

The Christmas Experience Leader Guide Session 1: At Just the Right Time

Leader's Devotional:

Do you ever feel like you're just whining when you pray? Many of us do. This is what I want, and I want it now! You probably don't pray those words, but God knows your attitude. Why aren't you answering my prayer, Lord? I know this is in your will. I know this is best for me. I know. I know. See the problem here? Sometimes we pray as if we know more or better than the sovereign God who created the universe!

As the group leader, you may be wondering how you can facilitate a discussion about trusting in God's timing when you struggle with this yourself. Don't worry; you're not alone! You do not have to have this all figured out before you lead a discussion. In fact, sharing your own personal struggles with waiting on God will help others grow.

God told the great leader and prophet, Isaiah, "I, the Lord, will bring it all to pass at the right time" (Isaiah 60:22, New Living Translation). God was reminding Isaiah and the Israelites that he is in control of everything. He will bring it to pass at just the right time- his time. This particular promise in Isaiah was in reference to the Second Coming. Like whiny adolescents, God's people wanted the fulfillment of God's promises immediately! God told Isaiah that it was all in God's hands, and their job was simply to trust him.

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You may be in God's waiting room right now yourself. And often when we are asking for God to come through, our question is "Why?" Why is God making you wait? Why doesn't he just come through now?

We wait, first, because he wants us to trust him. The timing is his, not ours. Perhaps he wants to remind us that he is God and we are not. To wait for him to come through, we must have faith.

We wait because, more than anything else, God desires a relationship with us. He desires for us to walk with him, listen to him, and have hope that he will work on our behalf. If he responded according to our timing, he'd be no more than a magic genie to us. But he wants far more than that. He wants a loving relationship.

We wait on him to test our belief that he really does work for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. We wait because the testing of our faith develops perseverance, which will make us mature and complete (see James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5) Yes, waiting is a huge part of what God uses to grow us spiritually.

Waiting is a fundamental part of the Christian life. We wait for Christ to return. We wait for our real home. We wait for the blessed hope- the glorious appearing for our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. We wait for his kingdom to come in all its glory. "Come, Lord Jesus," we pray. We are a people of waiting.

Purpose of this Week:

To understand through the Christmas story that we can trust God's timing.

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Preparation:

- Pray for your group before they arrive.
- Have name tags available to know each other's names
- Have copies of viewer guide ready
- Arrange to have a nativity set in a visible location in the meeting room. You will not use it this week, but you will in future weeks. This week it will serve as a fundamental part of the Christmas décor.

Discussion:

1. What initial reactions or thoughts do you have to this presentation? Read Luke 2:1-7.
2. What evidences of God's timing and provision do you see in this passage?
3. Why does it matter to the gospel story that Caesar Augustus issued a decree for the entire Roman world?

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7. It can be difficult to see God's hand when you are in the middle of your "winter." Why do you think it is so hard to see God at work when you're in the midst of painful circumstances?

8. How does Proverbs 3:5-6 show us how to trust in God's timing?