. Reveal Yourself to me in a new way today. Allow me to experience a Holy moment full of your quiet love. Amen.*

-Kristin Sauerbrei

# DAY 23

*“Wait for the Lord, be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!”*

*Psalms 27:14*

Undertaking this devotional generated “Wait a minute moments” for me as I had to “pause for more than a second” and wait a minute to think, “Am I the right person to be writing a devotional?” Let me try to explain.

I grew up in a small central Iowa town, attending a Missouri Synod Lutheran church. Every Sunday morning, my two older brothers and I would be very quiet in hopes that Mom would oversleep. It never happened, so we attended Sunday School regularly!

An initial “wait a minute” moment occurred when I was 8 or 9 years old. I discovered a small blue covered publication that listed the annual contributions of the church members. It was a great embarrassment for me to see that my

parents' annual contribution was 50 cents. This gave way to “wait a minute” moment number one of wondering if the amount of giving impacted our status in the church.

However, reflecting on the associations at that age, I constantly found myself surrounded by positive friends and family that were positive influences. Three of those early childhood friends later in life became a Lutheran pastor, a Baptist pastor and (my cousin), a devout Catholic.

Upon entering my freshman year in high school, our family moved to the Cedar Valley. I lost contact with these friends but they would reemerge 50 years later and serve as another “wait a minute” moment(s) for me.

In the intervening years, troubling moments occurred. During my last semester of college at UNI, I arrived home late one evening from my part-time job, just as our pastor was leaving. He had been there to inform us that we were no longer welcome as church members. It was the only time that I saw

my mother cry. Was it the “blue book” again showing lack of giving? Poor attendance? Or something more sinister? I never found out, nor did I care, because that was “wait a minute” number two and I vowed I would never set foot in a church again. Fortunately, this did not last long, because again I found myself surrounded by Christian influences. Namely, Jean and I were married in the Brethren church and that spring, I was hired as a teacher at Columbus Catholic High School in Waterloo!

Raising a family of four, over the next few years, Jean and I attended and became actively involved in a local church serving on the church board and helping with youth activities. Once again, there became a void when years later, a new pastor's views on women's roles in the church and society in general, and not so subtly expressing them from the pulpit, caused me to step away from my involvement in the church.

In 2012, I retired from full time employment and now had time to be introduced to Facebook and to reconnect with those childhood friends. Unfortunately, about this time period I also

witnessed the collision of social, racial, political and religious issues being promulgated by social media. In the beginning, I let some comments on social media affect how I perceived some of my long time relationships. I was hurt, surprised and dismayed by the comments that people were so quick to share on this social media site. I quickly learned that Facebook has an “unfollow feature” that I employed to remove this influence from my feed. Unfollowing Christ was not so convenient however. Thanks to immediate family influences, I now find myself coming full circle and enjoying the fellowship of the Naz family.

As 1 Peter 2:25 says: “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepard and Guardian of your soul”.

1 Corinthian 13:4 reminds us that “ Love is patient”. Luke 15 speaks of the father welcoming home His prodigal son.

Thank you Lord for constantly surrounding me with those family and friends, and like the father of the prodigal son, patiently waiting for my many returns.

- Alan Clausen

# DAY 24

*"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*

*2 Peter 3:9*

There are periods of life where we are in “waiting” mode... nothing much of importance seems to be happening, and we are feeling “in between.” Perhaps you’re waiting for a new job to come your way, waiting to be finished with your degree, waiting for a health diagnosis, waiting for the kids to get a little older, waiting for grandchildren to be born, etc.

As a 40-something adult during these times of COVID, I am finding myself more and more in “waiting” mode and sometimes losing touch with the present moment. When we wait, we may feel like no forward progress is being made in life, like we’re drifting. It’s clear from Scripture that “how we wait” matters to God, and what we do while waiting is important.

When I was in high school, I had a trying time of waiting. I auditioned for All-State music each year on my instrument, and my first three years did not make the cut, even with hours of lessons and extra practicing. In my prayers, I asked God “why” over and over, and God’s answer was to wait and try again the next year. In my senior year, I practiced even more, had more confidence in my musical skill and finally achieved my goal, and in that moment at auditions when the names were revealed, I felt God’s overwhelming answer to my prayers: “See how much more joyful and meaningful the achievement is when you have worked and waited for it?” God was right! I had experienced much growth, maturity and self-knowledge through those years of practice and waiting, and my appreciation of that music milestone was full when God answered my prayer.

When we enter Advent each year, I'm reminded of the Israelite people waiting for their Messiah. The last words of the Hebrew Bible, in the book of Micah, had been recorded hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, and they were still waiting when the New Testament narrative begins. We discover through the Scriptures that some had been waiting in expectation, but that others, including Israel's religious leaders, were caught off-guard and were not ready for the advent of Messiah when the time finally came in Bethlehem.

It's the same for us now, 2,000 years after the earthly life of Christ and awaiting His return. Several parables from Jesus himself, hammer home the point: stay ready, be expectant, do not mistake slowness for inaction.

When I remember Christ's message to stay ready while we wait, I remember the reason, pointed out beautifully in 2 Peter: God IS keeping his promise, and there is great purpose in the waiting: that as many as possible will come to repentance.

Suddenly, reminded of the purpose in the waiting, we can take heart again and wait with action! While we wait, we can "keep practicing," so to speak: Be in prayer for specific people who have yet to take God's words to heart, share God's love through our gifts, and make Christ known to the people around us.

*Thank you, Jesus, for your unearned patience! Help us remember your holy purposes for our good when we wait. Help our frustration so we can find peace and stillness, and help us resist the temptation to act out of impatience. And help us see the future joy of your glorious return, which will certainly be well worth the wait!*

- Steph Boeding

# DAY 25

*“We’re praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; by being strengthened through his glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience.”*

*Colossians 1:10-11 (CEB)*

We spend a lot of our lives waiting.

Waiting in line at the store, waiting for the car to warm up, waiting for a package to come, waiting for an appointment at the DMV, waiting for our acceptance or rejection letter, waiting for a call from the doctor, waiting for our loved ones to come home, waiting for the day to end or for the morning to come.

We wait and wait and wait and wait.

Obviously, some of this waiting is good.

Patience is, after all, a virtue. However, sometimes we get so caught up in what we are waiting for that we get passive and dismayed.

After I graduated from Wartburg College in 2020, I planned on heading off in the fall to the east coast, where I would begin my studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. Unfortunately, as we all continue to be dreadfully aware of, a global pandemic began. Princeton Seminary went fully online, and I discerned it would be best for me to defer my enrollment. Instead, I started my seminary career online through Wartburg Theological Seminary, living in my parents’ basement, fulfilling my “Lutheran Learning and Formation” requirement for candidacy in the ELCA.

Believe me. I spent a lot of time waiting during that year. While I had decided this was best for me, I still wished I wasn’t living back home and doing school where I did not originally choose. I was just eagerly waiting for that year to be over so I could finally get to where I wanted to be.

But you know what happens when we spend all our time waiting for something? We miss what is going on now. We spend all our time looking to the future, waiting for the next thing to come, and we don’t see what’s right in front of us.

This is the season of Advent, the season of waiting, the season of anticipation. There is nothing wrong with waiting. But when it begins to consume us, it hinders our vision of what God is doing. God is constantly working and on the move. Sure, Advent is the anticipation of the Word made flesh, the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, the hope of our newborn king. But to assume we only find God at work in the end of the waiting is foolish. God is working through the first 24 days of Advent just as much as God is in the 25th day.

While we wait, the Spirit is on the move all around us and in our world. Whatever it is you are waiting on, look alive!

Whether you are waiting for school to end or school to begin, whether you are waiting to move out or to move in, whether you are waiting for this season to conclude or the next to commence, know that God is with you and working in it all to bring about good.

Don't spend your waiting time as if there is nothing here or there for you. God's calling is a constant. While you wait, is there something

to which God is calling you? Obviously, God is constantly calling for us to love and serve our neighbor. But is there anything more specific? Anything you feel God nudging your heart and soul toward while you wait for what comes next?

As we wait, both for things in our own lives and in remembrance anticipating Christ coming, God loves us, God is for us, God is with us, and God is working in us.

Thanks be to God.

*God of hope, we ask for patience in our times of waiting. Please help us see you in working in our lives. Grant us your peace amid this troubled world. Amen.*

- Jackson Reynolds

# DAY 26

*“For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”*

*Isaiah 9:6*

When I was 6 years old, my oldest brother Jason enlisted in the Navy, and eventually went over to the Persian Gulf in 1991 during The Gulf War. I was very little when this happened, and all the exact details did not stick with me throughout the years. However, the feeling of waiting is one I've carried with me forever.

Back in the early 90's, the method of communication was quite different. I remember waiting and feeling excited for when we would receive a postcard written from him from overseas. I remember my mom waiting in hesitation and worry wondering when her son would come home. I remember her saying that when he got home, we'd all be together for the next Christmas.

The third week of April 1991 our wait was over. Jason walked through the doors of the Waterloo Airport, greeted by local Boy Scouts waiving the American flag, and we were all home together. We would be together for Christmas 1991.

On Friday, April 26, 1991, Jason would be coming to my first-grade classroom to talk to us about the war. I was so excited. I waited, and waited, and waited for him to come to my classroom. He wasn't coming and my excitement turned to worry. While I was waiting, the elementary secretary came and pulled me out of the lunch room. I saw my mom standing at the end of the

hallway coming to get my sister and me. I would soon learn my Grandmother on my mother's side had a massive heart attack. We would spend what felt like eternity in the waiting room of the hospital learning of her condition. When we got the news, it was not good. We lost her. We would not be all together for the Christmas of 1991 after all.

I waited for a lot of things in 1991, and I still wait for a lot of things today. Waiting often feels hard. With waiting comes anxiety, fear, and frustration. While we wait through the Advent season, we sometimes reflect on past and painful memories. However, there is good news, and that is that Christ is with us! He was born and died on the cross. Because of this we can have hope, joy, and peace even through the moments of pain and waiting in our lives.

*Heavenly Father,*

*Thank you for being with us this Christmas season. As we wait this Advent season, provide us with hope, joy, and peace.*

*Amen*

– Mallory Jensen

**“While we wait through the Advent season, we sometimes reflect on past and painful memories. However, there is good news, and that is that Christ is with us! ”**

# DAY 27

*“Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint.”*

*Isaiah 40: 31*

When I think about waiting, I remember well two experiences that Helen and I had many years ago. We met in 1959 when we were both sophomores. I was in college and Helen was in nursing school. In just a few months we were fully committed to each other. We were looking ahead to marriage, but it would be a very long time until we would be economically able to do so. In fact, we were ‘de facto’ engaged for over three years (over two of them ‘officially’ engaged) before we were finally married. That was a very long wait, and we thought at times that it would never end. A long time later, we have now been married over 58 years and we believe that God was using the waiting time to prepare us for marriage,

to give us a sense of purpose and diligence during the waiting time, and to make us even more appreciative of our marriage that eventually occurred.

The second period of waiting involved waiting for a baby to enter our home. After about two and a half years of waiting for a successful pregnancy (in retrospect, this was not forever, but seemed to be so at the time), we applied for an adoption at Hillcrest Family Services. After a half-year of interviews and other preparatory activities, we were finally approved and we received our adopted newborn baby boy, just before our third anniversary. Our joy overflowed, and he has been an indescribable blessing to us for 55 years. But imagine our surprise when we shortly learned that Helen was pregnant; our baby daughter was born exactly nine months and one day from the day we took our son home from Hillcrest. And then in the next few years, our biological family grew by two MORE daughters, for a busy total of four children. We have often marveled at God’s wonderful timing in all of this. All of our children are

precious to us, but if there had not been that initial period of waiting, we would never have been blessed with our son. It seems to us that God wanted to place him in our home, and made us wait so that this could be accomplished.

Life is full of waiting, and God has a way of orchestrating this waiting for His purposes and for our blessing.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your patience with our impatience during times of waiting. We are always in a hurry, but in your divine providence, You know the right time to accomplish your purposes.

-David Duncan

**Those who wait on  
the Lord will renew  
their strength. They  
will soar on wings  
like eagles; they will  
run and not grow  
weary; they will walk  
and not faint.  
Isaiah 40: 31**

# DAY 28

## Knowing the Gift

**“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”**

**Luke 12:29-32**

It was a long, difficult pregnancy, followed by a long and difficult delivery for Jen. Despite the months of uncertainty and waiting, I struggled to envision or imagine what life would be like or how I might feel when our oldest sons – twins- were born

just before Christmas in 1995. All I know now is that when I saw them and held them for the first time, all my waiting, watching, and wondering was replaced with deep loving and knowing.

The Gospel writer Luke describes a devout man named Simeon who had waited for God’s Messiah, the Savior, to come and save His people. We are not told Simeon’s exact age, but I tend to picture him as an old man. He’d been told that he would not die before he’d seen the Lord’s Christ. He is also linked in the story with Anna, who was “very old” (Luke 2:36). In his prayer, Simeon says that he is ready to die. Whatever his age, Simeon is described as a man who was in tune with God: “The Holy Spirit was on him.” Simeon was righteous, devout, and “was waiting for the consolation of Israel.”

Yes, Simeon patiently waited for the consolation of Israel. But, when he saw and held Jesus, he said, “My eyes have seen Your salvation.” Simeon was no longer waiting, watching, hoping, and praying for

the coming of the Savior, he was holding Him in his arms! He didn't have to WAIT for Jesus – he KNEW Jesus.

Like Simeon and Anna, we stand on this side of God's "birth" into human history with no need to wonder or wait any longer for God to save us. But, like every person since the shepherds first heard the angelic announcement of Jesus' birth and raced to Bethlehem to see Him, we have a choice about whether we will behold and take hold of our salvation in Jesus. Have you found the Lord's salvation in Jesus?

*Dear God, thank you for the fulfillment of all Your promises in the person of Jesus. May we, like Simeon and Anna, rejoice in His birth among us, taking hold of the truth of Your love, grace, and mercy that we may KNOW the gift of peace and salvation here and now. Amen.*

- Pastor Brian

**"All I know now is that when I saw them and held them for the first time, all my waiting, watching, and wondering was replaced with deep loving and knowing."**