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ADOPTION, FOSTER & ORPHAN CARE

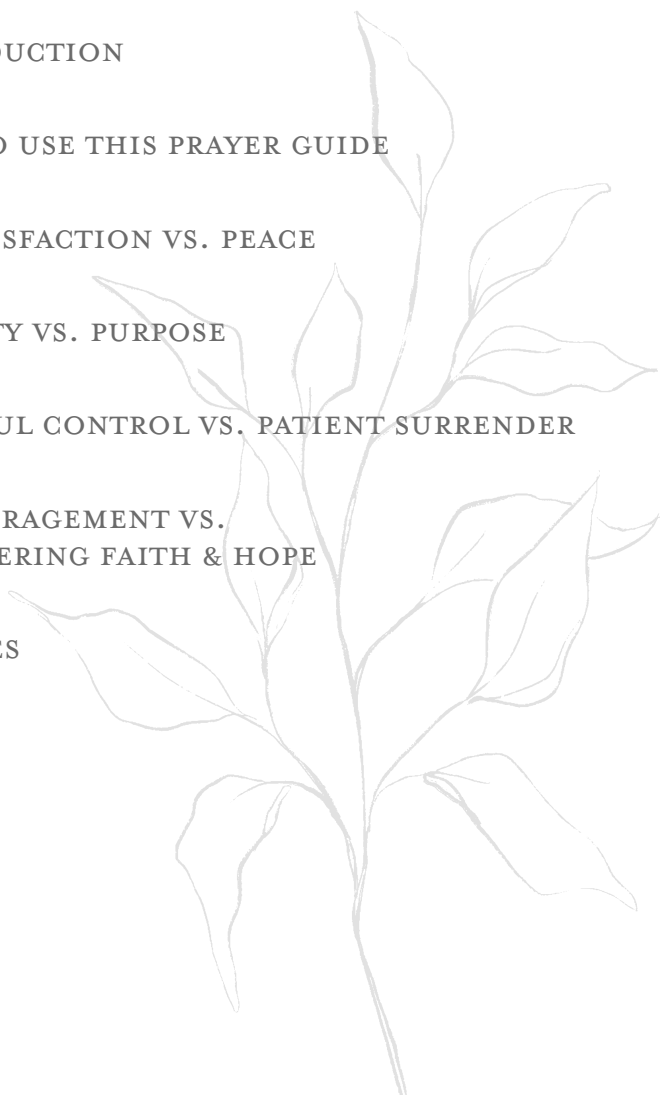
— WAITING FAMILIES —

PRAYER GUIDE

*A war-time prayer guide for families
awaiting placement via adoption or foster care.*



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BLESSED

be the longing that brought you here

And quickens your soul with wonder...

May you come to accept your longing as divine urgency.

May you know the urgency with which God longs for you.

— JOHN O'DONOHUE



*“Thy designs cause thee no fear or care of unfulfillment,
they stand fast as the eternal hills.*

Thy power knows no bond, thy goodness no stint.

Thou brings order out of confusion, and my defeats are thy victories:

The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

...Let me live near to the great Shepherd,

hear His voice, know its tones, follow its calls.”

— THE VALLEY OF VISION: PURITAN PRAYERS AND
DEVOTIONS; “RESTING ON GOD”

Since the fall in the garden, waiting has been woven into the fabric of history. God is waiting. Creation is waiting. Humankind is waiting. We are all waiting for redemption. We see signs and shadows, aches and groans of what is to come, knowing that what we wait for is not here yet ¹. We wait for new circumstances, but no circumstance can truly erase the deepest waits we all live out each day as humans. Yes, you are here, reading this prayer guide, because you are waiting for a child to enter into your home and your family, but ultimately, we wait for better things than this world can give. We wait for a new world where righteousness fills the air and sky ², for a new body free from death and decay ³, for a new power free from sin's hold over us ⁴, and ultimately, for King Jesus Himself ⁵.

From our own human perspective, seasons of waiting are never desirable. Patterns in scripture and even in our own lives will show that we as humans tend to root our hope in our circumstances. Yet God did not create us to have true joy and fulfillment flowing from our circumstances or a particular season of life, but instead from Himself alone.

If we believe the lie that our joy is found in a match with a family, adoption paperwork being finalized, or the ideal placement, we will be disappointed every time. What happens when we have a surprise medical diagnosis for our child that will affect daily life in a way we never anticipated? What happens when years have passed and we still struggle to have a secure attachment with our child? What happens when our child can't come to peace with their history or themselves, and they experience severe mental illness, drug addiction, or promiscuous behaviors? Is our joy found in circumstance? As Emily Jensen says in *Risen Motherhood*, "The transition you just want to end isn't a throwaway season. It's a time full of God's purposes, when hindsight will tell a story of sin and need, driving us to the Father and making us love more like the Son."

As Jon Bloom wrote, "It is painfully clear that God-time is different than man-time. God-time is relative to His purposes. And according to these wise purposes, He makes all things beautiful in its time — the time He purposefully chooses for it" ⁶. That is why this prayer journey is not focused on the circumstantial needs, the stages of waiting, or the checklist of desires that accompany pursuing adoption and foster care. While the biological process of adding a family member entails an unavoidable physical labor, your process of adding a family member will likewise entail an unavoidable spiritual labor. This laborious journey starts by recognizing the misalignment of our own assumptions and desires and uses God's word to direct us back to His good character and His good purposes. God says in Isaiah, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose" ⁷.

WHILE THE BIOLOGICAL PROCESS OF ADDING A FAMILY MEMBER ENTAILS AN UNAVOIDABLE PHYSICAL LABOR, YOUR PROCESS OF ADDING A FAMILY MEMBER WILL LIKEWISE ENTAIL AN UNAVOIDABLE SPIRITUAL LABOR.

In the time of Elijah, God was moving visibly against the realms of evil and darkness. Miracle after miracle, God was at work. Surprisingly, just a few verses after a huge spiritual show-down, Elijah literally runs away in fear. He enters the wilderness in despair and discouragement, exhausted and burned out. He declared the waiting for God's ultimate victory to be too hard and said, "I have had enough, Lord; Take my life" ⁸ .

We have much to learn from the Lord's life-giving response. After Elijah's physical needs are met, Elijah responds to God's voice by airing out his laundry list of prayers that rested in his perceived, circumstantial issues.

For a moment, his prayers seem to go unheard and unanswered.

Instead, God instructs Elijah to go out on the mountain in the presence of the Lord and wait. It is in the waiting that God demonstrates His very nature through a great and powerful wind, an earthquake, and a fire. God uses a chain of supernatural events to prepare Elijah for an encounter with Himself. Only after all of this, does God answer Elijah with a gentle whisper. And when Elijah offers a familiar complaint, God responds perfectly in a way that must have been beyond Elijah's wildest imaginings. He receives not only specific instruction, but also life-giving encouragement and companionship.

Like Elijah, we are quick to forget the displays of God's power and the impacts of His presence in our own lives. Almost immediately after seeing God move and answer in one way, we are in despair feeling misunderstood, afraid, and alone. We even tell God, "I have had enough!" Like Elijah, we are called to enter into the presence of God and wait. Waiting is a part of our story. That is how God designed it to be. God's response to our circumstantial cries will come. He has not forgotten. He will whisper His peace over our hearts, too. God's Word is His sacred whispering. It is the way He has designed to give life and purpose into our despair and discouragement.

"How long" appears in the Bible more than fifty times. The very first "How long," however, is from the Lord as Moses and Aaron deliver God's question to Pharaoh: "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?" ⁹ . Ultimately, a root issue of waiting lies embedded within the challenge of humility. True waiting is not merely passive inaction, but an active surrender that God's way and God's time is superior to our own. Thus, as we enter into the spiritual battlefield of prayer, we start by acknowledging that all prayers in the waiting rest upon the foundation of God's deity, His sovereign rule, and His goodness. Truly there is no better response to our groans of "How long?" than to come to prayer, the very altar for surrender—the very place where we hand everything over to God. "Prayer is the place where we hand things over to God on the deepest of levels, in our hearts, where He alone can see the exchange" ¹ . It is here, in this surrender, that we wait not merely for a desired outcome, but for God Himself.

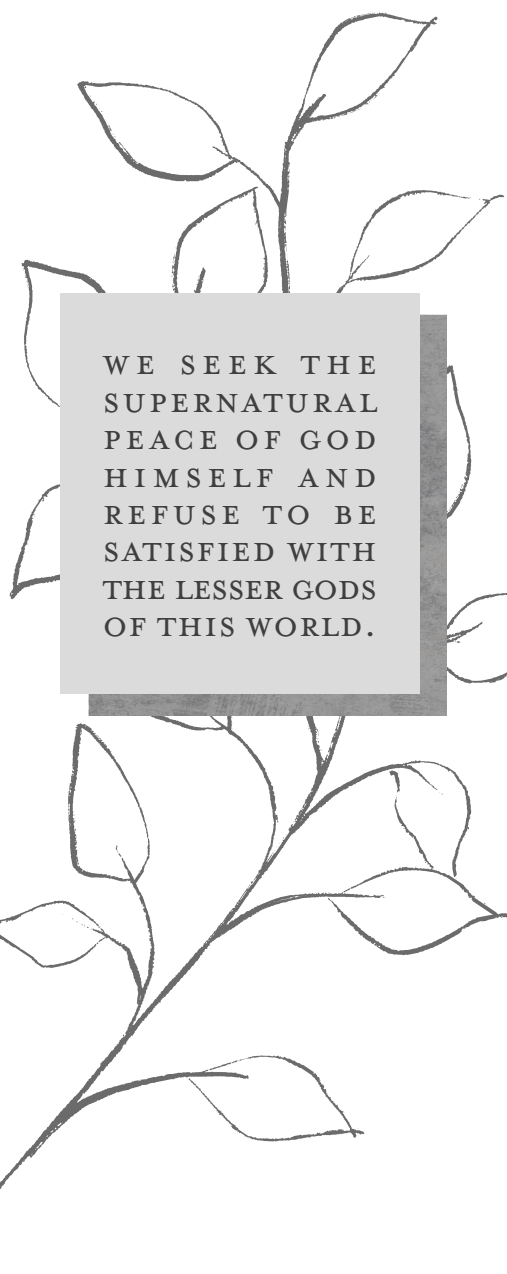
The goal of this prayer guide is not to erase your "how long," with platitudes. The aim is not to emphasize the power of gratitude and positive thinking. And the objective is certainly not to erase the pain and difficulty of the wait for a child. Instead, the goal is to arm you with the sacred whisperings of the Savior so that in the suffering and in the pain, you may rest in hope, in purpose, and, ultimately, in the arms of King Jesus. Though it remains a mystery to us, scripture makes it clear that God not only hears, but that He acts upon the prayers of His people. As Jennifer Dean wrote, "Prayer is how the will of God that is finished in heaven comes into the circumstances of earth. Prayer releases the power of God to accomplish the purposes of God." When we pray using the powerful truth of scripture in specific, intentional ways that align with the meta-purposes of God, we can be confident in the effectiveness of these words to not only be heard by the Father, but also to purify and sanctify our own hearts. Use this prayer guide as a reminder and a tool. May you wait with eager longing for the sacred whispers of the Lord to quiet your fears and to give you true peace, hope, and joy.

DISSATISFACTION VS. PEACE

THE WHY

Waiting for a child is often marked by discomfort, awkwardness, conflict, and pain. To believe that there can be contentment and peace in the midst of these very real heartaches is laughable in the eyes of the world; yet we know that in the Kingdom of God, the Prince of Peace rules completely over every challenge, every grief, and every wait. We seek the supernatural peace of God Himself and refuse to be satisfied with the lesser gods of this world. As we wrestle with discontentment and longings for a child, we acknowledge that contentment isn't merely accepting things as they are or giving up our hopes. Instead, we choose to believe that the peace of God can reign perfectly and wholly even in our heartaches, fears, and struggles. As Curt Thompson wrote, "God does not destroy desire; rather, He resurrects and renews it while using it to renew everything else, beginning with us"¹¹.

The secret of the Father's peace is shared with us in scripture. It's beautifully simple and can be summed up in the phrase, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." In theory, the exchange of dissatisfaction with supernatural peace is simple, but it is certainly not easy. As we remember the truth of scripture and the truth of who God is, we also remember that what discourages us today is not as powerful as it seems. The powerful, supernatural peace of God will one day have victory over all of creation, and the Prince of Peace is mighty enough to rule over your own heart in this moment. Surrender your cries of dissatisfaction to Him today. Let the sacred echos of scripture minister to your heart as you pray over them today.



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SUPERNATURAL
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OF THIS WORLD.

PSALM 37:7A

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.”

I am here before you Lord. You alone are God, and I wait for You. I long to hear Your voice and feel Your presence. You know my heart, my fears, my desires, my griefs. Help me to be still before You. Help me to wait patiently.

PSALM 16:11

“You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of Your presence and the pleasures of living with You forever.”

Oh God, show me Your way of life. I know that nothing in this world can satisfy but You. Grant to me the joy of Your presence in the midst of my longings. Let me not be satisfied by lesser joys. Grant to me the joys of living with You, in Your presence, today and forever.

PHILIPPIANS 4:11–13

“Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

Lord, I confess that at times the words of Paul can seem impossible to me. Help me Lord, to learn contentment as Paul did. Help me to learn a contentment that isn't based on the circumstances of life, but on Your presence alone. You alone can strengthen me. Help me today to trust in You.

1 CHRONICLES 16:11

“Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His presence continually!”

Remind me again and again, Father, with your Holy Spirit. Remind me that my joy will not be found in a child, but in Your presence alone. Help me to seek You first. I seek Your presence. I long for it. I need Your strength to carry on. I trust in You, Lord.

COLOSSIANS 3:15

“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”

Oh Lord, may the peace of Jesus Christ rule in my heart right now. Help me to radiate your peace to those around me for Your glory alone. Help me to be thankful and to remember Your faithful lovingkindness to me.



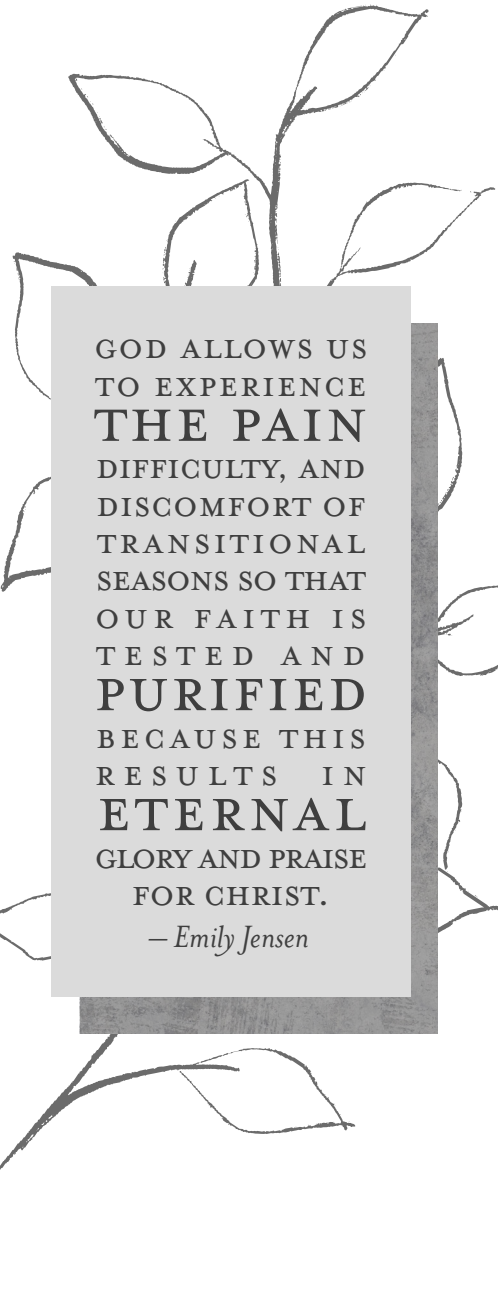
FUTILITY VS. PURPOSE

THE WHY

As waiting families, you are familiar with the many external factors and processes that accompany this journey. The paperwork. The background checks. The references. The family profile. The trainings. The home preparations. The home study. The list goes on. And on. And on. Add onto that our task-based society which emphasizes achievement, completed checklists, and never-ending celebrations of forward progress, and your season of waiting for a child can seem like barren wastelands with no purpose.

But this season is not meaningless. To choose to focus on external factors rather than seeking communion with the Father is to choose safety rather than abundant feasting. It is to choose perceived power rather than lavish provision. In the tension of waiting is where God does some of His best work of making us more like Christ¹¹. Emily Jensen said, “God allows us to experience the pain, difficulty, and discomfort of transitional seasons so that our faith is tested and purified because this results in eternal glory and praise for Christ.”

The reality is that waiting not only shapes our own hearts, but also is accomplishing mysterious purposes in the lives of the children and their biological families. When a child enters your family, it impacts far more than blessings and curses for you and the child alone. Indeed, it impacts the biological family, extended family, friends, community members, and generations after all of you. As you wait and pray, we pray God’s will and way over our own home for today and tomorrow, and we also wait and pray for His sovereign, eternal redemption and restoration over the biological family. To believe purpose rather than futility in our wait and their stories is to declare faith in His ways, His purposes, and His character. Let the sacred echos of scripture minister to your heart as you pray over them today.



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— Emily Jensen

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–5

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.”

Blessed are You, God. You are the Father of all mercy and the God of all comfort. Thank you for reminding me of Your comfort. Help me to be still and receive it. Use this testing of my faith for Your purposes and for Your glory.

PSALM 62:5–6

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.”

Lord I wait for You and only for You. You alone are my rock and my salvation. You are my strong hiding place. My soul waits for You, my God. I cry out to you on behalf of the birth family, Father. May they know Your salvation and Your grace. Work all things together as only You can. You alone are my hope.

JAMES 1:2–3

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Lord, I confess that I don’t find joy in this trial of waiting for a child. I confess that often I feel futility, loneliness, and discouragement. Lord, I choose to have joy as I remember the good work that You are doing, both in me and all around me. I take joy in how You are growing my faith. I take joy in how You are teaching me to trust You in a way I’ve never learned before. Have Your full way in me, Lord. I trust in You.

ISAIAH 41:10

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Lord, I confess my fears to you. I fear the abuse, neglect, and harm that might be happening in the circumstances surrounding the biological family right now. I surrender my fears, and trust that Your purposes are good. Oh Lord, be my strength and my help, and hold me in your righteous right hand. But also be the strength and help for the biological family. May they know Your salvation, Your lovingkindness, and a hope that is beyond circumstances.

PROVERBS 3:5

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.”

Lord, I confess that my own understanding is limited and lacking. Forgive me for trying to make my own path. You alone are God. Rule over my life and my heart today. I trust You. I trust Your way.

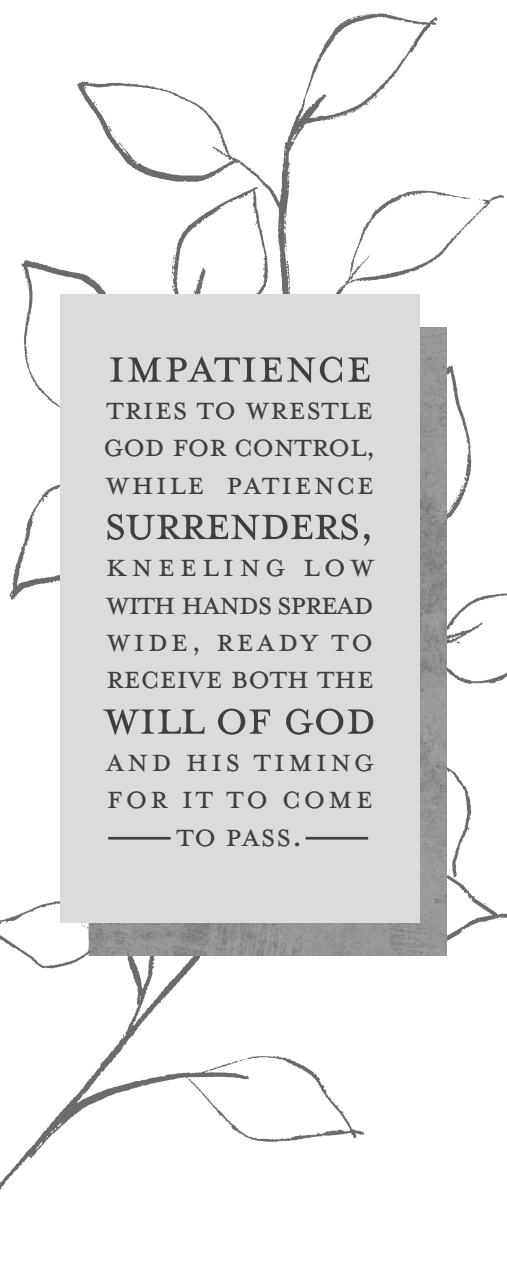


PRIDEFUL CONTROL VS. PATIENT SURRENDER

THE WHY

The world celebrates the idea that you can take control of your own life through better boundaries, clarifying your values, believing in yourself, taking responsibility, making the right action plan, being disciplined with your time, etc. In contrast, God's way celebrates stillness before the Lord, a continual surrender to His will, not your own, and patient faith that rests on God's timing. Our desire for control is in fact a spiritual battle, and the circumstances we seek to manipulate are not, in fact, the real issue. The real issue is that of the heart. We see it in the cries of "How long?" both in scripture and in our own hearts, and recognize our own impatience, pride, and desire to control.

As Paul Tripp wrote, "It's not your weaknesses that you should fear, but your delusions of strength. Delusions of independent strength are a curse because they tell you that you have power that you don't truly have and they keep you from resting and relying on the power that is yours in the presence and grace of the One who called you to be His representative." Impatience tries to wrestle God for control, while patience surrenders, kneeling low with hands spread wide, ready to receive both the will of God and His timing for it to come to pass. Let the sacred echos of scripture minister to your heart as you pray over them today.



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PROVERBS 16:9

“The heart of a man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”

Lord, Your word is clear that You are in control. Forgive me for how I’ve tried to manipulate my own life and circumstances when I need to surrender to you. I surrender to You now, Father. Establish my steps. Establish the steps of our family.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

“But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Forgive me for relying on my own strength, God. I know that You don’t need my strength, and You are pleased when I offer you my weakness. Here I am, Lord. I am weak. I trust that Your grace is sufficient for me. Work in power, Lord. May your power rest on me in my weakness for the glory of Your holy name.

PSALM 34:18

“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”

Oh God, You see me. You see my heart. Save as only you can. Remind me of Your nearness, Your presence. Draw me to Yourself.

PSALM 18:30

“This God—His way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; He is a shield for all those who take refuge in Him.”

Your way is perfect! Your word always proves true. Forgive me for how I doubt Your way again and again. I surrender, Lord. You are my refuge and my shield. I trust in You.

JAMES 5:7-8

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

Lord, forgive me for my impatience. Work to establish the patience in me that I will need in parenting. Help me to wait upon You with patient surrender.



DISCOURAGEMENT VS. PERSEVERING FAITH & HOPE

THE WHY

Satan loves to tempt us with discouragement because he knows we are easily intimidated by what looks overwhelming¹². When our own resources have run out and our wait for a child continues, it can be easy for the weeds of discouragement and cynicism to take root in our hearts. Perhaps you've just experienced a disrupted adoption and the baby isn't yours forever after all. Or perhaps in the midst of agency miscommunication and extended timelines, the process is far from what you originally expected.

Scripture shows us a wide range of responses to discouragement that do not exemplify a life of faith and hope. Like Elijah, we often cry out, "Enough!" Like Sarai, we grow restless and seek to take matters into our own hands again. Like the Israelites, when we find ourselves in the wilderness once again, we struggle to remember God's faithfulness or His miraculous works, as they seem so, so long ago. We even find ourselves wrestling with God like Jacob, grasping for rescue, truth, and purpose in the dark.

If you can relate to any of these scriptural examples, take heart! Remember that when Jacob held onto the Lord and did not give up, only then did he receive the blessing—not a stolen blessing or a blessing gained through trickery—a blessing from God Himself, revealed to Jacob, as a result of faith and perseverance. When facing discouragement, we hold tight to the character of God and remember His past faithfulness and lovingkindness. Why are we fearing that God won't be faithful? When the longing for a child aches and groans within us, we remember the one who is not constrained by

time, whose faithfulness will never cease. He is the Father of time, the Ancient of Days, from everlasting to everlasting, and He is good.

The reality is that discouragement and challenges to your faith will not disappear when there is a baby in your arms or a child in your home. The transplanting of a child into your family does not come without loss, grief, and challenge. It is essential that we as parents and caregivers are firmly rooted and established in the goodness and trustworthiness of God so that we can respond to these inevitable challenges from a place of deep faith and assurance in the Almighty God who loves, heals, and never fails. As you endure, trust that your waiting is part of God's redemptive plan, drawing you towards sanctification and nearness to the Father. Let the sacred echos of scripture minister to your heart as you pray over them today.

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— HEBREWS 12:12-13 —

“Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.”

Lord I surrender my discouragement and weakness to You. Though my hands are drooping, I lift them to You. Though my knees are weak, I will walk in Your way. Bring healing, Lord, for You are the Healer Strengthen my faith and my hope. Help me to trust in You.

— ROMANS 8:32 —

“He who did not spare His own son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will he not also with Him freely give us all things?”

Father, I see Your sacrifice. I see your generous, sacrificial love in Jesus’ suffering and death. I know You long to give what is good to me. I know that You see more than just this moment, but generations ahead and behind, and that You are always working. I trust You. I will wait for Your time and Your way. I will continue to persevere in faith.”

— PSALM 37:3B —

“Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.”

Forgive me for expecting faith to be easier. I know that You are working to grow in me a deeper dependence on You. Cultivate in my heart more faith! Help me to continue to fight the lies of the enemy in faith.

— ROMANS 5:3-5 —

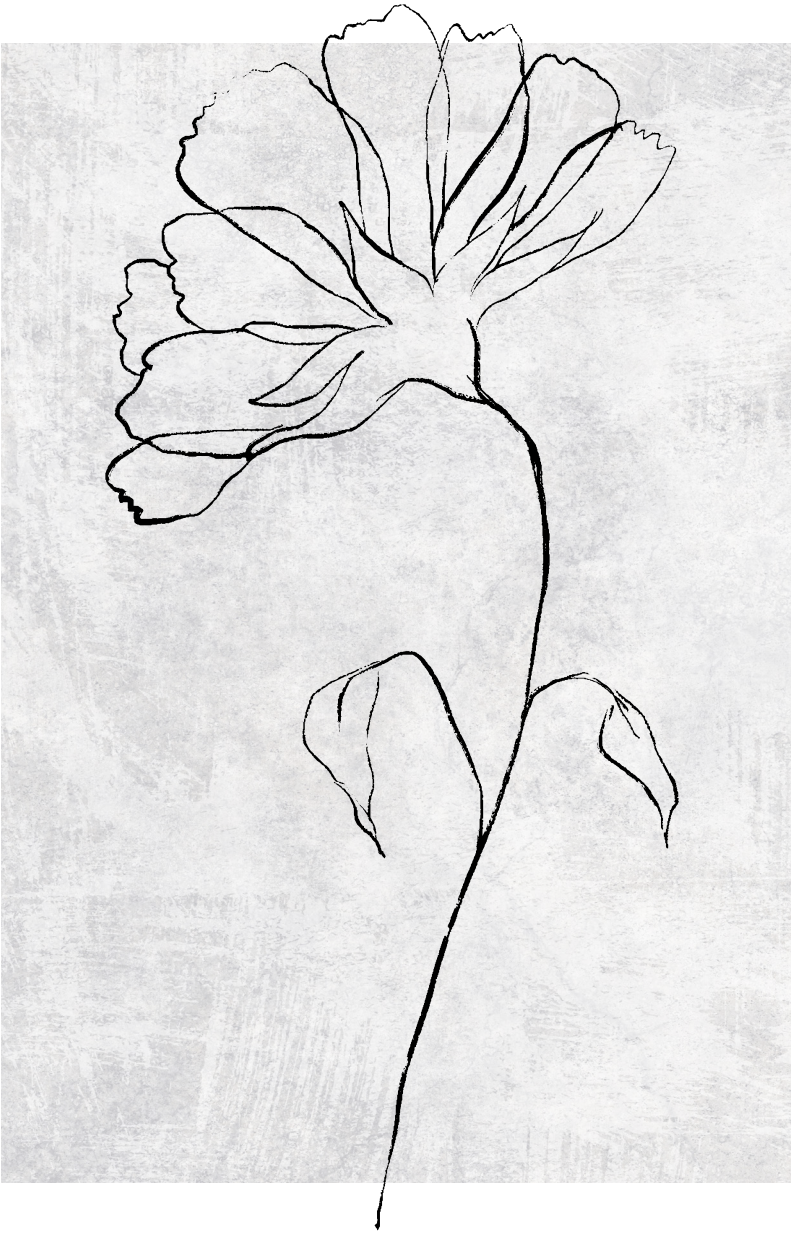
“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

— ISAIAH 40:28 —

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the Everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; His understanding is unsearchable.”

Oh God, I am so thankful for who You are. You are unlike any other. You alone are God, everlasting. Your wisdom and power have no end. Forgive me, Father, for my pride. Forgive me for focusing on my own way rather than surrendering to Yours. Lord, I worship You, for You alone are God. You alone are worthy. You alone are good.

Lord, in my suffering and in my waiting, You are working. I rejoice in the waiting today, knowing that You are doing a crucial and good work in my own heart. My God, may this season produce endurance, character, and hope in me. I am surrendered to Your Holy Spirit. Have Your way in me, no matter the cost.



One of our primary ministry goals is to equip families with resources and truth. If you would like more information, please contact us.

- 1 Margaret Feinberg, (2008). *The Sacred Echo: Hearing God's Voice in Every Area of Your Life*
- 2 2 Peter 3:13
- 3 Romans 8:32
- 4 Galatians 5:5
- 5 1 Thessalonians 1:10
- 6 Jon Bloom, (2021). "My Times Are in Your Hand: Learning to Trust the Speed of God." <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/my-times-are-in-your-hand>
- 7 Isaiah 46:9-10
- 8 Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:16; Daniel 7:9; Psalm 90:2
- 9 Acts 17:28, Colossians 1:17
- 10 1 Kings 19:4
- 11 Exodus 10:3
- 12 Curt Thompson, (2021). *The Soul of Desire: Discovering the Neuroscience of Longing, Beauty, and Community*.
- 13 Emily Jensen, (2019). *Risen Motherhood: Gospel Hope for Everyday*
- 14 Jon Bloom, (2017). "Lay Aside the Weight of Discouragement." <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lay-aside-the-weight-of-discouragement>







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PRAYER GUIDE

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