

# PREPARE HIM ROOM

28 WAYS TO EMBRACE  
THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

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Prepare Him Room: 28 Ways to Embrace the Spirit of Christmas

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28 WAYS TO EMBRACE  
THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

*Darlene Schacht*

Time-Warp Wife Ministries



Time-Warp Wife  
MINISTRIES



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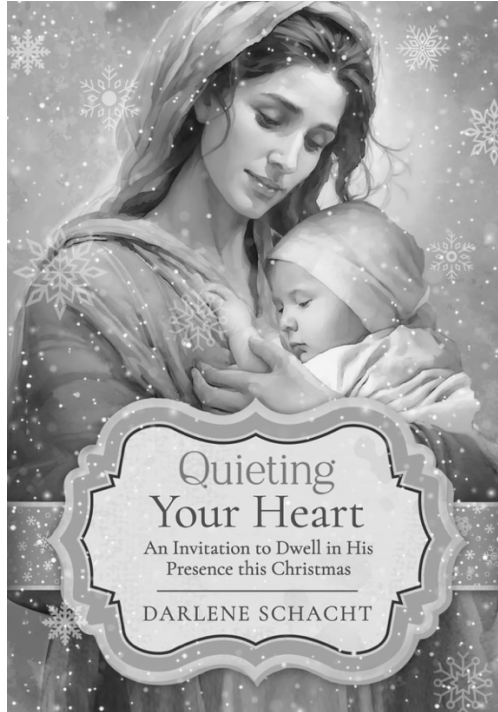
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## Embrace the Spirit of Christmas

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be  
on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

—Isaiah 9:6

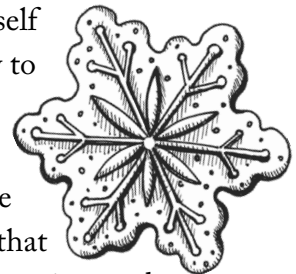
Hi Besties,

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the pressures of Christmas? Wishing you could go back to a simpler time, when the season was more about joy and less about stress? I think many of us can relate. If we're not careful, the holidays—with all the expectations, to-do lists, bells, whistles, hustle, and bustle—can overshadow the true reason we celebrate.

When I think back to Christmas days long ago, I can't help but think of my mom. She had an incredible ability to make every Christmas feel special. Weeks of preparation went into decorating, shopping, cooking, baking, cleaning, and wrapping gifts—all to create a home filled with comfort and joy during the holiday season. Our freezer was packed with homemade treats—sugar cookies, shortbread, peanut butter cookies, butter tarts, you name it. She filled every table with festive candies, nuts, and those little Japanese oranges that somehow made Christmas complete.

As I tried to follow in her footsteps, I found myself overwhelmed. She was so good at it, and it came naturally to her, but perfection is not my forte—especially when it comes to baking.

It took me a while to learn to let go. To release the expectations, the pursuit of perfection, and the frustration that came with it. Christmas is meant to be a time of hope, peace, joy, and



love. It's about celebrating the birth of Jesus, not about achieving a perfect holiday scene. That's what this book is about. It's not about adding more tasks to your to-do list; it's about making room—preparing Him room—in our hearts and in our homes. It's about focusing on what truly matters, finding contentment, and nurturing the relationships that bring meaning to our lives.

I invite you, as you read these pages, to pause. Breathe. Let go of the pressure to create a perfect Christmas and instead embrace its true spirit. Let's take this journey together, finding comfort in knowing that we don't need to do it all—just make room for Him.

As you read, I encourage you to ask yourself: What would Christmas look like if I let go of the expectations and truly embraced its spirit?

We're all in this together—seeking hope, peace, joy, and love in a sometimes chaotic world. Let's walk this path side by side.

May you truly feel the love and peace of Jesus this Christmas, no matter what else is going on around you.

Darlene Schacht,  
The Time-Warp Wife



*Christmas isn't about the perfection of  
our homes, but the preparation of our  
hearts. It's the quiet moments, the  
small gestures of love, and the warmth  
of His presence that make  
the season truly meaningful.*

Darlene Schacht





**THE FOUR ADVENT CANDLES** are a beautiful Christmas tradition. Each one has a special meaning, reminding us to prepare our hearts for the coming celebration. Typically, one candle is lit for each of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Maybe you'd like to do the same throughout the 4 weeks of our study.

**1. The First Candle: The Candle of Hope**

This candle is all about hope and anticipation. It's often called the Prophecy Candle because it represents the promises of the Old Testament about the coming of the Messiah. When we light it, we remember the long-awaited promise of our Savior and the hope God brings to a world that can sometimes feel dark.

**2. The Second Candle: The Candle of Peace**

The second candle stands for peace. It's also known as the Bethlehem Candle, named after the place where Jesus was born. This candle reminds us that Jesus brought peace into the world—peace between God and humanity. It's a comforting reminder that through Him, we're reconciled to God.

**3. The Third Candle: The Candle of Joy**

This candle symbolizes joy and is sometimes called the Shepherd's Candle. It takes us back to that moment when the shepherds heard the incredible news of Christ's birth from the angels—how joyful they must have been! This candle is pink, a little different from the others, to show a break in the more reflective tone of the season, and instead focus on the joy that Jesus brings.

**4. The Fourth Candle: The Candle of Love**

The fourth candle represents love and is often called the Angel's Candle. It's all about remembering the love of God for us—shown so beautifully in the gift of His Son, Jesus. The angels proclaimed this message of love and peace to the world on the night of Jesus' birth, and we carry that message in our hearts today.









## Trust in God's Plan

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” —Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV*

Read: Luke 1-2

When my kids were younger, one of our favorite Christmas traditions was setting up the nativity scene. Gathered around the big box of decorations, excitement filled the air as little hands eagerly unwrapped each figure—Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the animals, and of course, baby Jesus. Each piece was handled with excitement and care.

One year, as we unpacked the nativity set, we realized something was missing—baby Jesus. We searched everywhere, digging through tissue paper and old ornaments, checking the box again and again. The kids even crawled under the tree, hoping He had just rolled away. But He wasn't there. The whole nativity scene felt incomplete without Him. Mary and Joseph were there, the shepherds were there, but without Jesus, the heart of the message was missing.

That moment made me realize how true this is for our lives. We can have all the right pieces—the job, the house, the family, even a church—but without Jesus at the center, none of it feels right. There's an emptiness that nothing else can fill. That year, we found a small doll from the toy bin to use as a stand-in for baby Jesus. It worked in a pinch, but it was a clear reminder—when we lose sight of Jesus, nothing else can quite fill His place.

As I got to thinking about the gap in our nativity scene, I realized how easy it is to lose sight of Jesus amid the busyness of life, especially at Christmas. There's always one more gift to buy, one more event to attend, and it's so easy to forget Who we're celebrating and why. How we try to fill the empty spaces in our lives with other things, hoping they'll bring us peace. But the truth is, nothing else could ever take His place.

Think about the first Christmas. God's plan for the birth of His Son was far from what anyone expected. A young, unmarried girl, a simple, uncomfortable stable. It was messy and humble. But God's plans are always perfect, even when they unfold in unconventional ways. Mary and Joseph didn't know how everything would play out. They couldn't see the whole picture, but they chose to trust. Because they did, the Savior of the world was born in that little stable, bringing light to the world.

This Christmas, if you find yourself feeling like something's amiss, if life isn't fitting together the way that you planned, take a step back. Remember that Jesus fills every gap, every longing, every empty place in our heart. God's plans may not turn out the way we hope or expect, but His wisdom is far greater than ours, and His grace is sufficient for us.

Let's choose to trust Him, even when the way seems unclear, or the pieces don't fit in the way we expect. His presence fills what's lacking, and with Him, we find true meaning and wholeness. This Christmas, let's invite Him in—not just into our homes but into every moment and every plan. Because when Jesus is at the center of our lives, everything else falls into place.

## Today's Challenge:

Take one small step in faith today, even if you can't see the full picture. Whether it's reaching out to someone, tackling an unfamiliar task, or letting go of a worry, trust that God will guide your path.







## Seek Contentment

*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.  
I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether  
well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

—*Philippians 4:12, NIV*

Read: Psalm 23

I want everything to go well for my family at Christmas—whether it's hoping the turkey will be cooked in time, the food will taste good, or the wrapping will all get done before midnight. I pray things will fall into place. I hope that my kids will have a good day—don't we all?

But here's the thing—what happens when things don't fall into place? When the turkey is dry, the mashed potatoes are lumpy, and you forgot to pick up that last gift? What do we do when our picture-perfect Christmas unravels?

The truth is, Christmas isn't meant to be picture-perfect. It's meant to remind us of Christ. If we think that first night was calm and serene, and everything went as planned, we're sorely mistaken. Imagine being nine months pregnant, traveling 85 miles of rough terrain on a donkey, only to find out there's no room at the inn. Imagine going into labor with no proper bed or blanket in sight. There was no one boiling water or calling a doctor like we see on TV. It was just Mary, Joseph, and the uncertainty of that night. And maybe a little boy playing drums—okay, maybe not, but you get the idea.

Maybe that's your life today, in one way or another. The picture-perfect marriage you dreamed of is filled with challenges you never saw coming.

The kids you hoped would always be close have distanced themselves. The cozy home you envisioned is too costly to fix. How can we be content when this world keeps letting us down?

There's a common mindset that says, "When my circumstances change, I'll be happy." But the truth is, if we're not happy with less, we won't be happy with more. Paul offers us a better way of living, removing the crutch we're so used to leaning on. He writes, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Philippians 4:12, NIV).

Paul's secret has nothing to do with the changing world around him—it's about the Spirit living within him. Throughout Scripture, we see God's people thriving in difficult moments, not because God is reshaping their circumstances, but because He's reshaping their hearts.

A change of heart leads to a change in attitude—one of gratitude. Just as Paul "learned" the secret of being content, we too can learn to live that way, with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, this Christmas, instead of focusing on what we don't have, let's embrace the blessings we do have. Let's trust that even when things don't go as planned, God is still good, and His presence is our greatest gift.

## Today's Challenge:

Take a moment to list five things you're grateful for, even if they seem small. Focus on those blessings throughout the day especially if you're frustrated, or something doesn't go as planned.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_







## Remain Faithful

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

—1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV

Read: Hebrews 11 and Isaiah 9

I'm a big fan of Chip and Joanna, but then again, who isn't, right? Everything they do is jaw-droppingly gorgeous, and somehow, they make it look effortless. Anyone who's gone through a renovation process knows that it's anything but easy. It always looks worse before it gets better, and let's not forget about those unforeseen costs!

Michael and I just finished our basement (technically, he did the work, but since we're one flesh, I'll take a bit of credit too). It looks amazing, but if you had seen it a year ago, you might have doubted it would ever get done. The place was a mess for two years, and the light at the end of the tunnel was dim.

This one-man project was huge. Michael had to design it, frame it, and build it from scratch. And I'm not talking about just one or two rooms. We're talking bedrooms, two storage rooms, a family room, a bathroom—the works!

It was a lot to take on, but if there's one thing I know about Michael, it's this: he doesn't give up. Once he sets his mind to something, there's no turning back, no matter how difficult the journey may be.

Michael's persistence reminds me of what it means to be faithful—not just in projects like this, but in life in general. He's faithful to our marriage, faithful to his word, and most of all, he's faithful to God. He's taught me to push through, even when it doesn't seem like things are coming together. His determination to finish a project mirrors the kind of faithfulness God calls us to live by.

Looking at the book of Genesis, we see faithfulness in action. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations (Genesis 17:4-5), yet Abraham and Sarah waited for years without seeing that promise fulfilled. Even well past the age of having children, they held on to God's promise. Eventually, when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, God fulfilled His promise by giving them a son, Isaac (Genesis 21:1-3).

But God's promise didn't end there. It pointed ahead to something far greater—the coming Messiah who would take away the sin of the world. Christmas is a celebration of God's faithfulness to that long-awaited promise, fulfilled through Jesus Christ, His Son. It's a reminder to trust in His unchanging nature and to rest in His unfailing care.

So, just like a renovation project, life can get messy before it gets beautiful. There's dust, uncertainty, and sometimes it feels like we're tearing down more than we're building. But God is faithful, and He's committed to completing the work He's begun in us. Let's remember that, even when we can't see the finished product yet, we can trust the One who's in charge of the project.

*"Faithful one, so unchanging, Ageless one, you're my rock of peace.  
Lord of all, I depend on you. I call out to you, again and again."  
(Brian Doerksen, "Faithful One")*

## Today's Challenge:

Think about an area in your life where you're waiting for something or trusting God to come through. Ask God to help you trust Him with the process, even when things don't seem to be moving the way you'd hoped. Throughout the day, remind yourself that God is faithful, and that He's working, even when you can't see it.







## Be Hopeful

*Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.*

—*Jeremiah 17:7-8, NIV*

Read: Psalm 1 and John 15:1-17

Have you ever heard of a Shepherd's Tree? On the surface, they're not particularly impressive. They tend to be modest and unassuming, with a relatively small trunk compared to other trees. But, as they say, you can't judge a book by its cover. Beneath this ordinary-looking tree lies extraordinary strength. The roots of the Shepherd's Tree reach depths of up to 223 feet, making it the deepest known root structure in the world.

There's a reason this root system is the way it is—it's because of the harsh, dry environment in which it grows. In places like the Kalahari Desert, the tree relies on its deep roots to tap into underground water sources. This allows it to survive in conditions that other plants simply can't. The more I've read about this, the more I've come to love the tenacity of this tree. It doesn't just survive; it does what it takes to thrive.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 tells us, "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

This passage beautifully captures the idea of being deeply rooted in Christ. Those who trust in the Lord are sustained through difficult times—not because of an outward appearance of faith, but because of what lies beneath. Roots of faith and trust connect us to God, and the more we rely on His strength, the deeper those roots grow.

It's not just Shepherd's Trees that need water—all trees do. Even our Christmas trees need to be standing in water if we want them to last. I'm not talking about the artificial ones you pick up at Target. I'm talking about the real deal—the ones you haul home in the back of your red pickup truck, fresh from the lot. There's something special about a real tree, isn't there? The smell of pine filling your home, bringing back memories of Christmas long ago. But as wonderful as they are, real trees come with a responsibility—they need to be watered. If you don't water your tree, it dries out, the needles get brittle, fall to the floor, and instead of being the colorful, fragrant tree it once was, it becomes lifeless and dull, like most of the plants I've brought home.

Maybe you're facing a challenge this Christmas or having a difficult day. If you're suffering loss or struggling with fear, lower your anchor, my friend, and let His faithfulness hold you firm and secure. More than a wish for better days ahead, hope is there to remind us that God is not done. How do we embrace the Spirit of Hope? The same way the trees do—we soak in His Word to grow stronger in faith. We trust in our God, who is mighty to save. And when the winds of adversity rise up and roar, we stand on His promises—firm and secure.

## Today's Challenge:

Spend at least 10 minutes today in prayer or reading Scripture, asking God to help you deepen your trust in Him. Let this be your way of staying connected to the source of true life and peace.







## Speak Life

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. —1 Thessalonians 5:11, NIV*

Read: Ephesians 4

My grandkids come over about once a month and stay for a couple of days. I love every minute of it, but let me just say—they never stop talking. From the moment they walk through the door until they leave, they chit and chat without taking a break. Julia, I can understand perfectly well, but most of the time, Joseph sounds like he’s speaking in tongues.

But who am I to talk, right? I’m a woman, and I know how much we love to talk. My friend Sandra and I are a lot like the kids. We have so much to say in so little time that some days we can’t fit it all in.

Studies say that, on average, women talk three times as much as men. We speak about 13,000 more words each day. An average man will speak around 7,000 words while his wife speaks 20,000.<sup>1</sup> Of course, this is just an average—some days, I’m sure I speak about five times that much!

Our words are a powerful tool, aren’t they? They can build others up, but they can also wound deeply. In James chapter 3, we read about the potential dangers of misusing our tongues. In verse 6, James even says that the tongue “sets the whole course of one’s life on fire.”

That’s a strong but necessary warning when you consider how many lives are damaged by careless words. Marriages are broken, children are wounded, families are divided, and even countries can go to war. The impact

of our words can be devastating, and in some cases, those affected never fully heal.

Proverbs 18:21 tells us, “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” The tongue can also be used to build up and breathe life into others. Can you think of a better time to do that than now? The holidays give us countless opportunities to share hope with those around us. Whether we’re standing in line at the mall or sitting down with friends for a meal, a few words of encouragement can go a long way.

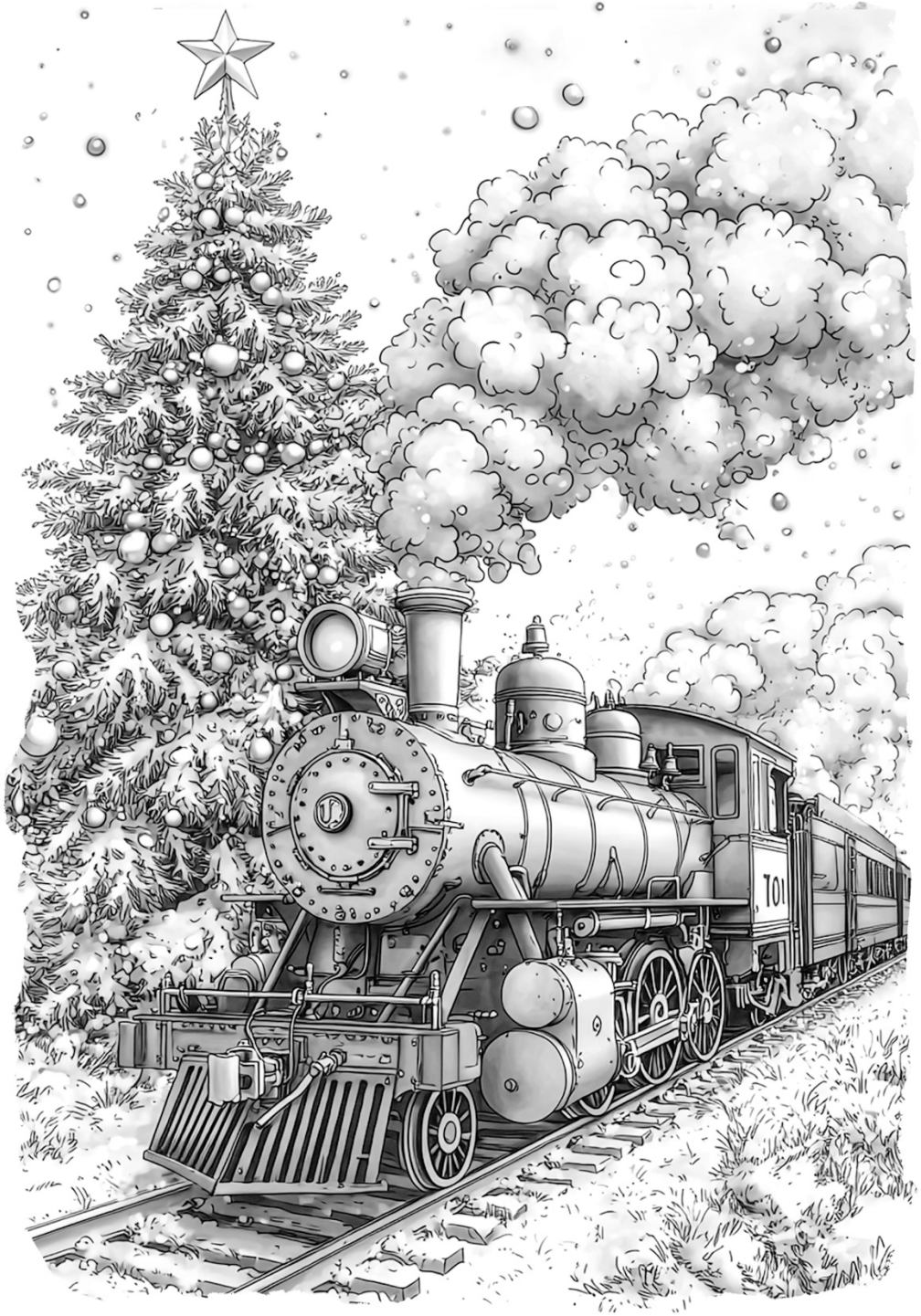
In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul writes, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” This call to encourage one another goes beyond simply “being nice.” When we encourage others, we help them overcome adversity and grow stronger in their faith. Christmas is more than just a celebration; it’s a proclamation of our faith—an opportunity to share the message of redemption. It’s a chance to give the world an answer to our brokenness, a plan to restore what was lost, and rescue us from sin through the gift of Jesus Christ, whose birth brought hope, healing, and new life to all who believe.

<sup>1</sup> *Fiona MacRae, "Sorry to Interrupt Dear, But Women Really Do Talk More Than Men," Mail Online, Science Correspondent.*

## Today’s Challenge:

Speak life into someone’s life today. Whether it's offering an encouraging word to a family member, sending a note to a friend, or sharing a Scripture verse with someone who needs hope, use your words to build others up.







## Be Patient

*But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint. —Isaiah 40:31, NIV*

Read: Psalm 37 and Romans 8:18-39

There's something about the Christmas season that brings me back to my youth. The joyful anticipation of waiting is something you never outgrow. Whether we're waiting in line, waiting for guests, or waiting for morning to come, we're reminded that waiting is a part of God's plan. After all, God's people waited thousands of years for the Messiah to come.

My husband and I have different approaches to waiting. He takes his time—he's patient, thoughtful, and makes sure every detail is firmly in place before moving ahead. Me? I'm on the opposite side. I tend to move quickly without pausing to breathe, which isn't always the best choice.

Corrie Ten Boom once said, "When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer." That quote gets me every time, because I know I tend to get impatient in times of waiting and uncertainty. God's timing is perfect, and sometimes He asks us to wait—not to delay us, but to develop character through faith, patience, and trust.

When Jesus arrived on that dark, starry night, it wasn't with the grand entrance we might expect. He came quietly, born in a manger, and His timing was part of God's plan. Imagine all that people endured while waiting for Him—centuries of slavery in Egypt, years of wandering in the

wilderness, periods of captivity in Babylon, and generations under foreign rulers. Through all of this, God's people clung to the promise of a Messiah, waiting and trusting that, in God's perfect timing, deliverance would come.

The Bible is full of examples of people who waited patiently—Noah waited for rain, Joseph waited in prison, Hannah waited for a child, Abraham waited for the promised son, and the Israelites waited forty years to enter the Promised Land. In each story, God's delay wasn't denial; it was preparation.

If you're in a season of waiting this Christmas—waiting for healing, for employment, for a family, or for another answer to prayer—don't give up. Those who wait on the Lord aren't waiting in vain; you can trust in His wisdom, His timing, and His sovereign power.

So, this Christmas, as you're waiting on God, see it as a season of preparation. Through patience, He's shaping your faith and molding your heart. Trust that when the time comes for His plan to unfold, He will act with wisdom and power.

Let's trust Him together, believing He's never too late, never too early, and always on time.

## Today's Challenge:

Identify one area of your life where you're waiting on God. commit to embracing this season of waiting, trusting that His timing is perfect and that He is working for your good, even when you can't yet see the results.







## Cling to God's Promises

*The Lord gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled. —Joshua 21:44–45, NIV*

Read: Numbers 13 & 14:1-11 and Joshua 14

If I could invite anyone over for Christmas, aside from the Savior of course, I'd set a place at my table for Caleb. Over turkey, stuffing, and an extra helping of mashed potatoes, we'd eagerly talk about God. You remember Caleb, don't you? We're introduced to him in Numbers 13. When Moses sent out 12 men to explore the land of Canaan, Caleb was one of them. What I love most about him is that he's tough, tenacious, and he leans on the power of God. He's like a Chuck Norris of faith, considering the giants he conquers as bread for the soul (Numbers 14:9).

Caleb saw what many of us often miss—that the promises of God are unfailing. As my dad used to say, "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." When the Israelites were on the verge of entering the Promised Land, Caleb was one of only two spies who believed they could take it, fully trusting in God's promise despite overwhelming obstacles. Even after 45 years of waiting, Caleb's faith didn't waver. At 85 years old, he was still as bold, strong, and determined as ever, confident that God would fulfill His promises—and He did. Caleb's story is a reminder of what it means to cling to God's Word with unwavering faith, no matter how long it might take.

I've encouraged my readers to incorporate God's promises into their prayers. Not because God needs reminding, but because we do. This practice builds our trust in God and provides comfort and hope, knowing that His promises are sure and steadfast.

I know many of you have suffered great loss, some as recently as this year. I know a lot of you are dealing with sickness, pain, financial burdens, and broken relationships. Even if I don't know you by name, there may be a struggle you're going through too. So I want to encourage you, friend. If you're looking for joy in your sorrow, hope through despair, and peace in the midst of uncertainty, cling to the promises God has given us:

- A promise to never leave you nor forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6).
- A promise to give strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak (Isaiah 40:29).
- A promise that His grace is sufficient for you (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- A promise that He works all things together for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).
- A promise that those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength (Isaiah 40:31).

Remember, God's promises may not unfold overnight, and sometimes the waiting is hard. But God's timing is perfect, and He's worth waiting for.

## Today's Challenge:

Take some time today to either jot down or highlight a few of God's promises that speak to your current situation. Meditate on God's promises throughout the day and pray them back to Him.

