



Can you feel it? Christmas is in the air! This post-Thanksgiving, pre-Christmas season brings with it some consistent expectations, doesn't it? It is marked by the beginnings of winter, the rush and bustle of preparing for holiday celebrations and the chaos of wrapping up a school semester and the end of a business year. There is A LOT that goes on in this season! Yet, probably the most important thing that happens, certainly for kids and especially for those of us who are Christ-followers, is the momentum that builds as we inch closer to Christmas.

It is in this pre-Christmas season that we find ourselves stuck on a certain element of the holiday that we really just don't like: the waiting. Think back to Christmas as a young child, if you can remember back that far! Knit together with the awe and wonder of the seemingly magical time of Christmas is the sharp pain of having to WAIT! You know Christmas is coming...because we all count down the days! Maybe you have a calendar somewhere in your house where you open a little door to reveal the next number in your countdown to the big day. Or maybe you use candles. Whatever system you do or do not use, we are all aware of the waiting process leading up to Christmas Day, and unless you have put off finishing your Christmas shopping, you hate the waiting!

This distaste towards waiting is a big issue for us because waiting can have huge implications in our lives! So in this season of Christmas...and waiting... we are going to dig into the "why" behind our waiting. Along the way you just might understand a bit more how beneficial waiting can be, and the unique role it plays in our history and our future as Christ-followers. We will start today with a word that may be a new one for you: Advent. Advent is all about waiting.

WHAT IS ADVENT?

Starting in the 4th century, Christians would celebrate the weeks that led up to Christmas, and the waiting process that preceded Jesus' birth. We call this pre-Christmas experience ADVENT.

ADVENT means “THE COMING” and it is all about WAITING for JESUS.

So, before we get to Jesus' birth, let's start way back in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah was giving God's instructions to His people, who were not being extremely obedient. So as a sign of how God would one day provide a way to solve the sin problem that continued to separate them from Him, God unveiled a clue to the birth of Jesus.

Isaiah 7:13-14 *“Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”*

This is one of Isaiah's prophecies that was not fulfilled for over 700 years. That is a long time to wait! If you have spent much time reading about Isaiah's audience, you know just how BAD God's people were at waiting. They had actually developed a great history of impatience!

1. **Genesis 16:1-4** – Abraham is told he would have a son but he is unwilling to wait for God's timing so he takes matters into his own hands...and kind of sets off a family conflict that lasts for thousands of years.
2. **Numbers 20:8-12** – God tells Moses to speak to a rock to make water come out, but he loses his patience and smacks it with a stick. His impatience resulted in him missing out on entering the Promised Land.
3. **1 Samuel 8:19-22** – God's people grow tired of following Him and want a king...just like all the other nations had...and so God gives them what they want. This leads to the division of Israel and lots of people dying.
4. **1 Samuel 13:8-10** – No surprise here. The king that Israel chose had a problem when he had to wait for Samuel to show up to make a sacrifice. This ultimately leads to his own demise in a downward spiral that took the throne from his family.

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