



Waiting on Christmas Eve (part one of three)

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In the past 12 months it has been my privilege to meet with alumni in South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, Illinois, California, and Texas. I really enjoy asking two questions in these times together, "What is God doing?" and "How can we pray with you?" It is the best job in the world to be able to talk with our alumni.

I hear a common theme in the prayer requests they share. Our alumni are waiting before the Lord. Waiting for what is not yet seen. Waiting for the expression of God's mercy touching a need. Waiting for the grace of God to fill a gap between what is and what could be.

The Christian life is filled with waiting. Sometimes waiting feels like standing in a long, slow moving checkout aisle at the store. At other times, waiting is more like desperately clinging to the floating scraps of broken wood after the ship has gone down. And then there are those moments when waiting is like a young child on Christmas Eve; not being able to sleep from the excitement of what might be under the tree in the morning.

Waiting was a part of life for several of the men and women in the Bible. Abraham waits for a son. Isaac waits for a wife. Joseph waits for a kingdom. Moses waits on release. Joshua waits on moving day. David waits for the temple. All of the prophets wait for judgment to fall or mercy to be delivered. Paul waits in prison for release. Peter and John wait to see their Lord again. The Bible even describes faith as waiting in the gap between what is seen and what is not yet seen.

How do we wait? We wait in faith. Faith-filled waiting rests on promises.

My two children have spent a good deal of their life waiting on me. I would call from the church office when I was a pastor, the CIU office as a teacher or from the road as a traveling consultant and coach. I would give them a time to expect my arrival so I could take them to some activity. And many times I was delayed. I did not set out to keep them waiting. But the clock would keep moving and I was not. And what did they hold to when I was not where they expected? My promise – my assurance that I was on my way. How much more faithful to His promises is our Father. So we wait.

Remember Simeon and Anna in the story of Jesus' birth? These two were waiting in the temple for God to show them He had not forgotten His people or changed His mind. They were waiting for the arrival of the King and the healing He would bring. Waiting – Simeon was kept alive so he could see and then give a short word of blessing and prophecy. Waiting – Anna an 84-year-old widow kept alive so she could worship and give thanks. Notice they do not "DO" any big significant ministry – as we often define significant. They are just two senior adults, probably in the local Hardee's morning coffee club, who are led into the temple to the young parents presenting their first born. They had filled those senior years with an expectation of God's blessing. They had prayed, sought the leading of the Spirit, and fasted. God let them see Him keeping His Word. God had arrived. He kept His Word.

I like the Hallmark commercial where a woman we never see narrates as her father takes a long walk from the house, past the barn, up the snowy hillside to watch for Christmas to arrive at midnight. She shares how that annual walk was such a highlight of her childhood. Since she cannot be there with her dad he reads her card (Hallmark of course) looking at the moon shining over the valley as he waits for Christmas to arrive.

Are you waiting for Christmas to arrive? Are you waiting for our promise-making God to come through? Join me on Christmas Eve. Turn off the lights in your home, except the Christmas tree lights. Pour a cup of your favorite hot drink. Take your journal or a piece of paper. Sit there in the quiet and make a list; a waiting list. Look at some of the gifts under the tree. Then list God's gifts to you. Name His promises to you. Remind yourself of His faithful love. Thank Jesus that He has come once to open the way into God's mercy and grace. Thank Him that He's coming back. Let's wait together.

Dr. Roy King serves as Director of Alumni Ministries and Professor of Leadership at Columbia Intl. University. CIU trains students from a biblical worldview to impact the nations with the message of Christ. Find out more at www.ciu.edu or call 1.800.777.2227

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