

C O U R T N E Y S I L B E R M A N



ONLY GOD
makes things grow

A P E R S O N A L J O U R N E Y T O
G R O W C L O S E R T O G O D

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“Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”

1 Corinthians 3:7


ENCOURAGING

WOMEN *for* CHRIST

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WEEK FIVE

Waiting & Trusting God

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

Wait for the Lord; be strong and courageous. Wait for the Lord.

Psalm 27:14

SONG

“While I’m Waiting” by John Waller

Day One: Faith of a Child



TODAY'S VERSE

Unless you accept God's kingdom
in the simplicity of a child, you'll
never get in.

Mark 10:15 (THE MESSAGE)

Often times, life just does not go the way we planned. This can be disappointing if we only view life through our own perspective. When we can't see the bigger picture of how our best-laid plans get turned upside down, we are apt to feel a sense of disappointment and unfairness. And that sense, if we are not grounded in God's Word, can lead to hopelessness and despair.

A while back we had several fun family plans that flew by the wayside when my husband and I came down with terrible head colds. Have you ever experienced this kind of disappointment? Though certainly not serious, when we are looking forward to something fun, it can feel frustrating when the plans fall through. We had been away from the kids the weekend before on our anniversary trip, and were looking forward to spending time with them at the pool and at a friend's house for a barbecue one Saturday evening. But with my husband sick on Saturday and me sick on Sunday evening, practically everything was shifted around so that we could each take turns staying in bed while the other one watched the kids. We were so disappointed. The weather was beautiful, and there we were, stuck inside, while the kids watched Cinderella almost five times. We felt awful for them and for ourselves. The weekends are so precious around here that it's hard to face the "wasted time," at least, from our perspectives.

But God never wastes anything. What may seem like wasted time to us is always God's perfect orchestration of events. We have to trust that He can see the

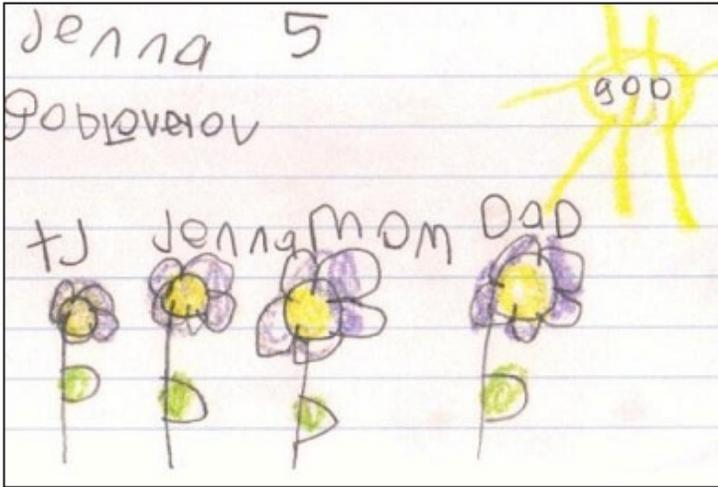
greater picture. That weekend He had to allow sickness to change our plans. We may not know exactly why, but I can trust Him. *His plans are always going to be better than mine in the long run.*

It's a great time to re-examine Isaiah 55:8-9. Write out verse 9 below.

This week, we are going to talk about waiting and trusting God. These lessons form the foundation of our daily walk of faith. My faith grew when I began very slowly and painstakingly to let go and let God take over—to trust in Him, to stop questioning every little change, and to stop saying, "this is so unfair."

Please read Mark 10:13-16. What is Jesus teaching us here?

Children are amazing in many ways. Their understanding of life baffles me at times. When I hear stories of children coming to Christ at ages four, five and six, I am in complete amazement. How is it that a four-year-old can understand the concepts of Jesus' gift of salvation while people who have lived their entire lives never get it? Because some children who have been taught the truth of the gospel at an early age are enabled to receive it for the gift it is. They haven't lived in this fallen world long enough to be tainted by the complexities of life—they just accept things as they are. Yes they do question (as we all should so we can learn more and grow closer to God),



What does the Word say concerning this according to Revelation 22:18-19?

My previous way proved detrimental to my life. With no real faith to stand on, I just flowed where the philosophy of the day took me. And it was meaningless and fruitless.

After I received God's gracious gift of the Holy Spirit through faith, it's like a little light bulb went off inside my head. It became so simple in the seemingly complex world we live in—all I ever need to know and do in my life is found in one book and one book alone: The Holy Bible. When I follow God's word I will never be wrong because it is truth. All truth comes from God, and God is perfect.

Are you ready to be at a place where you can surrender it all and have the faith of a child? Are you ready to let go of all the other pieces of advice in the world and stick to the one and only advice—God's Word? If not, then ask God for His help. Ask Him to help you have the faith of a child. Ask Him to show you His Way is the One and Only Way.

Psalm 131

A Childlike Spirit

LORD, my heart is not proud;
 my eyes are not haughty.
 I do not get involved with things
 too great or too difficult for me.
 Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself
 like a little weaned child with its mother;
 I am like a little child.
 Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
 both now and forever.

but once the answer is given, they accept it. That's the faith of a child and how Jesus said we should accept his kingdom.

This world has made skeptics out of us. With many claiming to offer truth, suggestions that all roads are foundationally the same, we can quickly be deceived to think there is no such thing as absolute truth. And that's exactly what Satan wants us to think. When we become skeptics, easily shaken by the different claims, we fall into the trap of losing our faith in the Only Truth.

Write out what Jesus says in John 14:6.

I was one such person for most of my life. I accepted a little of this over here, a little of that over there, tried to blend them in to justify my own philosophy, then called it "truth." Here's the truth about truth, friends. Truth is truth whether one believes it or not. Merely believing a statement or philosophy does not make it true. The only truth is the truth of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God. It cannot be added to, nor can it be taken away from. It is in its essence perfect, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.

Dear God,

I want to have the faith of a child that Jesus taught. I want to trust in you, stop listening to advice that goes against your Word, and have an unshakable place to stand for the rest of my life. Help me to find this, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

What is one new truth you learned today?

Day Two: It's Hard, and He Knows



TODAY'S VERSE

Therefore the Lord is waiting to show you mercy, and is rising up to show you compassion, for the Lord is a just God. All who wait patiently for Him are happy.

Isaiah 30:18

"His indescribable gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15).

Write Colossians 1:17 below.

While these past several years have been very hard, Jesus has held us together in countless ways. Because He's allowed this circumstance in our family, He is not going to leave us high and dry. He is with us every step of the way. I take much comfort in knowing this truth and experiencing it in my daily life.

Is there something you are waiting for? Describe it below. How have you seen Jesus help you through while you are waiting?

I have been praying for my husband to know Christ. I have been waiting for God to move him to an understanding of the truth. This is God's will for those who don't know Him.

Fill in the blanks from 1 Timothy 2:3-4.

... God our Savior, who wants _____ to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the _____.

God knows how hard it is to wait and to trust in Him. He knows how challenging these past several years have been for our marriage and family. God has seen me shed many tears and pray many prayers over this season. But I can say a blessing has come from following the Lord and clinging to Him during this time—my faith and my patience have grown. While on the elliptical trainer today at the gym (Thank you Lord that there was no one around me at the time!), I experienced an overflowing feeling of thankfulness to God for what He's done in my life. I did nothing, absolutely nothing, to deserve it. He took this insecure, untrusting, unbelieving, deeply hurting girl and turned her into a woman of courage and strength in Jesus Christ. I can't do anything but praise Him through tears of joy and worship. *"Thanks be to God for*

I believe waiting has become more difficult in today's time than it's ever been. With nearly instantaneous communication devices such as smart phones, we live in an era that is all about the wait-free life. In fact, if you watch many of the commercials on television with this concept in the front of your mind, you'll see that their sales pitches are mostly telling you that you don't have to wait, that you can get everything you want quickly and easily. This new technology and messages on TV have created an impatience in us that is plaguing our society. But God's time is not our time. He sees beyond the here and the now and makes things happen in His time.

Fill in the blanks below from Ecclesiastes 3:1,11:

¹There is an _____ for

_____, and a time for _____
 _____ under heaven. ¹¹He has made
 everything _____ in its time.

Think of a time when you did something or tried to make something happen because you grew tired of waiting. Describe it below. What was the outcome?

Now describe a time when you waited patiently for something. What was the outcome?

First Corinthians 13:4 says, *“Love is patient.”* Because God is love, God is also patient. He has a perfect patience He would like to pour into you. If you are waiting for something very dear to you right now, then pray each day that God gives you the patience to wait. Ask for the perseverance to carry on and the wisdom to know that waiting on Him will produce an outcome better than anything you could fathom or construct on your own. It is very difficult, but worth it. *“God takes the time to do everything right—everything. Those who wait around for him are the lucky ones”* (Isaiah 30:18 THE MESSAGE).

Dear Heavenly Father,
 Waiting is very hard. It stretches me like I’ve never been stretched before. But I want to wait for you. I want to trust you and your time, and not be blinded by my own, limited understanding. You have something so magnificent planned for me. Help me to wait. Pour your perfect patience into my impatient heart. Show me through this difficult time, Father. Pick me up and carry me. In Jesus’ name,
 Amen.

What is one new truth you learned today?

Day Three: You Can Wait with Peace



TODAY'S VERSE

You are my shelter and my shield, I put my hope in Your word.

Psalm 119:114

resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11). We are believing a falsehood if we think we'll escape suffering and hardship while on this side of eternity.

Here's the truth, Beloved Sister: Put your hopes and joy in Christ alone, and you will have peace while you wait.

What does Colossians 2:10 say about this?

We will always be waiting for something. If it's not one of the bigger things in life (a wedding day, a job promotion, selling a house, a baby to arrive) it will be something smaller (waiting in line at the grocery store, in traffic, or for a package from QVC to arrive). Waiting is a part of life. And in this lesson, we are going to explore how it is you can wait with peace.

In prayerful reflection of my own life, I have been pondering what it is that has allowed me to have peace while I wait for my husband to know Christ. I think for a long time I believed his coming to faith would solve all my problems. This mind-set went on for a while before God showed me I needed to stake my joy in Him first. Staking it on my husband's salvation was idolatry. In retrospect, the lie I was believing didn't make biblical sense. I had this belief that my husband becoming a Christian meant we would finally have a perfect marriage, never fight, and be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit. God would bless us and take away all of our marital problems.

Looking back, that belief was crazy! I see what Satan was trying to do—make me miserable while I wait, seal the ability to see the current blessings happening around me, and place something in my life above God. Seriously, would every problem in this family automatically disappear when we both know Christ? Of course not! That's completely unbiblical! Paul said, "*My goal is to know Him and the power of His*

You are complete in Christ alone. Getting married, having a baby, receiving a job promotion, moving to a new house, buying a bigger car, or seeing your husband get saved does not complete you. Christ alone completes you. The rest, as they say, is just the icing on the cake. Do not be deceived into thinking that happiness will only come when you get the things you are waiting for. It will never happen that way. There will always be the next thing along the line that you are waiting for to make you think you will be happy when you get it. Look at Paul! He wrote his letter to the Philippians while in a dirty, disgusting jail cell. How could he have been so joyful? Because His delight was in the Lord, not in his circumstances.

Read Philippians 4:11-13. Write verse 13 below.

Read Psalm 37:4. Which comes first, then what is the promised result of it?

Conclude today's lesson by meditating on Psalm 37:34:

Wait for the LORD and keep His way, And He will exalt you to inherit the land. You will watch when the wicked are destroyed.

Spend the next few moments thinking about a deep desire in your heart. Write it below. Spend some time in openness with your Savior Jesus. Have you staked a lot of your happiness on the occurrence of this thing or event? Share your thoughts below.

Summarize what God says in Exodus 20:1-6.

Listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit when you read this passage in Exodus and pray God would reveal the truth to you. It may take time for the Lord to break down the idolatry in your life, but make it a point to trust Him and not be fearful of what He reveals to you. Ultimately, the Father loves you and wants you to grow closer to Him. He wants you to rely on Him and Him alone, through His son Jesus, for your peace. He also longs to be gracious to you and give you the desires of your heart. He is the God of perfect gifts (James 1:17). Because He is a Perfect Father, He also knows we must be prepared to receive them, otherwise they cease to be a perfect gift and could be destructive to our lives. He knows what's best for you—that we all stand on the Rock of Jesus Christ, a Rock that can never be shaken.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for being the one true God of my life. Forgive me, Lord, for putting anything before you.

This thing I am waiting for is important to me, but it is not as important as my relationship and my faith in you. Strengthen me in you and complete me in Christ. Let me not believe this thing will complete me. Thank you for the grace and love that you have extended me. In Jesus' name,
Amen.

What is one new truth you learned today?

Day Four: The Things He Does Along the Way



TODAY'S VERSE

Dear friends, if our conscience doesn't condemn us, we have confidence before God and can receive whatever we ask from Him because we keep His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight.

1 John 3:21-22

Yesterday's lesson was a sobering truth to me about where I was placing my hopes. It may have been for you too. But the truth will set us free, strengthen our faith, and deepen our relationship with God. And here's another truth: just because we desire something does not mean Jesus does not want to bless us with it. He is the Greatest Giver of all time. He left His place in Heaven to take on flesh and experience life as a man on this fallen earth. He experienced separation from His Father and took all our sins upon Himself while on the cross, then died a very painful and tragic death. He then rose from the dead, declaring His victory over death and sin, so that everyone who believes in Him can experience forgiveness of all their sins and adoption into the family of God. He did this for you and me. Like I said, He is the Greatest Giver of all time.

Write John 3:16 below.

There aren't words to fully describe the love God has for us, but God demonstrates His love for us in many ways. God showed his love to me by using the deep desire in my heart for my husband to grow my faith. He's using the differing worldviews from our marriage to bring me to Him, to find reassurance in His Word, and to ultimately, place Jesus first in my life. It is a process that is still going on, but looking back, even in my deepest times of pain and frustration, God never left my side. I have faith God will bring my husband to Him one day, in His time. And God's time is always perfect.

Take a look at today's verse in 1 John. Let's also look at Matthew 21:22. Jesus said, "*And if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.*" Those are powerful words! But it's very important to take Jesus' words in Matthew 21:22 and look at them with 1 John 3:19-23.

Read 1 John 3:19-23.

Jesus is telling us to have faith and believe that He can do all things, but the thing that you ask needs to be according to the will of God. We must also pray with clear consciences, confessing all our sins before we make requests to the Lord. That is why the apostle John tells us to listen to our hearts before we pray. If our hearts are condemning us and if we are not asking for forgiveness before we pray, then we are not placing ourselves in a position before God where He can answer our prayers. Our best fellowship before God is always one with a clear conscience and confessed sin.

I know that I am always praying in God's will when I am praying for someone's salvation. I know that because of 1 Timothy 2:3-4—"... *God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*" So once you know you are praying according to God's will, He will bless those prayers by helping you while you wait for them to be answered. How do we know if we are praying according to

God’s will? It will always agree with what the Bible says. If it goes against what we are taught in the Bible, then it is not according to God’s will.

Psalm 34:18

While this season of my life has been challenging, God has given me grace upon grace to help me in my time of need. He has been encouraging me through His Word, through the Holy Spirit, through the materials I read, through the women He’s placed in my life, and countless other things He does every single day. His message has consistently been, “I am with you through every single moment of this. I will not leave you or forsake you.”

Psalm 37:7

Can you think of a blessing from God that lifted you up while you were waiting for something important in your life? Please describe below.

Psalm 37:34

Psalm 46:10

I am also comforted by the specific verses God shows me on waiting and trusting Him. His Word is a powerful blessing to us, and by spending time in it, we can be transformed in our thinking and granted peace in our struggles.

Write the following verses on the space below them:

Psalm 27:14

Isaiah 40:31

Psalm 31:24

Isaiah 64:4

I pray you are strengthened by these verses like I have been. Remember God loves you and wants to bless you along the way, but you have to trust Him and allow Him to show you all the current blessings in your life that you may be missing. Pray for His help today, and watch Him show you all the things He does along the way.

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for your blessings along the way of my life. Help me not to miss out on any of them. May all you have to teach me and show me renew my strength and increase my faith in you. In Your Heavenly Name, Amen.

What is one new truth you learned today?

Day Five: What Never Entered the Human Mind



TODAY'S VERSE

What eye did not see and ear did not hear, and what never entered the human mind—God prepared this for those who love Him.

1 Corinthians 2:9

I hope that you have been strengthened in the truth about waiting and trusting God this week. I hope the knowledge and the wisdom you've gained has helped you in your own wait and you have a greater sense of hope and peace from God. In the final lesson of the week, we'll discuss how God blesses us when we wait and trust in Him in ways that never entered our mind.

God showed me the powerful words of 1 Corinthians 2:9 during my first time of prayer and fasting. It was an unbelievable experience that drew me closer to Him. If you've never taken the opportunity to fast and pray, and you are physically able to do so, I encourage it if God wills it in your life. I am the first to admit that I never thought I could do it. I was frightened of how I'd feel and what it would be like. But God provided and blessed me through the first time I fasted. I felt his presence closely because I was depriving my body of food for the sake of Jesus Christ and had to turn my attention to Him almost every moment for strengthening and encouragement.

What does Jesus say about fasting in Matthew 6:16-18?

I prayed for the needs of my church and the needs of my family during this time of fasting. It was during this time of prayer that I first gained a sense of peace about my husband's salvation. I needed strength from Him on a deeper level because I felt myself losing steam during that time.

On my second day of fasting, I was sitting alone in my family room reading the Bible while the kids were in preschool. All of a sudden a sense of pain and discouragement overcame me and I began to weep. I let all the emotions and frustrations of my life out to God. I sat there in silence after I had cried for a while, feeling like I had emptied out all the thoughts that were poisoning my sense of hope. I then felt like a blank slate. I couldn't cry any more.

Then came God's amazing sense of peace and restoration. He spoke reassurance and comfort into my heart that kept me grounded in Him and His promises. I felt so loved and filled with God's peace and joy. I was grateful I got past my uncertainties of fasting and took a step of faith in His direction. Each of us has the capacity to be touched by God in ways that move us to joy beyond our understanding. Are we placing ourselves in a position to receive it? Having faith, believing God, and waiting for Him will yield a harvest that will not only blow us away here on earth, but also blow us away when we go home to be with Him in heaven. But we do have an adversary who is trying to steal all of this away from us.

Write John 10:10 below.

Who is "a thief?"

Through Jesus alone can we have the life that is set for us. And it is a life that is more amazing than we can dream on our own. But Satan wants to take that full life away. Once we are saved, Satan cannot have our souls, but he can try to rob us of the abundant life Jesus has promised us. We have a choice to allow it or to allow the Bible's truths to sink deep into our hearts, minds and spirits.

Name one way you may be allowing Satan "to steal and to kill and to destroy" the abundant life that Christ has for you.

Don't allow Satan to steal from you. Call on Jesus for help!

I was allowing Satan to destroy the abundant life Jesus has for me by doubting God. I believed Satan's lies that God is not big enough for my problems. My friend, God is big enough for all the world's problems! He is big enough to care for the entire world at the same time and big enough to care about me when I am crying on the couch for help. Never doubt the power of God, and never allow Satan to tell you that God does not care about you or that your problems are too big for Him. Go back to the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:9 and read it aloud, "*What eye did not see and ear did not hear, and what never entered the human mind—God prepared this for those who love Him.*" Love God and see all that He has prepared for you. It has never entered your mind! And I promise you it will be worth the wait.

Dear Heavenly Father,

I know that you have something planned for me beyond any or all of the expectations I can come up with on my own. I am willing to trust in you and wait for it, but I desperately need your help in doing so. Satan is trying to get me to doubt you, but I want to believe you and all that you have planned for me. Help me to do so. Help me along the way so that I do not lose sight of what you have planned for me. May you always be by my side, comforting me and growing my faith in ways that you alone know how to do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

What is one new truth you learned today?