

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

God in the Waiting - Where's Norm?

August 24, 2020

In our series, *Where's Norm?*, we have discussed how to move forward in a world of "I don't know." In week 1 of the series, we first learned that we need to clarify our GUIDE because it determines where we go. Last week, we talked about the need to acknowledge an ending by naming it, grieving it, and releasing it. This week, we looked at **The Neutral Zone**, which is the second stage of transition, according to William Bridges' book, *Transitions—Making Sense of Life's Changes*.

Bridges writes that this stage is the core of our transition to something new and is often the longest stage. He also calls this stage the "Wilderness" or the "Ambiguous Middle." No one likes this stage, and many try to rush through it, wasting it. It doesn't have to be a waste, though. We can find purpose in the wilderness leading to the fastest way out.

As I sit down to write, I am really struggling with what to say that is encouraging or helpful as we discuss "waiting in the wilderness." To be completely honest, the verse that popped into my head was Psalm 73:26.

Psalm 73:26

My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.

The verse says, "*God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.*" God was with the Israelites as they transitioned from being slaves in Egypt to living out God's promises for them. He remained with them, yet it was hard for them to see and apply it to their everyday struggles in the wilderness. They grumbled, complained, and even [made false gods instead of trusting](#). Sound familiar?

But the very good news is God knew from the start how each of them, and how each one of us, would respond to circumstances in our lives. Despite the fact that we complain and criticize, he still chose to make you and me. He not only made us and loves us but also sent Jesus to die for us so we could be forgiven and free. His love for you is far greater than how you are "handling" your waiting during this, or any other uncertain time.

That being said, I am not a victim in the wilderness—I am a daughter of King Jesus. That might be the only thing I am sure of right now, but it is enough, and it gives me purpose. Many of us are waiting for a divine answer to whether we should homeschool, select hybrid learning, or go exclusively online for school. We're waiting to feel it's "safe" to leave the house. Some of us are waiting to hear whether our sports season will continue. Or waiting for some certainty that it is

safe to visit at-risk family members. Most of us are waiting for answers about COVID-19.

Being in limbo, waiting for answers that will never be perfect and are often divisive, is a hard place to be. But trusting the Creator of the universe to provide the answers is the place of peace we need to go to.

So today, I am going to focus on a new question: **Lord, what good thing do you have for me today?**

Questions:

Are the unknowns of COVID-19 taking over your thoughts?

Why is waiting so hard and painful?

Do you have decisions to make that seem impossible?

What question would you ask Jesus if you were sitting with him?

Next Steps:

Ask God, "What good thing do you have for me today?"

Share your answers to the above questions with a trusted friend, and talk about the similarities and differences of your paths.

[21 Days of Prayer: Excite My Heart for What Excites You; Give Me Spiritual Vision \(Day 15\):](#)

God, you show us again and again your heart for those who are far from you. Remind me that I was once far from you. Instill deep in me this passion: to do whatever it takes to love you and others more each day. Exchange my thoughts for yours. Rearrange my priorities to be of one mind with you. Change my heart, God. Help me to see that this is how I join you in what will be and that today, right this very moment, is the greatest adventure of my life. Amen.

This post was written by April Willer, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

The Process of Waiting - Where's Norm?

August 25, 2020

During Christmas 1991, the magic was gone. I had older siblings who crushed my belief in St. Nick a few years before, but I held on to the myth (for more presents) a little longer. Unfortunately, the older bunch convinced us to methodically open the presents under the tree the week before, and take a peek. The gifts looked untouched on Christmas morning, but it's hard to fake a surprised look when you're a kid. I should've waited because I ended up messing up a priceless moment that God was building for our family. I didn't know that was going to be the last time the four of us woke up on Christmas morning, under the same roof as our mother.

But as time quickly changed, what we once saw as usual ended. We learned to adapt during a season of uncertainty, and God gave me more opportunities to be significantly present as I realized our Christmases of old were gone. By being present in the moments with my mother, I was able to do for her what we didn't allow her to do for us before her time on earth was done. It was only nine years, but I refused to miss out on more of God's priceless moments.

John 12:24

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives.

There is a waiting period ... before the new growth begins.

After the seed falls to the ground, there's the long wait before the harvest. Similarly, there is the long wait of winter before new life emerges in spring. In both cases something invisible is happening during the waiting.

Waiting is hard, and we all experience different types of waiting. But what we do while we wait matters more than we think. If we are impatient, we can waste our waiting, but if we realize God is preparing us for something new, we can find purpose in it.

Questions:

Do you wait with worry or with purpose? Do you understand that waiting is part of the process of something new?

Next Steps:

Find your purpose before your next season of waiting by taking or retaking GrowthTrack. Pray for guidance and patience during your waiting process. Try stepping into something different while you are waiting.

21 Days of Prayer: Deepen My Trust in You (Day 16):

Dear God, you are miraculous! You are so powerful, you can stop a storm at your command. I pray that every day I find myself in awe of you and your glory. I want to trust you even when the storms around me seem scary and overwhelming. No matter how things are around me, you are always in control. You are good, and you are worthy of my trust. I hope to surprise you with my abundance of faith, not my lack of trust in you. Amen.

This post was written by Jaron Camp, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Reflect While You Wait - Where's Norm?

August 26, 2020

The last five months have been rough for everyone. I wish I could say I am a patient person, but I am not. I want things back to normal. It feels like we are stuck in limbo. Lead Pastor Ben Snyder defined this as being in the “neutral zone.” (Or are we stuck in the Twilight Zone?) Who would have ever thought we would be required to wear a mask to go out in public? Or that our schools, colleges, and church buildings would all be closed? The list could go on and on. We are all waiting for things to return to normal.

Psalm 27:4 (ESV)

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

COVID-19 has given many of us a lot of time to wait. But maybe we're looking at “waiting” all wrong. Waiting is not about stopping everything you are doing. Waiting should be about us stopping “trying to do everything.” Waiting is hard, but it can also be beneficial when we wait with purpose.

Ben said we can wait with purpose if we: normalize, reflect, and experiment intentionally. Today, we are going to talk about *reflection*. Reflection is defined as “serious thought or consideration.”

God has really been teaching me that my peace and joy are found in what (or *whom*) I reflect on. If I reflect on everything I am missing or what is going on in the world, I'm miserable. This leads me to *attempt* to control the situation. It frustrates me and everyone around me, and ultimately, I lose all my peace and joy. However, when I make an effort to reflect on God's blessings and provision, my trust and faith in him grows, and I can be confident that *God's got this*. God has already determined the outcome.

Everyday, I write down three things for which I am grateful to God and reflect on those blessings. When things are especially hard, I reflect on all the times in the past he has worked miracles in my life. Instead of worrying, I choose to spend my time praising him, praying, and studying and meditating on his Word. I am reminded that Jesus understands everything I am going through, and I am his beloved daughter.

I don't need to figure it all out—I just need to trust him and obey.

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ *Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.*

⁶ *Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you the path to take.*

Questions:

How do you deal with waiting? Why is reflection important? How has God blessed you during tough times?

Next Steps:

Write down three things you are grateful for everyday.

Think about how God has helped you in the past, and write those experiences down. Reflect on them next time you are struggling.

Praise God for his blessings. Instead of watching the news or scrolling social media, pull out your Bible and read it.

21 Days of Prayer: Search Me and Know My Anxious Thoughts (Day 17):

Dear God, the weapon for anxiety is trusting in you. Search me and know my anxious thoughts. Help me to share those with you and trust in you. Help me not to be anxious, but to come to you in prayer and thanksgiving. May your peace guard my heart in these trying times. Amen.

This post was written by Marsha Raymond, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Glass Art - Where's Norm?

August 27, 2020

Creating glass art is challenging and requires a high level of skill and patience. Glass is melted down at high temperatures before it's carefully manipulated to create a new shape. The artist must have precise timing and a good understanding of the material. Once shaping is complete, the glass is allowed to cool at a controlled speed. The glass goes from a temporarily movable, shapeable substance to a more solid, long-term form.

Though God created us, he is continuously reshaping and molding us. Sometimes he needs to completely melt us down and make big changes. And boy, that can be painful. We'd much prefer keeping our original shape, even if it may be flawed. So much has changed in these last several months. At first, it was hard to "allow" it. I clung to the things that were being cancelled or changed. But since I recognized this season as a time for transformation, I have been able to determine that some things should remain eliminated (like a tight schedule and frequent restaurant food) and be replaced with new things (taking prayer walks, new hobbies, more reading, and time outdoors).

Often when going through change, because of the discomfort it gives us, we seek to escape. But if we can be still, we can learn to wait with purpose. Another step that allows us to find purpose in the waiting is to **experiment intentionally**. Every major change brings endings and creates both problems AND unparalleled opportunities.

Most of us would agree that we're in an in-between period. We recognize a clear "before," and we desperately hope for an "after." But we're not there yet, and what we do during the waiting period isn't meaningless. It has the potential to be life-changing and transformative. Jesus never wastes a time like this.

Romans 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Our glass artist, the one true God, is perfect. He knows exactly what he's doing. But part of the process is realizing we are the glass, not the artist. As I see all the

change taking place around me, I recognize that **God** can use this time to show me life-changing, meaningful new habits, or I can use it to gain some bad habits.

But we all need to be aware that the time will come when the glass hardens: our “after” to all of this. So while you're still malleable, allow God to do the shaping. Allow him to guide you so that when this season of change ends, and you are back to your solid, long-term form, you are transformed in his image better equipped to do his work.

Questions:

What areas of your life do you feel are being melted down and reshaped? Have you resisted this change or let it happen? How have you seen God working?

Next Steps:

Spend some time evaluating the areas of your life that have been most changed during this season. Clarify some areas in which you can experiment. Pray for God to show you the opportunities he is leading you to.

[21 Days of Prayer: Clarify My Purpose \(Day 18\):](#)

Dear God, please clarify our purpose. You have so generously given all of us unique gifts. I pray that we can identify them in our lives, so that we can serve you and your Kingdom. Help us to not only use our gifts, but to give you all of the glory when we do. You have said that the most important thing to do is to love you and love others. I want to use the gifts you gave me to find and live out my purpose and to follow your greatest commandment. Amen.

2020 Verse of the year - Where's Norm?

August 28, 2020

If I could, I wouldn't write anything else for today's LIO but these verses:

Psalm 27:13-14

¹³ *Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness while I am here in the land of the living.*

¹⁴ *Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.*

I invite you to spend 5 minutes reading and rereading them today. Tomorrow, I invite you to read and reread them for 10 minutes. By Sunday or Monday, you will have them memorized and be able to repeat them throughout your day when you are:

- waiting in traffic
- waiting in line
- waiting for your kids to finish their homework
- waiting for dinner to be ready
- waiting for sleep to come
- waiting for things to return to "normal"

Should you accept my invitation, I guarantee that over time, you will see the goodness of the Lord *while you are here in the land of the living!*

In fact, you will come to realize that the goodness of the Lord surrounds you wherever you are. Let's face it— most of us reading this devotional live in the United States of America. For all its flaws and troubles, injustices and turbulence, it is still the number one nation in the world where people want to come to improve their lives and provide opportunities for their children. No matter what your income level is, chances are that you are richer than 95% of the world's 7.8 billion population!

Maybe you are impatient in this time of uncertainty because you haven't spent any time thinking about the things you have confidence in and thanking God for them. Several weeks ago, Barb Roose spoke about the 1,000 gifts list and the man who sent her a picture of the 1,000th thing he was grateful for. I imagine as he made his list, which obviously took a lot of time (and patience), he felt

immersed in the goodness of God, right where he was. He took time to look back to see what God had done in his life and let that inspire him to believe in what God will do in the future. This is a form of meaningful waiting!

God isn't done! He hasn't abandoned us! Pastor and author Louie Giglio says, "Wait patiently, knowing that waiting is never wasted when you are waiting on God."

"Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord."

Questions:

What kind of wait-er are you? What kind would you like to be?

What do you need to stop trying to fix and trust in God's timing for it? Write it down, please! Now, take that paper, offer that thing to God, and tear it up! You're done with that!

Next Steps:

I know you meant to start that 1,000 gifts list when Barb talked about it. 1,000 is a big number! Write down five things everyday that you are grateful for. Let's see if that doesn't make it easier while you wait for the new thing that God is doing, right now, in your life!

Meditate every single day on [Psalm 27:13-14](#).

Smile! Trust God! He loves you!

21 Days of Prayer: Give Me the Courage to Make a Difference (Day 19):

Thank you, God (I Am), for saying we are. Thank you for blessing us with your love to share with the world. Please, give us the strength to step out of the shadows when so many are screaming to be loved. Give us the courage to reveal your truth, so that others can receive the knowledge and join in the fight against darkness. Speaking your name in silence doesn't reach our neighbors, so let us shout your name in praise. Grant us the confidence to live by faith with everyone we meet. Let them see your forgiveness in us, so that they may also experience your grace. Amen.

21 Days of Prayer: Fill My Life with Your Fruit of the Spirit (Day 20):

Dear God, help me to be completely rooted in you, so that the only fruit I produce

is the good fruit from you. I know that it is through the Holy Spirit that my life can be filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). I want to posture myself to produce good fruit in my life and in the lives of others. I want to do this all for you, your glory, and your kingdom. Amen.

21 Days of Prayer: Fill My Life with Praise and Worship (Day 21):

God, we praise and worship you for the things you have done and will continue to do for us. It is our way to show the world how thankful we are for your love and grace. It is a time for us to share the bliss of our testimonies and be witnesses to the promises of your truth. Thank you for gifting us with music in our hearts that fills our eyes with tears of joy. Thank you, God, for allowing us to ignite our passion for you each and every day. Amen.

This post was written by Lauri White, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.