

15 Ways to Strengthen Your Faith and Trust God While Waiting

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Christian Reflections to Build your Faith, By Melkisedeck Leon Shine

Cultivating Trust in God During Periods of Abeyance: Fifteen Principles of Enduring Patience

Periods of waiting, or abeyance, are an inherent part of the human experience. From professional setbacks and health challenges to relational uncertainties, these times often generate feelings of anxiety, doubt, and a perceived lack of control. Navigating these periods requires a deliberate and multifaceted approach rooted in theological and psychological frameworks. This article explores fifteen principles designed to foster trust in God during such times, drawing upon concepts such as theological hope, which is the confident expectation of future good based on unwavering faith in divine promises; spiritual disciplines, which are intentional practices designed to enhance one's relationship with the divine and cultivate inner resilience; and the critical importance of pastoral care, referring to the compassionate support and guidance offered by religious communities to individuals navigating spiritual and emotional challenges. By examining practical applications and illustrating these principles with relevant biblical examples and contemporary scenarios, this article offers guidance for enduring periods of uncertainty with faith and fortitude.

1. **Affirmation of Divine Promises Through Cognitive Reframing:** The bedrock of enduring faith rests on consistently remembering and meditating upon God's promises as revealed in scripture. This process involves intentionally reframing one's cognitive landscape, actively replacing anxious thoughts and fear-based projections with scriptural affirmations and reminders of God's unwavering commitment. Drawing from the principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), individuals can actively challenge negative thought patterns, identifying and disputing cognitive distortions that amplify feelings of uncertainty. This is then replaced with positive, faith-based affirmations, drawing strength from past instances of God's faithfulness, such as Abraham's unwavering perseverance in the face of seemingly impossible odds (Genesis 12-22) or the Israelites' miraculous exodus from Egyptian bondage (Exodus). This active engagement with scripture and cognitive restructuring mitigates the corrosive effects of uncertainty during waiting periods, fostering a sense of hope and stability grounded in divine assurance.

2. **Cultivating Daily Spiritual Disciplines for Enhanced Resilience:** Consistent engagement with spiritual disciplines, encompassing prayer, scripture study, meditation, and contemplative practices, is crucial for fostering a deeper and more intimate relationship with God. These practices, integral to various spiritual formation models, provide solace, guidance, and strength, cultivating inner resilience in the face of external challenges. Consistent prayer, understood not merely as a ritualistic practice but as a form of communication and communion with God, cultivates a profound sense of divine presence and inner peace, allowing

individuals to experience God's unwavering support. Practices like *Lectio Divina*, a contemplative approach to scripture reading, encourage deeper understanding and practical application of God's word to daily life. This consistent connection acts as an anchor during turbulent periods of uncertainty, fostering spiritual resilience and providing a source of unwavering strength.

3. Surrendering to Divine Chronology Through Acceptance and Commitment: The surrender of control to God's timing, a cornerstone of many spiritual traditions, requires acknowledging the inherent limitations of human understanding and recognizing the vastness of God's perspective. This involves accepting that God's plans and purposes often surpass human comprehension, mirroring the theological concept of divine sovereignty. Applying the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), individuals learn to embrace the present moment without excessive struggle or resistance against the inherent uncertainties of life. By cultivating acceptance of what is beyond their control and committing to values-driven action in the present, individuals foster psychological well-being and inner peace, even amidst circumstances that are not immediately understood.

4. Discovering Purpose in the Process: Meaning-Making and Growth: The waiting period should not be viewed as a passive state of inactivity but rather as an opportunity for profound personal growth, spiritual development, and the discovery of deeper meaning. This approach draws on the concept of meaning-making, where individuals actively seek purpose and value in challenging experiences, reframing adversity as a catalyst for transformation. By focusing on the potential for growth, resilience, and spiritual deepening, rather than solely on the desired outcome, individuals cultivate optimism and find purpose in the present. This aligns with the principles of positive psychology, which emphasizes focusing on strengths, fostering resilience, and cultivating a positive mindset in the face of adversity. By actively seeking opportunities for learning and growth during waiting periods, individuals can transform these times into periods of profound personal and spiritual enrichment.

5. Nurturing Hope-Filled Expectation Through Eschatological Vision: Faith involves cultivating a hope-filled expectation, a confident anticipation of God's fulfillment of promises, even when circumstances seem to contradict that expectation. This entails a proactive stance, actively believing in the positive outcomes that God has planned, even amidst uncertainty and doubt. This echoes the theological concept of eschatology, the study of last things, which focuses on the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan for humanity and the cosmos, fostering a sense of purpose that transcends immediate circumstances and provides a framework for understanding present suffering within a larger, divinely ordained narrative. By maintaining an eschatological vision, individuals can anchor their hope in the ultimate triumph of God's purposes, fostering resilience and unwavering faith during periods of abeyance.

6. Practicing Gratitude Amidst Adversity: Shifting Focus to Abundance: Cultivating gratitude, a key element of positive psychology and spiritual well-being, shifts the focus from perceived lack to the recognition of existing abundance. By actively acknowledging God's blessings, both big and small, individuals counter the negative emotions associated with waiting, such as anxiety, resentment, and despair. This practice promotes emotional well-being, strengthens spiritual faith, and fosters resilience in the face of challenging circumstances. Engaging in practices such as gratitude journaling, where individuals regularly record and reflect on the blessings

in their lives, or engaging in regular reflections on God's goodness and faithfulness, can facilitate this process and cultivate a sustained sense of thankfulness, even amidst adversity.

7. Leveraging the Power of Community Support: Pastoral Care and Fellowship: Seeking support from a faith-based community provides essential encouragement, accountability, and emotional sustenance during periods of waiting. This aligns with the principle of pastoral care, where the support and guidance of a spiritual leader, mentor, or community aids in navigating difficult times. Shared prayer, fellowship, mutual encouragement, and practical assistance within a supportive community strengthen spiritual resilience, provide a sense of belonging, and offer a safe space for processing emotions and seeking guidance during periods of abeyance. This communal support system serves as a buffer against isolation and despair, fostering hope and resilience in the face of uncertainty.

8. Remembering God's Consistent Character and Reliability: Counterbalancing Doubt: Doubt is a natural human response to uncertainty; however, focusing on God's consistent character, past acts of faithfulness, and unwavering love provides a strong counterbalance to these feelings of skepticism. This approach relies on the theological concept of God's immutability, his unchanging nature and unwavering commitment to his promises, reinforcing faith during times of trial and uncertainty. Reflecting on scripture, recalling personal experiences of God's faithfulness in the past, and engaging in practices that reaffirm God's character, such as reciting affirmations or listening to uplifting music, strengthens confidence in his future actions and fosters a sense of security grounded in his unwavering love.

9. Embracing the Transformative Power of Waiting: Spiritual Refinement: Waiting on God is not passive inactivity; rather, it's a dynamic period of spiritual preparation, refinement, and transformation. Understanding this allows individuals to embrace the process as a time of growth, learning, and deeper connection with the divine. This view aligns with the spiritual formation concept of "spiritual disciplines," where periods of waiting are viewed as opportunities for cultivating patience, developing inner strength, and deepening one's understanding of God's purposes. By embracing the transformative potential of waiting, individuals can emerge from these periods with greater resilience, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.

10. Cultivating Humility and Obedience: Submission to Divine Will: Periods of waiting often necessitate humility, acknowledging the limitations of human control and submitting to God's divine will. This aligns with the principle of surrendering one's ego-driven desires and personal ambitions to a higher purpose, trusting that God's plan ultimately surpasses human understanding. Obedience to God's commands, even in the midst of uncertainty and when the path ahead is unclear, demonstrates faith, strengthens trust, and fosters spiritual maturity. By cultivating humility and obedience, individuals align themselves with God's purposes, opening themselves to his guidance and experiencing the peace that comes from surrendering control.

11. Following Christ's Example of Patient Endurance: A Model for Trust: Jesus Christ's life serves as the ultimate example of patient waiting, enduring suffering, and unwavering trust in God's plan. His experience provides a powerful model for navigating trials, maintaining faith in the face of adversity, and surrendering to divine providence. By contemplating Jesus' unwavering trust in his Father's plan, even in the face of unimaginable suffering, individuals can draw inspiration,

strength, and hope to persevere in their own waiting periods. This approach draws on the theological concept of Christ's example as a model for Christian living, offering a tangible representation of faith, perseverance, and unwavering trust in God's purposes.

12. Recognizing God's Strength in Weakness: Grace and Empowerment: Waiting periods may often reveal personal vulnerabilities, limitations, and weaknesses. However, these moments highlight God's power working through human limitations, demonstrating his ability to transform weakness into strength. This aligns with the theological concept of God's grace, which empowers individuals to persevere despite their inherent limitations, offering comfort, strength, and hope in the midst of vulnerability. Acknowledging one's limitations fosters humility, cultivates dependence on God's strength, and opens the door for experiencing his transformative power in overcoming adversity.

13. Finding Peace in God's Unwavering Promises: Inner Sanctuary of Calm: God's promises offer a source of profound peace amidst the turmoil of waiting. Focusing on his words of comfort, assurance, and unwavering love creates an inner sanctuary of calm and tranquility, providing refuge from the storms of uncertainty. This mirrors the concept of spiritual peace, a state of serenity and inner harmony found through unwavering trust in God's faithfulness and a deep sense of connection with the divine. By meditating on God's promises, reciting affirmations of faith, and engaging in practices that foster inner peace, individuals can cultivate a sense of tranquility that transcends external circumstances.

14. Prioritizing God's Kingdom Over Temporal Desires: Eternal Perspective: Shifting the focus from immediate desires, material possessions, and fleeting earthly pursuits to God's eternal kingdom offers a broader perspective, fostering a greater sense of purpose, hope, and contentment. This involves prioritizing spiritual values, such as love, compassion, justice, and service, over material gain and personal gratification. This aligns with the theological concept of kingdom priorities, emphasizing eternal values over fleeting earthly pursuits and encouraging individuals to live with an awareness of God's ultimate purposes for their lives. By aligning their priorities with God's kingdom, individuals experience a sense of purpose that transcends immediate circumstances and fosters lasting joy, peace, and fulfillment.

15. Demonstrating Perseverance and Endurance: Steadfast Commitment: Waiting can be exceptionally challenging, pushing individuals to their limits and testing the depths of their faith. However, perseverance and endurance, demonstrating unwavering faith and steadfast commitment to God's plan, even when circumstances seem bleak, are essential for navigating periods of abeyance with grace and fortitude. This requires consistent faith, disciplined effort, and a resolute determination to remain faithful to God's purposes, even when the path ahead is uncertain. This approach draws on the theological concept of Christian perseverance, highlighting the importance of remaining faithful in difficult times, trusting that God will ultimately fulfill his promises and reward those who remain steadfast in their faith.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Navigating periods of abeyance effectively requires a holistic approach that integrates theological understanding, psychological principles, and practical spiritual disciplines. By actively applying these fifteen principles, individuals can

cultivate deeper trust in God's plan, foster spiritual resilience, and experience greater peace, hope, and purpose amidst uncertainty. The consistent application of these principles fosters spiritual maturity, enhances emotional well-being, and strengthens the individual's relationship with God, transforming periods of waiting into opportunities for profound growth and divine connection. Future research could explore the efficacy of integrating various therapeutic interventions, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction or trauma-informed care, with established spiritual practices to mitigate the negative emotional and psychological effects of prolonged waiting periods. The integration of these principles within pastoral care, faith-based counseling, and spiritual direction could offer valuable support to individuals facing extended periods of uncertainty, providing them with the tools, resources, and guidance needed to navigate these challenges with faith, resilience, and hope. The application of these principles can lead to increased spiritual maturity, emotional well-being, and a strengthened relationship with God, impacting their overall well-being and contributing to a more resilient and compassionate community.

Reader Pool: Considering the increasing prevalence of anxiety and uncertainty in contemporary society, how can faith communities adapt their pastoral care strategies to effectively support individuals struggling with prolonged periods of waiting, while also addressing the underlying psychological and emotional factors that contribute to their distress?