

Waiting

Being patient seems especially hard this time of year. Many children – ages 2 to 92 – have a hard time dealing with the fact that Christmas morning is still several days off, especially when every time they turn on the television or go outside there's a reminder of all the gift-giving (or is it gift-*getting*?) that is supposed to be going on.

The reminders I love, though, are the ones about the gift of Jesus Christ. Our Father God offers us forgiveness and a rich relationship with him for all eternity through Jesus, God the Son. Not only that, but Jesus promises us the gift of the God the Holy Spirit to live in us always. We truly receive from God the gift that keeps on giving. Let's spend this week exploring what it means to receive the gift of the Savior, as we await patiently the day we celebrate his birth.

Monday – Time Fully Come

"Patience is not passive; on the contrary, it is active; it is concentrated strength." Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton

1. Please read Galatians 4:4-7. How might verse 4 reassure you that God is in full control of his plans?
2. Read 2 Peter 3:8-9. What should we keep in mind about God's timetable? How does this affect your ability to be patient in spiritual matters? In day to day activities?

Text Insight: In God's view, a thousand years are "like" a day, not "equal" to one day. Peter is describing a proper view of how God's plans unfold, not teaching us a mathematical equation.

3. Describe the attributes of God listed in Psalm 145:8-9. What benefit does that passage identify from having a God who exercises patience?

Making it Personal: When do you find yourself most impatient? What are you impatient about right now. Ask God to guide you in learning how to face those situations with patience, grace and compassion.

Tuesday – Full Rights under Law

"You cannot make men good by law." C.S. Lewis, 20th c. Anglo-Irish writer and professor

1. Please read Galatians 4:4-5. What does the word "law" usually bring first to your mind? What do you think Paul had in mind when he used the word "law"?

Text Insight: This passage refers to laws that governed the Israelites. Those laws were found throughout the Old Testament, largely in the first 5 books of the Bible but also in the books of history, poetry and prophecy.

2. What did God promise for his people in Deuteronomy 18:15-18? What does this passage tell us about the manner in which God worked through his prophets?
3. Read Acts 3:19-23; how did God keep his promise in Deuteronomy 18? What are you to do (Acts 3:19)?

Digging Deeper: Read Romans 2:17-29 and 3:21-31. How is Jesus' fulfillment of the Old Testament law and prophecy able to bring us the benefits of God's grace instead of the penalties of his judgment?

Wednesday – Spirit Sent

"A church in the land without the Spirit is rather a curse than a blessing." Charles Spurgeon

1. Please read Galatians 4:6. What has the Spirit done in our lives?
2. Take a look at John 14:26, 15:26 & 16:7 and note the progression: Jesus said the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father, by Jesus from the Father, and by Jesus. What does this tell you about Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
3. Now read Acts 5:1-11. How is the Holy Spirit identified in verses 3-5? How does this help you understand the Holy Spirit's ability to do the work described in Galatians 4:6?

Making it Personal: The Spirit desires and longs for the things of God (Galatians 5:17). What desires has he put in your life and what are you doing to yield to those desires?

Thursday – Abba Father

"It is a wise child that knows its own father." Danish proverb

1. Please read Galatians 4:6. What does it mean to you to have the same Father Jesus has?
2. In Matthew 3:13-17, how are all three persons of the Godhead (also called the Trinity) acting together? How would you describe their relationship with one another?
3. Describe the intimate relationship Jesus lays out for us with his Father in Matthew 6:5-15.

Prayer Focus: Re-read Matthew 6:9-13 slowly as a prayer you are offering to your Father right now.

Friday – Inheritance

"He is no great heir that inherits not his ancestor's virtues." Portuguese proverb

1. Please read Galatians 4:7. How do the words "slave," "son," and "heir" apply to your relationship with God?

Text Insight: "Son" is used here in a legal sense, since sons had greater inheritance rights under the law. The inheritance is for all people – female and male – who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

2. Read John 8:31-47. Who are the two spiritual fathers Jesus speaks of here?
3. What does Jesus do for those who trust him (v. 36)? How does this reinforce Galatians 4:7?

Making it Personal: Who is your spiritual father? Ask God to show you the riches he has for those who are his children and heirs.

For the Weekend: Re-read Galatians 4:4-7 as you consider the approach of Christmas Day. How do you now view the gift God our Father has given you through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?