



# SEARCHING FOR GOD



<b>Topic:</b>	The virtue of patience
<b>Main Point:</b>	We can be faithful to God during times of delay
<b>Intended Response:</b>	God wants us to have patience

### Introduction

We live in the instant age. Everything comes quickly to us at the press of a button. But how do we respond when we have to wait? This sermon looks at a person in the Bible who had to wait a long time for God to answer his prayer.

#### A. Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the Temple

- Mary and Joseph aligned their lives with God's plan
- They took Jesus to the Temple after he was born
- They dedicated Jesus to God for all of His days

**Point One:** During periods of waiting, we need to act in a way that lines up with God's plan.

#### B. Simeon's Advent

- Simeon was a righteous and devout man
- He waited many years for God to answer his prayer
- He was open to the leading of God

**Point Two:** Simeon had to wait for the promise of God to come to pass.

#### C. How to cultivate patience in our lives

- Act in a way that lines up with God's plan
- Remain open to the Spirit of God
- Keep an attitude of service

### Teaching Illustrations and props:

This sermon focuses on the concepts of waiting and instant. You might want to set up a microwave on one side of the stage and cook some popcorn in 2 minutes (it's quick but is it good for you?).

On the other side, you could have a slow cooker with the ingredients for a nice meal – and talk about how it takes time for a good meal to be made. **More resources for this sermon, including PowerPoint slides are available at [www.SArmy.org.au](http://www.SArmy.org.au)**

<p><b>Introduction:</b></p>	<p>Good morning, welcome to church everyone.</p> <p>Who here enjoys waiting in long queues at the supermarket? Doe anyone like to leave the express checkout when it's clear so you can go and stand at the back of the line of a busy register?</p> <p>No one? How about really slow internet? No? "I'm just dying to have dial-up back", said no one, ever!</p> <p>We like to have things quick don't we. We're used to fast food, instant search results, microwaves. We like things quick, quick, quick.</p> <p><i><b>Insert story:</b> I was in the car the other day and my daughter was telling me that her birthday is taking "forever to get here". My daughter has been born into the "instant" age, where everything comes quickly at the press of a button.</i></p> <p>If you want music, just press a button and it instantly downloads onto your device. Need a book, Kindle will have it to you in seconds. Looking for a TV show, Netflix will stream it to you straight away. Need information, just Google it and you'll have a million answers in an instant.</p> <p>It's hard to wait patiently for things in the instant age.</p> <p>All around us, the fastest growing companies in the world all use speed as one of their competitive edges. There's one company building a Hyperloop. It's basically a big tube with the fastest train in the world. What would take you 6 hours in a car will take only 35 minutes in the Hyperloop – it travels at 1,125KM per hour.</p> <p>So in this fast paced, instant delivery society, waiting can be a real challenge. Patience is rare and is becoming more of a virtue than ever before.</p> <p><b>God wants us to be patient:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love (Eph 4:2).</li> <li>• But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transition</b></p>	<p>Today, we're going to look at a person in the Bible who had to wait a long time for something. In fact, it seems his whole life was built around waiting for this one event. And it happened during the first Christmas.</p>

It's a great story, and I love that it happened at Christmas time because today is also the beginning of Advent. Advent is a time when we patiently count down the days leading up to Christmas, as we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. This is the period of time when we need patience – Christmas is just around the corner – but it's not here yet.

## Part One

Our passage begins just after the Christmas story has taken place. After 40 days of waiting, due to a Jewish tradition, Mary and Joseph are planning their first road trip as a family to the Temple.

It's been a hectic month for Joseph and Mary. Planning a wedding. An unexpected trip to Jerusalem. Finding last minute accommodation. Having a baby. People popping in visiting them unannounced.

God told them Jesus was the long awaited Messiah – the Saviour of Israel. But He was just a baby. They would have to wait for Him to grow up before He could fulfil all the words spoken about Him.

We pick up their story in Luke 2:21-23:

... it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD."

Now, the Temple was normally a busy place, but it would have even more so because of the census the Roman government called: think of it being like Chadstone at Christmas time. Even today, the Temple is a great attraction with an average of 3.5million people visiting it per year. This is where they were headed off to.

***Insert story:*** I can remember the first time I took our daughter home from the hospital. I remember looking in the rear view mirror and seeing my wife and baby in the backseat of the car. I couldn't believe the hospital let us take a little baby home with us – I was so nervous. It was the slowest, most gentle drive home ever. We stayed off main roads and avoided every street with speed humps in them. I wanted to avoid any and all possible dangers!

On this day there would have been thousands of people at the Temple. People waiting in line with animals to be sacrificed. People trying to exchange their small lambs for bigger ones. People trying to park their donkeys – and little baby Jesus asleep in His stroller (mother's arms).

What's great about this part of the Christmas story is that we get to see that Joseph and Mary took the Word of God seriously. They followed the Law and were obedient to God.

	<p><b>Joseph and Mary were faithful to God, as they waited for Jesus to grow up.</b>          Their act of dedicating Jesus to God, much like Hannah did with Samuel, shows us that they took the prophetic words about Jesus seriously.</p> <p>We too can be faithful to God during times of delay, during periods of waiting, we need to act in a way that lines up with God's plan.</p> <p>I know many people who have received prophetic words over the years but they do nothing with them. God actually requires us to align our lives with His words if they are to come to pass. Here, we see Joseph and Mary align their actions with the intentions of God – that Jesus, would be dedicated to God all the days of His life.</p>
<b>Point 1.</b>	During periods of waiting, we need to act in a way that lines up with God's plan.
<b>Transition</b>	<p>At the same as Joseph and Mary were making their way through the crowded Temple entrance, God was directing a man named Simeon through the same crowd.</p> <p>We read in Luke 2:25-27,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple.</p> <p>I like to refer to this as Simeon's advent.</p>
<b>Part Two</b>	<p>This passage reveals a lot to us about Simeon and about waiting patiently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He was a righteous man – meaning, he was regarded as someone whose heart was intent on pleasing God and obeying His word.</li> <li>• A devout man – he lived his life in a way that was conscious of God's presence.</li> <li>• He was close to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had “revealed to him” and “moved him”...             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Having this type of sensitivity to God's voice and God's leading requires a constant level of intimacy with God.</li> <li>○ It's the same language used of Jesus in Luke 4:1 when Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days.</li> <li>○ From this we can only speculate that Simeon was a man of prayer, Scripture, and spent time with God.</li> <li>○ We also see Simeon as a man attuned to the prophetic voice of God. In the next few verses he prophesies about Israel, and Jesus and Mary.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>I think the stand out feature of Simeon was that <b>he to was faithful to God during times of delay...</b></p>

	<p>In verse 25, we read Simeon “was <b>waiting</b> for the consolation of Israel” – which means he was waiting for a time when God would place Israel back in charge of the promised land – something that hadn’t happened for over 500 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At some stage of his life, God spoke to Simeon and said he would see this happen.</li> <li>• We don’t know the age of Simeon, some guess he was over 50 years old (see Num 8:24-25). What we do know is that he was <b>waiting</b> for this to happen for a very long time.</li> </ul> <p><i><b>Insert story about waiting for an answer to prayer that took years.</b></i></p> <p>And then one day, after all these years of waiting, the Holy Spirit moves him to go to the Temple...</p> <p>(Luke 2:27-32)</p> <p>That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!”</p> <p>How amazing! After all these years of waiting, after all these years of praying – he was rewarded for faithfully waiting on God because now, Simeon is now holding the Messiah in his arms!</p> <p>I wonder how many times did he go to the Temple and look? How many prayers did he pray only for them to be unanswered until the right time? Did he ever want to give up, do you think he ever doubted what he heard God say to him?</p> <p>Do you think his faith would have struggled during the years of delay? How did he stay in the Spirit for all that time? How did he stay open to God all those years?</p>
<b>Point 2.</b>	Simeon had to wait for the promise of God to come to pass.
<b>Transition</b>	<p>I don’t know if I could have waited that long? To be honest, I find it hard waiting for everyone to get in the car to go to church on Sundays.</p> <p>So how do we remain faithful to God in times of waiting? In the instant age and fast pace of life we live in, how do we cultivate patience? When we’ve prayed prayers and received no answers or if we’ve been holding onto a word from God for years, how do we keep hope and faith alive?</p> <p>If we reflect on the worlds of Joseph, Mary and Simeon during the first Christmas we can learn three things that can help us cultivate patience in our lives...</p>

<p><b>Application:</b></p> <p>How to cultivate patience during times of waiting</p>	<p><b>1. Act in a way that lines up with God's plan</b></p> <p>Our passage started with Joseph and Mary bringing Jesus to the Temple. What we can learn from this act is that Joseph and Mary followed God's law. They didn't just head back to Galilee. They took steps towards dedicating Jesus to God.</p> <p>After all they experienced – the amazing events surrounding Jesus' birth, miracle conception, the angels, the shepherds – they could be forgiven for thinking that God was going to bring everything to them. But they didn't sit back and wait for the next big God event to take place.</p> <p>They faithfully headed off to the Temple. And in dedicating Jesus to God they were acting in a way that shows us that they too were dedicated to God.</p> <p>That's why I love Advent. Christmas is happening whether we like it or not. Every year December 25<sup>th</sup> will happen – the presents, the bbq's, the carols – but Advent is a time when we can intentionally dedicate our lives to God.</p> <p>Advent is a special time when we can consciously think about Jesus' arrival, stir our faith, keep our hope alive, knowing that one day soon Jesus will return again for all the world to see.</p> <p><i><b>Insert Christmas appeal reminder:</b> But God calls us to do more than wait faithfully, he asks us to live faithfully. As ambassadors for the gospel, we are called to bring <b>hope where it's needed most</b>. We are called to meet the needs of others in practical, life-giving ways. We can do this through prayer, acts of kind service, giving food, inviting people to church by or giving generously to our Christmas appeal.</i></p> <p><b>2. Remain open to the Spirit of God</b></p> <p>In verse 29 Simeon praises God, calling Him the "Sovereign Lord" – it's a phrase that means God is in control.</p> <p>I know unanswered prayer can leave us feeling disappointed and can at times cause us to question where God is.</p> <p>During these times, we can remind ourselves...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ God has heard us (1 Jn 5:14) and He has a set time (Gal 4:4)</li> <li>○ God has a plan and will restore all things eventually (Gen 50:20, Rev 21:4).</li> <li>○ God is wise (Job 38:2, 42:3).</li> </ul> <p>God reveals in Isaiah 55:9 that, "As the heavens are higher than earth, so to are His way higher than ours". Our closest star in the heavens is 4.37 light years away - that's 25 trillion miles away. So on a good day, our thoughts are about 25 trillion miles short of comprehending just one of God's actions – knowing this helps me keep perspective.</p> <p><b>3. Attitude of service</b></p> <p>Simeon goes on to say in verse 29 "...as you have promised, you may now dismiss your <b>servant</b> in peace".</p>
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	<p>Simeon had the heart of a servant. It's a word that means you belong to someone else. Someone else has ownership of you. God had ownership of Simeon's heart. Simeon was open to being moved and guided by the Spirit during his daily life because he had an attitude that God was in control of his life. I believe it's because of this that Simeon heard from God.</p>
<b>Transition</b>	<p>The plan of God takes time to out work in our lives. A delay doesn't mean God is not at work. From the time of Simeon's prophecies, it would be another 30 years before Jesus would start his public ministry and another 3 and a half years after that before He conquered sin and death on the cross.</p> <p>Some things take time and we need patience while waiting for them to happen.</p>
<b>Call to Action</b>	<p>As we close today, can I ask, how's your patience going? How do you go when you're in a time of waiting. <i>Some people are looking at their watches wondering when is this sermon going to end – well, I'm here to encourage your growth of patience in Christ so you'll be happy to know we've only got another two hours to go</i> 😊</p> <p>But seriously, how are you going with developing your patience? Sometimes we need to experience the weightiness of waiting so the roots of Christ character can grow deeper in us. It's a fruit of the Spirit – we should be praying and asking God to help us cultivate this in our lives.</p> <p>Perhaps during this message, you felt God highlight an area in your life that you need help waiting for,</p> <p>Or perhaps, you've been waiting a long time to give your life to Christ.</p> <p>The great thing about God's help is we don't need to wait long – He is always willing to help us when we pray to Him.</p> <p>Would you prayer with me...</p>
<b>Prayer</b>	<p>Father God, we know you help us in all situations. We ask that you would bless us all with greater levels of patience.</p> <p>We pray that we would be open to your voice and your guidance in our lives. We ask that you help us partner with your plans for our lives. We open our hearts to you today and ask that you would fill us with faith, hope, and love of Jesus this Christmas. Fill us with your Spirit we pray – Amen.</p>



**Prov 16:32**

Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.

**Eph 4:2**

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

**Gal 5:22-23 (NLT)**

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

**Lk 2:21-23**

Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived. Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD."

**Mk 13:1**

"As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

**Luke 2:25-27**

At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple.

**Luke 4:1**

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

**Num 8:24-25**

This is what applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall enter to perform service in the work of the tent of meeting. "But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work anymore.

**Luke 2:27-32**

That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people. He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"

**1 Jn 5:14**

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

**Gal 4:4**

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

**Gen 50:20**

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

**Rev 21:4**

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

**Job 38:2**

"Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?

**Job 42:3**

You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

**Isa 55:9**

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.