



# Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

## The Patience of Anna

by Nate King

I'm impatient. When I decide I want to do something, I'm ready to make it happen. With an impatient mindset, it is so easy to become frustrated with anyone who doesn't want to run at the same pace. Maybe that's why the Lord blessed me with four little kids that are never in a hurry. Sometimes it seems like they spell hurry s-l-o-w.

If you're not a parent, trust me, toddler time is a real thing. And it always strikes at the most inopportune moments. Running late for church? *Yes, Matty, please stop and count each of the steps on the way to the garage.*

The meandering of my kiddos routinely matches the insufferance of my impatience. In other words, they ain't in any hurry. This used to drive me crazy. Jamie might say, "it was a short trip." But the truth is there is a blessing easily overlooked amidst all the rushing around. Life is a lot sweeter when you slow down enough to take it all in.

My daughter Anna reminds me of this each morning as I load her up to go to daycare. She stands at the top of the stairs and waits for me. Once I've loaded the lunch boxes, coats, and backpacks, I return for her. There she is every time. Waiting. Smiling. And even when I say, "Anna, let's go to the car." She will still be there waiting at the stairs when I return to get her. I know because I can hear her sweet voice whispering my name.

The first time we played through this scenario, I was frustrated with her. I was in a rush. I just wanted to get the day moving and do all of the things I needed to do. Anna was waiting on the stairs, whispering my name. As I approached the bottom of the stairs, she shouted with the enthusiasm of an excited toddler, "DADDY!" And with that one word, my one-year-old daughter threw herself off the top of the stairs. For just a moment, my breath caught, and my surprise was evident as I simultaneously scrambled to catch her. She had been waiting to jump into my arms.

Anna had learned what it meant to wait, and she taught me something about it too.

Inevitably, every time I go back to where she stands waiting—she jumps. Every day, Anna is waiting for the chance to jump into Dad's embrace.

One day Mary and Joseph, the newlywed parents of the infant Jesus, walked onto holy ground carrying the Son of God. There they were met by another Anna. One who was well versed in the joy of expectant waiting. You can read the story in the second chapter of Luke's Gospel. Part of me wonders if Joseph was in a hurry like I so often am. I wonder if he was just ready to do his duty and move on to the next thing? If he had been in as big a hurry as I usually am, would he have missed what happened next?

Anna had been waiting. She'd been waiting for years for that precise moment. And when she saw the Baby Jesus, she knew her eyes beheld the only begotten Son of God. The Holy Spirit stirred her heart and moved her spirit. She'd prayed. She had fasted. She had worshipped and waited. And then she saw him. Immanuel. God with us. And I have to imagine her very soul leaped at the chance to be there in the presence of God in this small and innocent babe. It was the culmination of decades of worshipful waiting.

What if God is trying to teach you and me something about waiting? Honestly, that doesn't sound very exciting. Does it? No. I've never met anyone who said, "I'm praying that the Lord will help me be more patient." Why? Because we each realize that patience isn't a miracle. It's something carved out in your character through everyday moments.

As Anna met the Baby Jesus, I don't think this was lost on her. Not at all like it was lost on me right up until the moment my Anna first threw herself at me from the stairs. Patience is hard. But for those with the courage to rest in unapologetic patience, an opportunity will come to put you right where you're supposed to be: with Jesus.

If you're like me, you want to skip to the part where it all comes together. That's not how patience works. We want the miracle now. We want provision now. We want the job, the favor, the reconciled love one, or the clean break, and we want it all now. God gets a different kind of glory when you pray for the same loved one for twenty-five years. And you get something too. You grow in the type of loving son or daughter of God who learns to patiently abide in the expectancy of seeing your Father reach out his arms and catch you when you need it most.

We've each been given an incredible opportunity. What we learn from the life of Jesus, and most importantly, what we do with it now is both the choice and chance of a lifetime. What if one of the most important things God has wanted to reach us with is the promise we can find wrapped up in a Holy Spirit-led patience. A comfort that not everything depends on you. A certainty amidst the mighty workings of a wonderful Father we talk a lot about but don't always entirely understand. What do we do with that?

There will be days when life won't look a lot different. We'll still run at breakneck speeds into the fullness of the day to do the things God has entrusted to us. But don't miss the other days, the days when we'll need to just sit and wait. On those days, don't be afraid to clear your schedule, calm your heart, and just wait on the Lord. Grab your Bible, take some notes, listen to some music, or maybe just sit at the top of the stairs and whisper his name.

**Question** What are you doing this season that is actively waiting? Are you gathering with your family or close friends daily, reading God's word and praying together?

**Family Chat** As a family, commit to reading God's Word together and praying together every night as a part of your daily routine as we actively wait and prepare for Christ's return! And keep going with this practice through 2021, even in those moments when it's tough to keep your kids focused!

**Suggested Family Activity** Read the story of Jesus' birth together as a family, using Matthew 2, Luke 2, or a children's picture Bible.

**Prayer Starter** Jesus, thank You for the encouragement in Your Word about how Anna prayed and fasted, actively waiting for You to show up on the scene! We commit to seek You together and grow closer to You in our faith journey as a family for the remainder of this year and through next year, as well. We ask that You help us with this because the enemy will want to discourage us and distract us from You. We ask that You strengthen us to stand firm in our resolve to follow You wherever, whenever, and however You lead us!

**Take Action** Spend some time this Christmas season inviting the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart for the coming year and give you an idea of what He'd like to disciple you in next.

For example, you can ask the Lord about: Growing stronger in hearing His voice; understanding who the Holy Spirit is, knowing how to share your faith; understanding what it means to have faith; standing stronger in your identity in Christ; growing deeper in knowing His Word; and strengthening your prayer life. Journal about it, pray about it, and set your heart to follow Him wherever He leads you! We are preparing for a season of Prayer and Fasting the first two weeks in January; we would love for you to join us in that! Text PRAYER to 501-200-3122 to join!