

If you are waiting on God for relief don't allow your afflictions to distract you from God's truth. What do you know about God's character that gives you strength to wait and maintain your hope in God? How have you seen Him move in your life before?

One way to combat the lies of the enemy is to fill your heart with the truth of God's word. *Which of the following gives you the greatest hope?*

- "God arms me with strength, and he makes my way perfect" (Psalm 18:32).
 - "Do not fear. I have redeemed you. I have summoned you. You are mine" (Is. 43:1)
 - "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).
 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17
 - Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12
 - For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. Romans 8:2
- 7 But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me. - Micah 7:7 NIV

WRAP-UP

Advent calls us to prepare our hearts for Christ—who came, who comes to us daily, and who will come again—inviting us into a season of hopeful waiting shaped by God's grace rather than our own striving. Yet this sacred focus is often challenged by the distractions of a hurried, task-driven holiday season that leaves us spiritually exhausted. Choosing to center our lives on God becomes an act of defiance in a secular age, a deliberate guarding of the ember of faith. Through Mary's story—spoken into centuries of silence—we see that in following God we may face uncertainty, as we wait, and trust in the miraculous. Advent invites us to wait actively and expectantly, grounded in God's character, history, and presence, allowing Him to shape our hearts with hope as we look toward Christ's ultimate return.

MEMORY VERSE

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." ... - Luke 1:38a NIV

Challenge –

Memorize and meditate on one of the truths about how God sees you in question 3. Allow God to shape you in the crucible of waiting.

Hope-Filled Waiting Advent - Week 1

INTRODUCTION

This week is the beginning of the season of Advent. The word advent means "to come" or "arrival". On Christmas we celebrate the arrival of Jesus when He was born in Bethlehem. During Advent we also look with hopeful expectation for His return. But during the holiday season we face endless distractions that keep us focused on what's next or what needs to be done. Keeping the sacred at the center of our lives becomes a "heroic act of defiance" (Brian Zahnd) And if we don't determine to do so, we will live our lives in a blur rather than on a journey with God. During this Advent season we choose to focus on the truth that Christ came, He comes to us daily and will come again.

Ice Breaker

What is on your "to do" list this week?

Key Passages

35 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. 36 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. 37 For no word from God will ever fail." 38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. - Luke 1:35-38 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Mary's Example

Each year we revisit the story of Jesus' birth. But doing so is much more than repetition. God's word is alive and each time we read it, hidden treasures can be revealed.

It had been around 400 years since Malachi's prophetic book was written. Generations listened to the silence, waiting to hear what God would say next. Now the Creator was on the move again and just as we saw in Genesis, when the Spirit arrived, light and life came forth.

28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." 29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ... 34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35 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. - Luke 1:28-31, 34-35 NIV

Mary was only a very young woman, but she trusted God for the impossible. The promise of a virgin birth may have seemed absurd, but all it takes is a miracle. And Mary believed God could do miracles. When we realize who God is, we understand why nothing is impossible for Him.

Have you seen God do the impossible in your life? Is there a miracle that you are praying for right now? If so, share it so that others can join you in that prayer.

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. - Luke 1:38 NIV

When Mary heard the Lord's call she willingly committed everything. She may not have known what she would be facing in her future, but she offered herself as the Lord's servant. Joining the Lord as His servant means we are working together as He pushes back the darkness and ushers in the light.

Has there been a time you were following the Lord's call and found it more difficult than you had expected? If so, how did that experience turn out?

2. Learning to Wait

We live in a time when our expectation is for immediate gratification. Do we need to know something? Just search it and AI will give you an instant response. Do you want something? With Amazon Prime you will have in 48 hours. (And doesn't that seem like an eternity?) But God doesn't always work that way. Waiting is the crucible of God's transformation in our lives.

30 Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; 31 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 faint. - Isaiah 40:30-31 ESV

You may be familiar with this verse. It should encourage us as we learn to wait on the Lord. But your bible's translation may not use the word "wait". In the Hebrew, that word is *qāwâ* and can also mean to trust (NLT) or to hope (NIV). Learning to wait is directly related to learning to trust God, and as we wait and learn to trust, we develop a hope in Him, which is our confident expectation in future events.

Can you recall a time when you had to wait before you saw God move? What emotions did the waiting evoke? Were you eventually able to trust God in the waiting?

You may think of waiting as simply setting something aside and ignoring it, but that kind of waiting doesn't give God the opportunity to shape you. When we recognize that God is still with us, and we engage with Him in our waiting, we allow God to do the work in us that results in our transformation.

25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. - Romans 8:25 NIV

During Advent we renew our hope in Jesus' second coming. We don't see it yet, but we can hold on with confident expectation that God will keep His promise as we wait patiently for His return.

3. Hope-Filled Heart

Choosing to wait, trust, and hope will not always be easy. In fact, it will be a battle against the darkness the enemy throws at you through doubt, fear and anxiety. God knows our hearts may become overwhelmed with grief and sorrow in the waiting, and He wants to lift our burdens and fill us with hope.

Lamenting is the way we passionately express our grief and sorrow. Jeremiah wrote an entire book of laments. But he resisted growing bitter towards God.

Below we see how Jeremiah lamented while still trusting in God. What did he intentionally do to regain his hope? What is it about God's character that Jeremiah clings to in his waiting?

19 I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. 20 I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. 21 Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: 22 Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." 25 The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. - Lamentations 3:19-26 NIV