

**Text:** [Luke 2:25-38](#)  
**Date:** July 18, 2021  
**Title:** The Power of Patience Series, Week 2 > “Pray, Expect, Watch”  
**Theme:** Christian patience requires us to pray, expect, and watch for God to move.

## 1

Do you have a movie or TV series that you love so much, you just can't wait to see the next one?

There's always something someone is waiting for:

A new Marvel movie

The next season of *Stranger Things*

Or if you're a sports fan:

Opening day of the baseball season, or this time of year:

The Eagles' first preseason game (August 12!)

But when I was growing up, and perhaps even more so in recent years, the thing I was waiting for were the *Star Wars* movies

When I was in elementary school, my Mom signed me up for a *Star Wars* fan club

I would get quarterly newsletters (*Bantha Tracks* was the name, I

remember – and if you have no idea what that is, I'll let you look it up)

I remember they always included updates about the production of the next film

And it was in those newsletters that I first read about the grand plan for nine movies

Which was mind-blowing, because up to that point only two had been released

I remember thinking: nine? Really?

I was absolutely thrilled every time *Bantha Tracks* came

And I watched for the next film to be released

Well, we waited a long time for that nine-film vision to be completed

And, like everyone else, I was mightily disappointed in the long-promised prequels

Sooooo much patience for soooooo little payback

But, I have to say, the last three made up for it – at least, mostly

My thing was *Star Wars*.

What was yours?

What is it that you've watched and waited in expectation for?

## 2

Now, there was a long gap between the release of the original movies and the prequels – 16 years to be exact

And another 11 before the most recent trilogy

I mean, for the whole series to be released took 42 years

That requires whole lot of patience

Patience is a necessary skill for life, because there are plenty of things that can sometimes take a long time to happen for us:

The right job

The right partner

The right community

The right volunteer opportunity

Or the right ministry in the church

We might find ourselves waiting on certain prayers to be answered:

Prayers for healing

Prayers for peace

Prayers for justice

Prayers for salvation

Prayers for the restoration of a relationship

So this is a skill we need in our lives in general, and in our spiritual lives in particular

Because waiting is a part of our every day experience

And we can either learn to do it well

Or we can be impatient and frustrated all the time

So the question is: how can we do it well?

## 3

Today's scripture is a kind of Christmas-in-July story

We normally read about Simeon and Anna just after we celebrate Jesus' birth

And it's the story of two people who have been looking forward to  
something with great expectation and hope  
People who cover that expectation in prayer  
And people who watch for signs that God is making good on a promise

Notice how the scripture begins and ends:  
At the start, Simeon is described as "anticipating the restoration of Israel"  
And at the end, Anna spreads the good news about Jesus to all who were  
"looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem"

Now, to understand these phrases, we have to understand the context  
Israel was once a powerful nation – under King David, it controlled territory  
well beyond the borders of modern Israel  
But in the thousand years after David, Israel was at the crossroads of  
various empires and mostly lived under the rule of others  
In Jesus' time, as you probably know, the Romans were in charge  
And for the average person, life under the Empire was incredibly difficult

So the people had long dreamed of a time when they would again be free  
Folks might use different words for it: the restoration or consolation of  
Israel, the redemption of Jerusalem, the salvation from God  
But the idea and expectation was always the same: that God would act to  
send someone who would make everything right  
A Comforter, a Savior, a Messiah

Now I think you can probably agree that 1000 years, and the rise and fall of  
five empires is a long time to wait for God to do something  
And yet, Simeon and Anna were both still filled with this expectation and  
hope, based on God's promises  
They genuinely believed that any day, something would happen

We might call that kind of expectation overly optimistic at best  
A pipe dream, a waste of time, or crazy at worst  
And yet, these two prophets believed in the promises of God  
Every day they practiced patience, expecting God to make good on those  
promises  
And finally, at long last, God came through

## 4

Both of these prophets had two specific practices that helped to keep that  
anticipation and hope alive  
That allowed them to live in that patient expectation

The first was prayer  
And the second was watching

Both Simeon and Anna are described as devout – worshipping, fasting,  
praying all the time  
Fully devoted to God  
And committed to a practice of prayer that's not just about talking  
But about listening

The scripture says that God had revealed to Simeon that he would not die  
before he saw the Messiah  
How else can you receive that information except by listening?  
Except by setting aside regular time where you get quiet before God  
Where you stop talking  
And just wait to hear what God might reveal  
Listening for what clues there might be for you today about when and how  
God will show up?

Which brings me to the other key discipline of patience: watching  
Because what good is waiting for something to happen if, when it happens,  
you miss it?  
Israel had waited 1000 years for a Messiah: imagine if Simeon and Anna  
had slept in on the day Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the  
Temple?

But instead, Simeon and Anna were in the right place at the right time to  
see it  
That wasn't just luck  
They were watching

Simeon was prompted by the Spirit to go and see  
He had a gut feeling that he trusted  
And his willingness to act on it allowed him to move toward what God was  
ready to reveal to the world

## 5

Often, I think we allow our minds to dismiss our intuitions  
It's like: "It's been 1000 years. Why should I believe that anything will  
happen today?"

But when we've stopped watching, we've stopped expecting  
We've stopped trusting  
We've stopped believing that God is actually going to do something

And at that point, our patience with God's possibility becomes something  
else:

Impatience with what we perceive as God's inaction  
And eventually, I would say – depending on how much we wanted the thing  
we were waiting for – it becomes indifference toward God altogether

I think this is exactly the reason why so many of us struggle with faith  
It's because we've failed to practice patience when the things we looked for  
and hoped for took too long to happen

So eventually we conclude that God isn't interested  
That God has ignored our prayers  
That there's no point in expecting anything from God at all

Patience is hard  
But it's necessary.  
If Israel waited 1000 years for the Christ  
If a generation can wait 42 years for a movie franchise to reach its  
conclusion  
Why can't we wait for the work of God to reach its fulfillment in other areas  
of our lives?

The keys to patience that we learn from today's scripture are simple: pray,  
expect, and watch.

PRAY and listen for God's guidance  
EXPECT and trust that God will do something  
WATCH for the signs that something is about to happen and move toward  
them

And to help you remember, I've given you a helpful little mnemonic  
Did you notice?

I started by talking about Star Wars  
And my points are PRAY, EXPECT, WATCH

You following me, here?  
The keys to patience are: pray, expect, watch  
Pew-pew. Pew-pew.

It's dumb, I know.  
But I couldn't help myself.  
And the idea is important.

Because a lack of patience leads to a lack of faith.  
And there's nothing I find more disturbing.

Thanks for hanging in and indulging me this morning.  
Let's pray together.

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