

13 Ways to Live While Waiting to Receive Your Promise

"How's the adoption?" a friend asked excitedly as I walked into church one Sunday.

I desperately wanted to tell her that we were moving forward without a hitch and that we had everything ready and that we would soon be traveling to bring our children home, but I couldn't. Instead, I reluctantly spoke words that broke my heart. "We've hit another roadblock," I said, before mustering enough faith to add, "but we've been here before."

I expected to see sorrow in my friend's eyes at my response, but she simply said, with complete and total assurance, "Yep, and you know how to get through them," before she quickly hightailed her way to service.

I was a bit stunned to be honest at her quick reaction to my heartfelt confession, but I couldn't help but smile. *She's right*, I thought. *I do know how to get through them!* God was reminding me that I knew just what I needed to do in the face of yet another insurmountable obstacle in our adoption journey.

It's been five years since we first began adopting. We signed up for one to two. This crazy messy adoption journey my family and I have been on has somehow morphed into an epic journey that has tried all four of us, in every way possible. By faith, we know we are walking out God's call for our family, but it has not been easy.

My family and I have been living in what I like to call *the messy middle*, the time between God's promise and its fulfillment, for quite some time. But how do we live victoriously in those times? How do we maintain faith despite the many challenges and oppositions and roadblocks thrown at

us? How do we run our race well in the face of discouragement and setbacks?

I'd like to suggest that living in the messy middle is something we get better at, with practice. Most of us aren't born courageous but often choose the path of least resistance. But if we're going to live victorious lives, the very lives Jesus died for us to have, we're going to have start here:

Remember who God is.

Remember that God is sovereign and in control of all things. You and I serve a good, loving, and just God who loves you and has promised to work His will in your life as you submit your heart and your desires to Him.

Remember who you are.

The most important thing about you is that you are loved by God. If you are a follower of Christ, you have been given the right to become a child of God. It's imperative that you keep your identity straight. To know who you are *in Christ*. Without a proper understanding of your stance before God, you'll be tempted to believe the lie that your difficulties are an indication that God does not love you or see you or hear your prayers, but that's simply not true. Remember who you are!

Make sure you're on the right path.

Before we get too far, it's important ask yourself a difficult question: Are you pursuing a promise from God, or is it possible that you're simply pursuing your own desires? If you have genuinely sought the Lord in prayer, asking Him to direct your steps with a heart that is willing to exchange your desires for His, and you still feel the promise is true, then I believe you're on the right path. If not, it's time to realign your heart and your desires with God's.

Remember and recount God's faithfulness.

God has never failed us, and He never will. He is faithful. When you find yourself struggling in the messy middle, remember and recount that faithfulness. Keep a running list of all the times He's been faithful so you can go back to be strengthened in times of doubt.

Go back to what you know.

Sit down with pad and paper and write down what you know. How do you know this is God's promise? What has He shown you? What Scriptures has He used to lead and encourage you along the way?

Go with what you know, even if it doesn't make sense.

Now, go with it. Believe it. Sometimes what God calls us to won't make sense, but that's OK. God doesn't usually do things the way we're used to them being done. Is what He's promised impossible? Great! Impossible is where the work of God really begins.

Don't just believe in God, believe Him!

Far too many Christians stop at mere belief *in* God. That may be enough for salvation, but ultimately, if we're going to live the life Jesus died for us to have—a wonderfully, full life—we're going to have to start believing what God says in His Word. Now, of course, that requires us to know the Word, so that would be the place to start. Get into the Word. Read those promises. And then believe them! Believe *Him*!

Rely on your faith, not your circumstances.

Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." I've heard many say, "I'll believe it when I see it," when faced with a difficult or even impossible situation, but that's NOT faith! Do not allow your circumstances to smother your faith. When facing our latest obstacle in our adoption, I told my husband,

“Unless God tells me something different, I have to believe.” And the same goes for you: unless God speaks otherwise, keep believing!

Recognize your battle.

As Christ followers, we have an enemy who challenges everything good God works in our lives. We’re not called to focus on the enemy or the opposition, but we *are* called to learn how to take up the whole armor of God so we can stand firm (Ephesians 6:13).

Pray, worship, and fast BEFORE you have reason to.

One way to live out our faith is by praying, worshipping, and fasting *before* we have reason to. This is what it looks like to seek (and praise!) the Lord with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. Prayer, worship, and fasting moves God! Something happens in the spiritual realm when we engage Him in these ways, not as a means of manipulation to get what we want, but by simply coming to Him as a child comes to her Father in her time of need.

Recognize and work through your doubts.

It’s OK to doubt. Doubts can actually strengthen your faith, so don’t deny your doubts. Work through them. Don’t let them draw you away from God, but instead, take them to Jesus and allow Him to speak to them.

Know there’s purpose in waiting.

Waiting may seem like a waste of time, but it’s not. It’s a time when things are happening behind the curtain. A time when God moves on our behalf. A time when all things are being placed just where they ought to be so the very outcome God intends can be delivered. God’s timing is perfect. I know that may sound trite or annoying, but on the other side of the promise, we’ll see just how spot on He really was.

Don't Give Up!

I wonder how many Christians never reached their promised land simply because they gave up too soon. I wonder how many followers of Christ have settled for lesser things because they lacked endurance. I can tell you one thing. I don't want to be one of them! I want to believe God for great things. And I want you to as well. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, but remember, in order to receive all God wants to bless us with, we must be willing to persevere. So do not give up!

Living in the messy middle isn't about manipulating God to get what we want. It's about living in victorious faith even when we cannot see what He's up to. Even when we feel like we're surrounded by darkness. Even when we face one insurmountable obstacle after another on the way to our promised land. It's about winning the battle on our knees, in complete surrender and dependence on the Lord. I once heard someone say God's promises don't take us out of the battle, they give us strength to stay in the fight. God most certainly goes before us, and the victory is ultimately His, but our part of the battle is waged on our knees as we pray, fast, and worship, bringing thanksgiving and glory to our mighty God.

This, my friend, is living victoriously in the messy middle.

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