



WAIT & SEE

for ADVENT

**Daily Reflections
for Teens and
Young Adults**

The 1st Sunday of Advent

The Worth of Wait

(the myth of immediate gratification)



The fact of the matter (and I know you don't want to hear this—I don't even want to hear it) is that we've been lied to. There is no such thing as immediate gratification. It's a myth propagated by the great, unknown and unknowable "THEY." "They" tell us that we can have it all ... and fast. "They" even tell us that that's the best way to have it. "Fast and easy," our world tells us, "is truly gratifying!"

That, as you may have guessed, is not the truth.

Why? I'll tell you why! It's right in the phrase itself—in the WORDS. The word "gratification" has, at its heart, the same root as the word "GRATEFUL." And to be truly grateful for something, well, that requires needing ... and wanting ... and hoping ... and yearning ... and praying ... and anticipating ... and desiring ... and WAITING. So that when all of the agonized waiting is over, the result is an overwhelming sense of HAVING. The wait is what makes the gratefulness happen. Skipping the wait—making it immediate—well, that's a gratitude killer.

"Immediate gratification" is a myth. It's an oxymoron.

Waiting isn't only worth it. Waiting is what MAKES it worth it! Especially at Advent, when what we're waiting for fulfills "the hopes and fears of ALL THE YEARS." That's a lot of waiting ... a lot of wanting. And can result in something pretty gratifying!

Monday of the 1st Week

Marking Time

(your method indicates your wait)



Hold on. I'm about the drop one of those sentences on you that makes your eyeballs roll back into your head ... that makes your brain curl in on itself ... that makes you oh, so eloquently proclaim "well, duh." Here it comes:

Your method of marking time indicates the duration of your wait.

Allow me to unpack that mind-numbing phrase:

- A drag race (short wait, right?) is measured with a stopwatch.
- A tortoise race might be measured with a slowly burning, marked candle.
- A pregnancy (LONG wait) is measured by trimesters.
- The rise and fall of mountain ranges (long, LONG wait) is measured in eras and epochs.
- Internet downloads are measured in megabytes per second.

See what I mean? Your method of marking time indicates the duration of your wait.

That's important information as we begin our Advent wait. Oh, we're not talking anywhere near the wait for, say, tectonic plate movement. Still, suffice it to say that no one's ever used an "Advent Stopwatch."

Tuesday of the 1st Week

Fire Up the Wreath

(seven days of waiting makes one weak!)



Like I said yesterday, there's no Advent stopwatch. No Advent sweep-second hand. Not even an Advent clock.

Instead, as in the example of the tortoise race, we'll be marking our time through Advent using CANDLE power.

And not just ONE candle (which would be a slow enough way of marking time). Nope, there are FOUR of them—four tiny candles burning their way through Advent ... marking our hours and days through the four WEEKS of the season.

Suddenly the pastor from the beginning of this books seems pretty smart. This Advent IS a hard sell. And a long haul.

If you don't already have one, construct a simple Advent wreath for your own personal use. (Try cutting a large hole in a paper plate, gluing small, torn pieces of green construction paper to the resulting paper ring, and using inexpensive tea lights as your candles.)

Light the first candle, flickering and lonesome in the darkness. And think, today, about the long wait we have. Will it be worth it?



As you watch that tiny flame, think about the verse from the Psalm: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). What does that mean to you? How does it relate to your Advent waiting?

Wednesday of the 1st Week

The Prophets' Candle

(oh ... it's much worse than you thought)



Right about the time I'm ready to send out engraved invitations to my own pity party,—“poor me, I have to wait a whole month until Christmas”—the first candle on the Advent wreath walks up and jolts me with a big blast of perspective.

That first candle is traditionally named “The Prophets' Candle.” It's single, flickering flame is intended to remind us of those ancient purveyors of God's good Word—the prophets. Like lonely flames sparked in cavernous darkness, they represent hope against all hope. They didn't just wait a month, those prophets. They waited months ... and years ... and lifetimes ... finally dying before the promised Messiah ever arrived.

While you're letting that sink in, want some REAL perspective? Those prophets are just the tip of the “waiting iceberg.” Before them there stands a long waiting line of people that stretches back through kings and queens, psalmists and judges, matriarchs and patriarchs ... all the way back to a garden called Eden, where a young, guilty couple are being promised some sort of future salvation.

We're talking eons here. Generation after generation of “waiters” and “waitresses.”

Which puts my own waiting into perspective in at least two ways. First of all, four little weeks suddenly seem pretty easy to handle. But more importantly, I'm overcome with a sense of COMMUNITY. I'm not alone in the waiting. You're waiting too. And ALL of God's people, throughout history. We're a waiting people ... together.

Which just leaves one question unanswered. What do I do with all of these engraved invitations?

Thursday of the 1st Week

Reeling in the Years?

(we've gone way beyond candles, now)



Now that we're talking about the whole of Biblical History, even our candles have become obsolete. We're talking about years, centuries, ages, millennia, eras and epochs. How long does a candle last? Even a really big one? A few hours? A day, at best?

Even a calendar won't do here. To get the proper perspective on the sheer volume of waiting involved in this whole "salvation of the world" business, we're going to have to seriously up the ante.

That's right, folks. I'm talking "timelines." Oh yeah, baby. You heard me. To map out our "ultimate waiting line," we'll need THE ultimate waiting line—TIMELINE, that is.

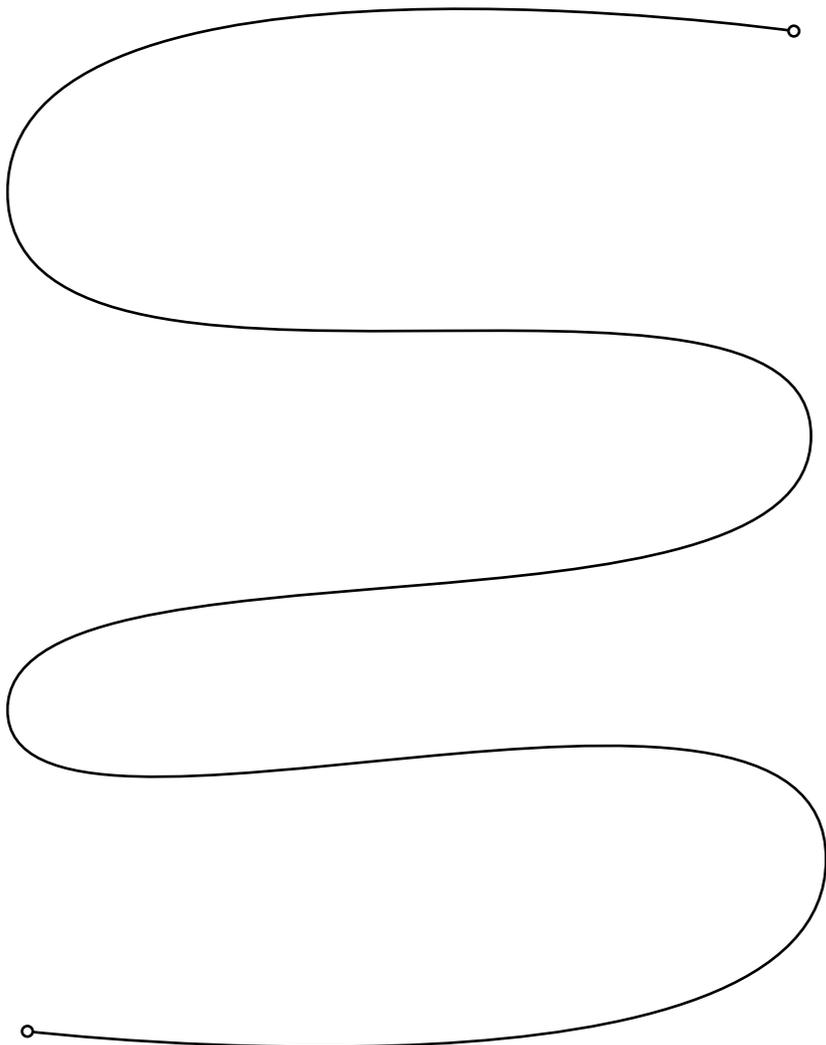
Spend some time today reviewing your Biblical history—the great story of salvation. Who are the characters involved? What stories do you remember? What's their proper, historical order? Page through your Bible (one with headings helps). Or even review a Bible storybook from your childhood.

Then, tomorrow, use the opposite page to construct a timeline. Make it as detailed as you can (write really small). You can even add tiny illustrations if you want. Begin ... well ... at "the beginning." The end of the line can be the birth of Jesus.

Friday of the 1st Week



My Salvation Timeline





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Open your eyes to the act of “active waiting” this the Advent season, a waiting that is focused first and foremost on an arrival in the manger, but even more so on Christ’s glorious return.

We’ve got plenty to do to fill our time. We’ve got his message to share. We have a world to change. We’ve got all sorts of loving things to do. That should more than occupy our waiting time.

Just wait & see! This fresh way of viewing Advent is engaging and eye-opening.