



CHRONIC JOY® DEVOTIONAL

WAITING IN WINTER

By Lee Ann Zanon

Tall maple trees outside my office window vividly proclaim the changing seasons. Barren branches greet me each morning, a skeleton of former glory. Once lush green, then vibrant orange/gold, now stark and gray.

Parallel imagery of chronic pain lands heavy in my heart. The color scheme of my life has changed dramatically in the past five years, with many vibrant hues gone or faded. Shifting from this season is beyond my control, no matter how much I wish it were different or try to make it happen. Like the cycle of nature, I must wait for timing orchestrated by God Himself.

When my journey of suffering began, I assumed it would be short-lived. I had come through a variety of difficult health challenges in the past, each one resolved through prayer and appropriate care. Yet, as weeks turned into months and months into years, the cumulative disappointment of failed treatments threatened to extinguish hope. Looking toward the future triggered fear, sadness, and resentment. As I repeatedly and honestly poured out my heart to the Lord, I eventually realized expectations were at the root of my angst.

Ruth Chou Simons, author of *Emmanuel: An Invitation to Prepare Him Room at Christmas and Always*, says, "I've squandered too many days coddling expectations rather than waiting with expectancy. One leaves you tight-fisted and anxious, while the other rests with a posture of outstretched hands, ready to receive with hope and confident trust."

Oh, how those words (echoing Micah 7:7) ring true in my soul!

But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.

Living with God-focused expectancy (rather than self-imposed expectations) opens our eyes to see His goodness even in hard seasons. In the wise words of a long-time friend, "Release all expectations and watch for what the Lord will do."



The prophet's progression from "watch expectantly" to "wait for the God of my salvation" accentuates that His provision may not match our desired timing or outcome. It requires relinquishing control and surrendering to the Lord's will and way. It also implies active anticipation, looking for divine engagement and impact.

The phrase *My God will hear me* is one I need to hold tight and believe with all my heart. Knowing that He listens to my prayers, whether spoken or silent, instills vital assurance of His love.

Living with this mindset cultivates gratitude. When we're aware of the Lord's involvement, we're much more likely to give thanks. Another friend told me, "We'll always see what we're looking for."

The enemy of your soul and mine would like nothing better than to keep us swirling in despair. When we dwell on disappointment, we miss the chance to recount and rejoice in God's blessings. Our vision is limited to what surrounds us, turning our attention inward and obscuring our hope in Christ.

WAITING IN WINTER REQUIRES A CHOICE

Watching and waiting requires a deliberate choice. Whatever You have for me, Lord, that's what I want.

Last winter, the bare-branch trees I mentioned created a stunning shadow atop a blanket of glistening snow – a gift no other season could offer. If I had been preoccupied with wishing for spring or aching for autumn, I would have missed the wonder right before me.

Exchanging our expectations for God-focused expectancy opens the door to persevering faith and joy. His wisdom is boundless. His mercy is sure. He is entirely trustworthy for every season of our lives.

PRAYER

Gracious God, please help me release expectations and look for Your goodness. I long to see You in new and fresh ways. Thank You for Your past faithfulness. I trust You for today and the future. Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What are your expectations in this life season?
- Where do you see God at work in your current circumstances?
- What is one step you can take toward living with expectancy rather than expectations?

Prayers for the Journey (printable) offers meaningful encouragement as we watch and wait. Explore and share its insights with a friend!

