

## Week 1 Waiting with Faith

### 1A. Abraham: Friend of God

Pray

*...Your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you.  
(Psalm 26:3)*

During the season of Advent, we remember people who waited: people who heard God's promises and trusted that he would be faithful to keep them. We begin with Abraham.

- Read Gen 12:1-5, and Hebrews 11:8-12.  
How would you sum up what these Scriptures say about Abraham?

God called Abraham to a new life in a new home. He revealed the journey one step at a time.

*And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith. (Genesis 15:6 NLT)*

*Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. (James 2:23)*

*Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. For by this our ancestors were approved. (Hebrews 11:1-2 CSB)*

God called this imperfect man "righteous" because of his faith. The book of James tells us that Abraham was a friend of God. We, too, can be righteous in God's eyes if we believe his truth. We, too can be friends of God as we follow and depend on him.

Abraham spent much of his life waiting for a promise that seemed impossible to believe. While he waited, he developed a friendship with God. That's my goal for this season--to move deeper into that friendship. I want to thank God for his faithfulness, to cry out to him when I am discouraged, and to trust in his plan for the future. These sound like big goals, but I have the same God supporting me that Abraham did.

*When Abram was 99 years old, Yahweh appeared to him. He said to Abram, "I am El Shadday. Live in my presence with integrity. I will give you my promise, and I will give you very many descendants." Immediately, Abram bowed with his face touching the ground... (Genesis 17:1-3 NOG)*

*Shadday* or *Shaddai* probably comes from a Hebrew word ("shad") which means "breast." This name of God refers to his completely nourishing and supplying the needs of His people as a mother would her child. Connected with the word for God, *El*, this name describes a God who freely gives nourishment and blessing. I find this description of God especially significant during this time of year. Whether I am running low on finances or energy or hope, God is my source of nourishment. He is worthy of my faith.

Pray

*You who live in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty [in Hebrew, Shadday]  
will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress;  
my God, in whom I trust.” (Psalm 91:1-2)*

## 1B. Sarah: Defined by God

Pray

*Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people,  
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. (Psalm 85:8)*

*They call You the God of Abraham, but You are  
Also the God of Sarah, Chaldaean Princess, called to  
Serve her Lord and Master, mother of mighty multitudes  
Who remained unrealized, unbegotten, unbegun  
Only in stubborn fact. She knew, believed that Your promises  
Stand, judged You faithful even as she stood  
And laughed in the shadowed uncertainty of the tent, compelled to  
Wait a little longer for the echo of her laughter to return.*

*—Mark J. Leamy*

Yesterday we discussed Abraham, but we barely mentioned Sarah. Maybe you feel like a “barely mentioned” character right now. Perhaps you are feeling anything but festive in this season. If so, you can find encouragement in the story of Sarah.

- Read Genesis 18:1-15 and Genesis 21:1-3.

I don't know if Sarah ever heard messages from God directly or if she got them secondhand from Abraham. In Genesis 18, she seems to be on the edge of the action, almost eavesdropping. Perhaps this was a cultural thing. Maybe it was her own choice that day. That's not the point here. In fact, we can stop second-guessing Sarah's actions and let God define her. While Genesis 18 shows us a moment of doubt and denial, the author of Hebrews describes her as a woman of faith. Hebrews 11 is the great Faith Chapter of the Bible, memorializing many Old Testament saints who trusted God. The author included Sarah in this chapter and also recorded what Sarah believed about God:

*It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. (Hebrews 11:11 NLT)*

This is more important than that moment of laughter in Genesis 18. Did Sarah have doubts? Yes. Did she make big mistakes? Yes. But God chose to memorialize this about her: “She believed that God would keep his promise.” God defined her as a faithful woman.

Did you notice the words that begin each line of Mark’s poem about Sarah? “They also serve who only stand and wait.” This is a quote from a poem by John Milton (“When I Consider How My Light is Spent”). Milton mentions the angels who serve God by speeding over land and ocean at his command, and then he states that those who are simply waiting for God’s next command are serving him.

If you are in the shadows today, feeling forgotten, or waiting on what seems like an unanswered prayer, let God’s faithfulness speak to your heart. Don’t let your current situation or your accomplishments (or lack thereof) define you.

*For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.  
(Colossians 1:19-22 NLT)*

How does God define you in Colossians 1:19-22?

Can you think of any other Scriptures that tell you how God defines you?

Pray

*All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,  
and all your faithful shall bless you. (Psalm 145:10)*

## 1C. St. Andrew: Introducing others to God

Pray

*Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones,  
and give thanks to his holy name. (Psalm 30:4)*

During Advent, we will focus on a specific Saint every week. What do I mean by “saint”? I mean a familiar figure from the Bible or from history who gives us an example of faith.

Our saint this week is Andrew the disciple, whose feast day is celebrated in several branches of the faith on November 30. I always have good intentions to observe this day. It’s a holiday in Scotland, and I would like to celebrate our Scottish heritage. But somehow in the kerfuffle of Thanksgiving and the beginning of Advent, I forget this holiday every year,

St. Andrew himself often seemed to be overshadowed by his brother, Simon Peter. We talk about Peter’s big confession: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16) What a remarkable statement! But who introduced Peter to Jesus?

- Read John 1:35-42.

How did Andrew describe Jesus to Peter?

- Andrew also brought someone else to Jesus.

Read John 6:1-14.

Reading about St. Andrew reminds us that the truths we rejoice in this season are not only comforting truths to savor in our individual lives. They are abundant feasts to share.

A prayer for St. Andrew’s Day

*Almighty God, who gave such grace to your apostle Andrew that he readily obeyed the call of your Son Jesus Christ, and brought his brother with him: Give us, who are called by your Holy Word, grace to follow him without delay, and to bring those near to us into his gracious presence; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (from the Book of Common Prayer, 1979)*

Pray

*I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your ordinances before me.  
(Psalm 119:30)*