

Things to Do While Waiting for Jesus to Return

*After His resurrection Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven, and we are awaiting His return. In the meantime, are we to sit by passively and do nothing?
Or is there something we should be doing?*

We have all heard the mock prayer, “Lord, give me patience...and give it to me *right now!*” In today’s usage, the word “patience” seems to be a pale, almost sickly word, denoting passivity or weakness. But in the Bible, patience is a bold, courageous word, denoting a confident endurance.

There are many Bible examples of impatience leading to sin. Take, for instance, the rebellion of Israel while they were impatiently waiting for Moses to return from the mountain (Exodus 32:1–9), or king Saul’s impatience in waiting for Samuel before he presumptuously offered sacrifices on Samuel’s behalf (1 Samuel 10:8; 13:8–12).

In the Bible, the patient man is undefeated, standing firm, and though buffeted by life, stands quietly persistent in doing good. In the Olivet prophecy, undoubtedly the most important prophecy given for our last days, Christ said, “In your *patience* possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). The Greek word for patience here, *hupomeno*, means cheerful or hopeful endurance, constancy or patient continuance. Hebrews 10:36 says, “For ye have need of *patience*, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”

We spend a great deal of our lives impatiently *waiting* for something or someone, yet we seldom learn how to do it well, either physically or spiritually. We grow impatient in traffic, impatient for the mail carrier to come, for the doctor to see us, or for the mechanic to finish our car. Instead of making good use of our time reading a good book or booklet, writing a letter, or simply thinking about solutions to some vexing problem, we agitatingly waste time by pacing nervously about or drumming our fingers in annoyance.

These seemingly small snatches of time can add up to large segments of our lives. By preplanning and organization, we can redeem the time and accomplish much. Likewise, there is much we can do to redeem the time while waiting for Jesus to return.

When Jesus told His followers He would return, He did not say *how long* they would have to wait. Many have grown impatient and given up the faith (Matthew 24:48). In Acts 1:7–11, Christ’s disciples were told not to stand around watching the heavens for Him. Rather, they were commanded to be busy about the work He gave them to do. By extension, we are to be *doing* something today.

Christ gave a very important parable concerning what we should be doing until He returns. It is found in Luke

12:41–46: “Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.* Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.”

Too many in today’s society—and even many in God’s church today!—have a “the lord delayeth His coming” attitude! What should we be *doing* and *how* should we be doing it?

If Satan cannot get at you any other way, he will waste your time by distraction, interruption, and indecision. Many are confused by “overchoice,” resentment, and emotion, drifting from idea to idea and from church to church. In time, many “burn out,” grow lukewarm, and then cold. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). First and foremost, we need to trust God and get *back to the basics*—the trunk of the tree, doctrinally speaking!

By analogy, this writer recalls that, when he was a teenager, he insanely climbed a tall tree, perhaps “just because it was there.” As long as he clung to the main body—the trunk of the tree—all was well. But one day he went out on a limb, away from the security of the trunk. The further he went out, the more the branches bent, and soon, because his body weight pressed the branches down, he was unable to pull himself up back to the safety of the trunk. Near panic struck! Fortunately, in this instance, he was able to maneuver from branch to branch, lower and lower to safety.

By spiritual analogy, many have gone “out on a limb,” so to speak, doctrinally, debating over semantics, genealogies, and dabbling in vain arguments or personal agendas, and unfortunately were unable to rescue themselves. (See what the Bible has to say about this in 1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7; 6:4,20; 2 Timothy 2:16,23; and Titus 1:14; 3:9!) A wise man once said that if we go out on a limb—if we get away from the basics, or the trunk of the tree, doctrinally speaking—someone will come along and cut it off behind you. How true!

Jesus said, "But he that endureth *to the end* shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). This means, of course, to either the end of our natural lives or, if we are still living, to the return of Jesus Christ. Let us examine some ways we can insure we will endure to the end—how we can cling to the trunk of the tree, or the basics. Let us seriously consider some things we can do while waiting for Jesus to return.

Humble Yourself, Repent, and Do Good Works

God says, "But to *this* man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth* at My Word" (Isaiah 66:2). It seems more and more people today are interested in correcting the Bible instead of letting the Bible correct them. To draw close to God we must proportionately reduce the self. To get the self out of the way we must *humble* ourselves—even by fasting, if necessary. "But as for me," David said, "when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I *humbled* my soul *with fasting*; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom" (Psalm 35:13).

Certain trials and problems need the twin barrels of prayer *and* fasting. "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer *and* fasting" (Matthew 17:21). Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you *be subject one to another*, and be clothed with *humility*: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the *humble*" (1 Peter 5:5). Humility preserves peace and order both in God's church and in society; pride disturbs them. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God," we are told in 1 Peter 5:6, "that he may exalt you in due time."

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:1–3).

On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter, under inspiration, said, "*Repent*, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Much emphasis has been placed upon the word "baptize," while ignoring the word before it, "repent." "Repent" is from the Greek word *metanoeo* (met-an-o-eh'-o), and means to think differently, or reconsider; to be sorrowful for past behavior to the point of changing, turning around and going the other way. It means turning your entire life around in submis-

sion to Jesus Christ! (Send for our free booklet, *Ten Facts You Should Know About Repentance*.)

Repentance is all-important. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

"But [Paul] shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should *repent* and turn to God, and *do works* meet for [worthy of] repentance" (Acts 26:20).

We are reminded in 2 Peter 1:8, "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye *shall neither be barren nor unfruitful* in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Luke 9:23 reads, "And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." We must deny ourselves and be following Jesus Christ daily until He returns.

Read the Bible

A Bible in the hand is worth two in the bookcase. Those who *don't* read the Bible have no advantage over those who *can't* read it. The Bible has survived the negligence of its friends, the false systems and churches built around it, and the warfare of those who have hated it. Thousands do not read the Bible because they fear it will impede their lifestyle. Actually, the exact opposite is true. John 8:32 says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you *free*." Purchasing a Bible one doesn't use saves no one, nor is anyone saved by reading a Bible he does not obey. God gives His Holy Spirit to *whom?*—to those who *obey* Him (Acts 5:32)!

The Bible is God's written Word, a revelation of things that would not otherwise be discoverable by man. Many today are being misled into thinking that all we have to pay heed to is the New Testament. Sadly, they are missing over three-fourths of God's Word! The New Testament is built and grounded upon the Old Testament. One cannot properly understand the New Testament if he is unfamiliar with the Old. All the disciples and New Testament Christians *had* was the so-called Old Testament because the New Testament had not yet been written.

See what the apostle Paul had to say in 2 Timothy 3:15: "And that *from a child* thou hast known the holy scriptures, *which are able to make thee wise unto salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Did you catch that? Paul is saying that the Old Testament was sufficient to make us wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ! Memorize this: "The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed; the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed." They fit together like hand-in-glove. Please do not disregard your Old Testament!

Go to your Bible regularly, open it prayerfully, read it expectantly, and live it joyfully. We must be doing these things diligently until the Lord returns.

Study the Bible

Reading the Bible and *studying* the Bible are two different things. One might compare it with having a right leg and a left leg. *Both* are necessary. One accomplishes one task, the other, another. We *read* the Bible through to get the overall story flow and become familiar with its contents and context. We *study* the Bible to gather all the Scriptures relating to a particular subject or topic.

The apostle Peter makes three interesting points about the Holy Scriptures: 1) The biblical authors wrote according to the inspiration given them (2 Peter 1:20–21). Each one had, as it were, a piece of the puzzle. 2) Some sections in the Bible are difficult to understand. Though the plan of salvation is simple, Holy Writ also contains some deep mysteries (2 Peter 3:16). 3) Ignorant and unstable teachers pervert and wrest the Bible's meaning. While some deliberately twist the Scriptures, even sincere interpreters can promote error through an ignorance of sound hermeneutics. Second Corinthians 11:13–15 warns, "For such are *false* apostles, *deceitful* workers, transforming *themselves* into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* [yes, Satan has ministers who set out to deliberately deceive God's people!] also be transformed as [like, or resembling] the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Is it any wonder God's Word exhorts us to *study* the Bible for ourselves? Like the Bereans, we need to search the Scriptures daily "with all readiness of mind" (Acts 17:11). Satan has no fear of a dusty, unopened Bible, but we *should* have!

Too many come home from Sabbath services and throw their Bible on a shelf and do not pick it up again until the following Sabbath. Is it any wonder so many are spiritually anemic today? By comparison, consider how weak and emaciated your body would be if you did not feed it for an entire week! The Holy Spirit will guide us into all understanding *as* we properly study and follow God's Word (John 16:13).

We are told in 2 Timothy 2:15, "*Study* to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." Not the same as Bible reading. "Study," as used here, is not a passive word. The Greek word used for "study" is *spoudazo* and means literally, to use speed, to make effort, to give earnest diligence, and to labor.

Some may ask, Why study the Bible? Several reasons come to mind: Bible reading increases your faith; all

knowledge essential for salvation is found in your Bible; and Bible study protects us from false teachers who would misguide us.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 reminds us that "*All* scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"—why?—"that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Once again, this contextually refers to the whole of the Old Testament because that was all that was in existence at the time of writing.

How should we study the Bible? *First*, have a goal—a reason to study. Don't just peruse through the Bible in the hope of finding something interesting. *Second*, study topically and with the intent to recall or teach. You do not know a subject well enough yourself unless you can teach it to others. *Third*, our attitude should be one of self-correction. Live by what you learn! The value of the Bible doesn't consist in merely knowing it, but in *obeying* it. You may not at first understand all you read in the Bible, but you can obey what you *do* understand. The Bible finds us where we are, and with our permission and diligence, takes us where we ought to go. We should be doing this diligently until Jesus Christ returns. (Be sure to send for our free booklet, *How To Study Your Bible*.)

Learn to Pray As Jesus Prayed

We would all like to live as Jesus did, wouldn't we? Part of the reason He *lived* as He did is because He *prayed* as He did.

The story is told that there is a dial-a-prayer for atheists; when you pick up the phone there is nobody there! Factually, prayers cannot be answered unless they are *prayed*. We are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." Let us observe some of the ways that Jesus Christ prayed.

- Jesus prayed ALONE. Nowhere in the Bible do we observe Jesus leading an unruly, arm-waving or shouting mass of people in public prayer. "But thou, when thou prayest," Christ said, "enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is *in secret*; and thy Father which seeth *in secret* shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:6). He illustrated in Matthew 26:36, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder," and went on to commune alone with His heavenly Father. Certainly, there are times of crisis, despair, or danger when the church prays as an assembly, such as when Peter was in prison, sentenced to death, "but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5), but the majority of our prayer should be as Christ taught: close one-on-one communion between God and His begotten children alone.

- Jesus prayed **ALoud**. We never read of a “silent” prayer from Jesus. Praying aloud helps us formulate our thoughts. Not that it is wrong to pray silently on occasion (1 Samuel 1:13; Romans 8:26), but the Bible *example* is praying aloud. “Kneeology” will do far more for the world than all its theology.
- Jesus prayed **EARNESTLY**. “And being in agony [Greek, *agonia*] He prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:44). Vainly citing memorized or ritualistic prayers means nothing (Matthew 6:7). If your prayer is unimportant to you, it will be equally unimportant to God. If we are too busy to pray, we are too busy.
- Jesus prayed **persistently**. “And He went away again the second time and prayed...and prayed the third time, saying the same words” (Matthew 26:39,42,44). Jesus prayed continuously, consistently, and persistently. Read the parable of the unjust judge in Luke 18:2–6. “And shall not God avenge his own elect,” Jesus concludes in verses 7–8, “which cry *day and night* unto Him, though He bear long with them?” The mistake many people make when they pray is putting in too many “commercials.”
- Jesus prayed with **SUBMISSION**. He taught, “*Thy will be done* in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10), and He lived, “O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, *Thy will be done.*” Nothing lies outside the reach of prayer except that which is outside the will of God.
We need to pray as Jesus prayed until His return.

Meditate on God’s Word

Meditation is nearly a lost art in the distractions of our modern society. Meditation is far more than gazing beatifically at one’s guru, repeating a mantra, or contemplating one’s navel. To meditate means to think deeply and quietly, to consider at length and ponder. It means to plan or think about doing.

David said, “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2). David meditated upon God’s law. Think! What would the world be like if everyone kept just one of God’s Ten Commandments?! What *if*, for example, the whole world kept the Fourth Commandment, God’s Sabbath, for twenty-four hours? There would be no crime, no wars, and no “people doing their own thing.” There would be peace and harmony as people earnestly and sincerely sought God and His will. Think, meditate, upon each of God’s commandments in this manner and the ramifications if each one was kept.

David confided, “Mine eyes prevent [anticipate] the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy word” (Psalm 119:148). In other words, David was more earnest in the study of God’s Word than those who kept watch over the city in their charge. How many today

meditate upon God’s Word?

Going on, David said, “When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches” (Psalm 63:6). No nighttime television for King David! God was first and foremost in his thoughts, day and night. No wonder God found David a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22)! “How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” (Psalm 139:17) “Let this mind be in you,” we are reminded, “which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). We need to meditate on God’s Word day and night until Christ returns.

Individually and Collectively, Do the Work

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the *work* of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that *your labor* is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching *them* to observe *all* things whatsoever *I* have commanded *you*: and, lo, I am with you always, even *unto the end of the world*. Amen” (Matthew 28:19–20).

The word “synergy” means that the sum of the whole is greater than the parts that compose it. That is to say, the collective, organized energy of many amounts to more than that which is possible to individuals acting independently. God’s church is an *organized organism*, not a haphazard or sporadic effort on the behalf of scattered individuals acting on their own. We have a commission; a work, to do. Those who deny the plain scriptures of Matthew 10:23; 28:19–20; Mark 13:10; 16:15; and Luke 16:16 are being dishonest with the Scriptures.

A wise man once said that when we wholeheartedly do the work of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God as God has commissioned us, he will automatically develop the godly character he needs to be there. This we must do until Jesus Christ returns.

Personal Overcoming

Revelation 3:21 promises, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.” “Overcoming,” here, means “to subdue, conquer, prevail, or get the victory.” Paul said, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Romans 7:18).

The Christian walk is often depicted as “warfare.” “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:11–18). We have three enemies to overcome: 1) Satan and his minions, 2) the pulls and influences of the world, and 3) the

works of the flesh. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that *they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (Galatians 5:19-21).

In addition to developing godly character, we must learn to love one another (Romans 12:10; 1 John 4:11). So we see we have much to do before Jesus returns to this earth.

The apostle Peter passed along some instructions on things to *do* while waiting for Jesus to return: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the *other* scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and

in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:14-18).

In summary, there are many things we should do while waiting for Jesus to return. Among them are:

- Humble yourself before God, repent, and do good works.
- Read your Bible.
- Study your Bible.
- Learn to pray as Jesus prayed.
- Meditate on God's Word.
- Individually and collectively, do the work.
- Work on personal overcoming.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith *virtue*; and to virtue *knowledge*; And to knowledge *temperance*; and to temperance *patience*; and to patience *godliness*; And to godliness *brotherly kindness*; and to brotherly kindness *charity*. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: *for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall*" (2 Peter 1:5-10).



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