

The Joy of the In-Between

100 DEVOTIONS FOR TRUSTING GOD
IN YOUR WAITING SEASON



Ashley Hetherington

FOUNDER OF THE HONEY SCOOP

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Dear Friend . . .

Let me paint a picture for you: I showed up at my best friend's wedding without a date. Here I was, with all my college best friends—who were with their significant others. I was the only single bridesmaid. I kept it together for the most part, except the few times I cried in the porta potty. But as hard as I tried, I couldn't stop the tears from flowing. I felt like the only person at prom without a date.

As I sat alone on the bus going back to the hotel, surrounded by the rest of the wedding party talking one-on-one with their dates, I couldn't shake these thoughts in my head: *Something must be wrong with you. How could you be the only one without a date? You should have started online dating before this. Then you wouldn't be in this situation. Do you really think God is going to bring your spouse? You need to figure this one out yourself.*

Whether these thoughts were from myself or the pit of hell—or maybe both—I was fully believing every word.

Here I was, waiting for God to send the right man into my life. I looked back on all the times I had prayed for a husband. All the times I had fasted. All the times I had cried out to God about the desires of my heart to be with a man of God whom I could partner with for the kingdom. And all the times I had wiped my tears and decided to believe, *again*, that God would make it happen.

So why was it that after I had prayed, after I had fasted, and after I had believed, this man still wasn't here?

The greatest test of our faith is when we pray for something and God does not answer. Will we still believe in Him and put our faith in Him—will we still trust Him and choose Him—even when He doesn't answer our prayers in the time frame we want Him to?

Waiting is never fun. In fact, it is actually the worst. We pray, we bring our desires to God, and we think He is going to deliver what we've asked for the next day, like an Amazon Prime package.

You can have a dream or a vision that you really believe is from God—whether it's a man of God to marry, a child to bear, a business to start, a book to write, or whatever else. The dream excites you, so you lift it up in prayer and believe and trust that God is going to come through.

But after you pray, nothing happens. You wait, having blind faith that God is going to make this dream happen, and all the while it seems as if He is doing nothing.

You look on social media and almost immediately see that God is making this same dream happen for other people. Someone becomes an overnight success. Another girl meets her future husband the day *after* she broke up with her boyfriend. Another friend says she is pregnant and it was a complete surprise. They weren't even trying.

You hear these stories. You see them on your social media, listen to them in podcasts, hear about them happening to your friends. So why does it seem as if God is making their dreams happen almost seamlessly, but He's taking His sweet time with you?

You aren't alone in this thought process. Sarah in the Bible felt the same way. She had been given a promise from God that she would be the mother of a nation. But at ninety, she was completely barren.

I can imagine her in today's world, going to baby shower after baby shower, wondering when it would be her turn. I wonder if she

felt the same way I felt sitting alone on the bus after the wedding. I wonder if she felt the same way you feel right now.

The waiting season is not unfamiliar to human nature, and it is not unfamiliar to God.

When we face a difficult waiting season and our faith is being tested, God encourages us to count it as joy. Because if we endure this season and stay steadfast, we will be mature and complete—not lacking anything.

This book isn't about getting God to answer every one of your prayers. (If I knew how to make that happen, I would certainly tell you. But you and I both know God doesn't work that way.) This book is about having joy and purpose when you can't seem to find any. It's about staying faithful when all you want to do is give up your faith. It's about trusting God, even when you don't understand a single thing He is doing . . . or not doing.

In this time that we have together, you will learn how to live with joy and purpose in your waiting season. You will learn how to really trust God and wait on His perfect timing, even when it's the last thing you want to do. You will learn how to make the most of what is right now while you wait for Him to provide what's next. This book will help you be patient and wait on God's perfect timing.

This season is not just a time to get through. There is great joy and purpose for you to experience, right where you are. I have been through countless waiting seasons. In fact, I've been in one for a lot longer than I thought I would. My husband still has not come. Though I believe he is coming, it doesn't change the fact that I am still waiting on the Lord to provide, in His perfect timing. But even in the waiting, I am choosing joy. Because I know it is in this season of waiting where my faith is being tested. And if my faith is tested and I

pass that test with endurance and faithfulness, I will be stronger because of it.

You are not alone. We are walking through this season hand in hand, step by step, looking to God and praising Him the whole way.

In the pages to follow, we will choose joy and purpose each day. We will trust God during our waiting. We will finally feel the peace that we were always longing for, even amid the in-between.

Thankfully, we serve a God who is not going to let us walk through this season alone. Surely, there is joy to be found right where we are, right now.

XOXO,
Ashley

**The Joy
of the
In-Between**

Day 1

What to Do in the Waiting

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

—1 PETER 5:10, ESV

One Saturday morning, I decided to go on a walk. I came to a stoplight, pressed the button, and waited for the signal. One minute passed. I hit the button again, thinking that surely pressing it multiple times would speed up the process. Another minute passed . . . and I was still waiting.

I then noticed a sign above the crosswalk button that read *Steady*, encouraging pedestrians to wait for the signal to illuminate. I had been standing about four minutes at this one stoplight—which felt like an eternity. And then, finally, a signal said *Walk*, and I continued on my way.

Later that day, I thought about the word *steady* and how it relates to a long, painful waiting season. Other words for *steady* are *consistent*, *faithful*, *regular*, and *constant*. It can be difficult to know what to do while you wait, when you're not sure what's next or why God is making you wait so long. But perhaps there is something we can do

as we wait: We can stay steady. We can stay faithful. We can stay consistent, right where our feet are.

In my own life, that's looked like continuing to show up to the same church and the same community and love the same people God has given me to love, no matter how frustrating they may seem. I can stay faithful in prayer and Scripture reading, even when I don't see

HOW HAS GOD BEEN
FAITHFUL TO YOU
IN THE PAST?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK
LIKE TO STAY FAITHFUL
WHERE GOD HAS YOU
TODAY?

my circumstance changing. Half the battle of staying faithful in a waiting season is continuing to show up.

No matter how long you've been waiting, God will give you strength as you struggle to get through today. He will direct you as you feel directionless. He will steady you as you remain

faithful to what He has given you to do. Eventually, God's perfect plan will be revealed in your situation. And perhaps because of your wait, the answered prayers and the change of seasons will be all the sweeter when it finally happens. So, stay faithful today. Stay steady. Eventually, this season will give way to something new. And when it happens, you will be ready.

Lord, I lift up this season of waiting to You. Please help me wait well and stay faithful right where You have me. I know You will not waste this season. In Jesus's name, amen.

Day 2

God Knows What You Need

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

—ROMANS 8:26

The other day I was sitting at a coffee shop, working on my laptop. When lunchtime rolled around, the most random craving came to mind: I wanted a taco bowl. But since I didn't know of any nearby taco places, I let the thought go.

Shortly after, I got a call from one of my good friends. "Hey, Ash, have you had lunch yet?"

"No, not yet! But I was *just* wondering what to get."

"I'm going to bring you lunch."

That was music to my ears. I thanked her and asked what she was bringing. She replied, "I made Mexican rice this morning, so I'm going to make a little taco bowl with it!" You should have seen the look on my face.

Although this example may seem like a happy coincidence, it reveals a God who cares about even the smallest details in our lives. I love what Romans 8:26 says about the Spirit interceding when we don't know what to pray for. Isn't it crazy that the God of the uni-

verse knew my desire for a taco bowl—and He met my desire? Not even because I asked Him for it, but just because He loves me. And if God cares about small things like what I want for lunch, He certainly cares about major things, such as what I desire for my life and relationships and future. He cares just as much for your desires right now—no matter how insignificant they may seem.

Your heavenly Father knows what you want and need—even before you ask Him. He knows what you want for lunch. He knows

WHAT WAS A SMALL
PRAYER REQUEST GOD
ANSWERED FOR YOU?

WHAT IS A BIG PRAYER
REQUEST YOU CAN
BRING TO HIM TODAY?

what you want in a spouse. He knows the healing you're seeking, the redemption you crave to see. He knows what you want for your life.

This doesn't mean God *always* gives us everything we want. But do not forget for a second that the God of the universe sees you and cares about you today—even the little details of your life. Even when God doesn't answer prayers in the ways we expect, we can trust that He will provide for us in His perfect timing and according to His perfect plan.

So let this be your reminder to bring every need and every request to Him, even the small and seemingly insignificant ones. Just think—if He cares for something as small as my wish for a taco bowl, how much *more* will He care for you in the big and difficult areas of your life? You are in good hands today.

Lord, I lift up my desires to You. I know that You care for the little things as much as the big. I trust You to provide for me today. In Jesus's name, amen.



Day 3

You Won't Know Unless You Go

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

—JOHN 16:13

I don't know about you, but I love to know the entire plan before I do something. I want to know where we're going, what we'll be doing, and where the nearest grocery store is in relation to where we are staying. The problem with this is we rarely know the whole plan before we take the first step. And if we wait for a complete road map, we might not ever move at all. Because God rarely works that way.

Many of us want to know *for sure* that God is telling us to do something before we take that first step. But how do we know if we're hearing God's voice? How do we even get guidance from God? In my own life, God has guided me in many ways: through the Bible, wise counsel from other believers, and even a sense of peace. I've sensed God's direction through song lyrics, movies, and even a billboard. He is quite creative, and He can—and surely will—use anything to speak to us. We can be assured that we aren't alone as we

make decisions, because Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide us when we don't know what to do next.

But just because we sense God's guidance on something doesn't mean it won't be scary to move. There are still risks involved, because to move in faith is risky. You never really know how things are going to turn out. After all, you are getting guidance from a God you can't even see.

In the past, when I have felt God leading me to do something, I have taken a brave step of faith and moved. If that step brought success, I rejoiced. But if I completely failed and fell on my face? The worst thing that happened was that *I learned*.

So you might not know the next right step to take. Maybe you

WHERE HAVE YOU
MOVED IN FAITH, AND IT
WAS SUCCESSFUL?

HOW CAN YOU TAKE A
STEP OF FAITH IN YOUR
SITUATION TODAY?

feel paralyzed in your situation, not exactly sure what to do. Let this be a gentle reminder to ask God for the wisdom you need. Ask Him to guide you to the right job, to the right person to marry, to the right next step to take.

And if you feel He gives you an answer and it aligns with His Word, His peace, and His character, let that be your sign to step out in faith and move. Together, we will succeed—or we will learn. We are much better off than if we don't ever try.

Lord, I lift up this area of my life where I'm seeking direction. I ask that Your Holy Spirit guide me on the right path. Please show me the way today, and give me the courage to move in faith. In Jesus's name, amen.

Day 4

Preparation Is Necessary

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction.

—2 TIMOTHY 4:2

I am not the biggest fan of planes. In fact, the last time I flew, I ended up looking out the window before we took off to make sure the ground crew was doing their job. But as I watched them refuel the plane and perform their other routine checks, I began to feel comforted by the amount of careful preparation that's taken before a plane even leaves the ground. Not only do pilots train for many years, logging thousands of miles before transporting passengers, but planes also have to be inspected by ground-crew members and other officials to ensure they are safe for takeoff.

Similarly, in our own lives, God is always preparing us for something bigger than what we can see now. He prepares us by encouraging us to take small, daily steps of faithfulness in the right direction. He prepares us by giving us family and friends to love well—before we have the spouse. He prepares us by giving us opportunities to test out and use our gifts—before we get the platform.

Many of us often try to skip the preparation and go right to the

blessing. However, the preparation makes the blessing sweeter when it comes. And the preparation is necessary for building the character you need to steward the blessing you'll receive.

If you miss the chance to prepare yourself, then by the time God gives you the opportunity, you won't be ready. You might still "take

WHAT BLESSING HAS
GOD PREPARED YOU
FOR THAT YOU'RE
WALKING IN TODAY?

HOW CAN YOU PREPARE
FOR WHAT YOU'RE
WAITING FOR?

off" . . . but without the character or the readiness to reach your greatest potential.

God never wastes a season of your life, even if that looks like a season of preparation. Success comes when preparation meets opportunity, and opportunity can only come

from the Lord. We are all given opportunities. Use this time of waiting to prepare for the blessing so, when the opportunity comes, you will be ready.

Lord, I desire to do Your will. Please prepare me for what You have planned for me. I want to be ready for any opportunity You send my way. In Jesus's name, amen.