

## LISTENING ALONGSIDE



## ECHOING CHRIST

### **Lenten Devotions 2017**

**Thursday,  
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On December 23, 2015, my life got turned upside down! My husband's company had recently been bought out, and we got the dreaded call: "I am sorry but the new company has eliminated your position." Oh wow! Major heart drop, and two days before Christmas!!! Could they not have waited until the new year? All the questions rushed through my head: What are we going to do? He is the breadwinner— what about bills, the house, everything? Are we going to be ok? Once we got over the initial shock, we took a breath and were thankful it was the holidays. We put all our focus on our kids and being with family

Fast forward 422 days later...and we are still patiently waiting for the right opportunity to come his way. So far, for 607, 680 seconds I have been praying....Praying for the perfect job, one he likes, and can grow with....a long-term career. God's plan has been very different, and we are continuing to trust him and be patient.

Have you ever wanted something so badly that you felt like waiting just wasn't an option? Like you didn't care about passing GO and collecting \$200 dollars, you wanted to go straight to the end result?

Maybe like your wedding day. With all the preparations for the big day, you just wish it would be here already. Or waiting for that precious bundle of joy to come into the world, so you can enjoy all those baby snuggles. Or maybe you're counting down the days to a vacation, so you can sit on a beach and actually relax. I know there have been plenty of times I wanted to skip all the middle stuff and get straight to the exciting things in life. The "happy memories" like wedding days, babies and vacations.

But real life doesn't just land on the exciting times. It skips around....a lot...just like a game of Monopoly.

So often, we want to jump straight to God's Plan. We don't want to go through the pauses and detours He sends us on. At times we become impatient, angry, full of questions, and we expect Him to slingshot us past the trying times. But God always has a plan. He seldom hands out passes so we can skip the hard times and head to the fun, exciting, and easy times. But the hard times aren't necessarily a bad thing, as painful as they feel at the time. He always has a purpose for everything in our lives.

I read on a blog not too long ago, "A rush through the wait has the potential to stunt our spiritual growth and dull our senses to what God wants us to learn." Whoa....what??? That hit me hard, because for the last year that's all I wanted to do: rush through the wait and get to the goal of God's Plan.

I have to say I am still learning from this past year. Through the trials and tribulations, with unemployment, two foot surgeries, my son having surgery, myself starting a job after six years, and many more God has always been there, right by my side. This may sound crazy but, I say, "Thank You!" Thank you to God for this past year. I continue to learn and see what big things God has in store for me. See. I feel special. I feel like God chose me to spend time with, to mold me, to grow me spiritually, and to heighten my senses to what He wants me to learn.

Waiting is hard, but it isn't meant to be a punishing process. Look at it as a place to spend time with God while He works in us so He can work through us. Use the waiting time wisely and grow your faith. He never stops working for us and on us, and He will never disappoint.

## Prayer

Look upon us gently, Lord, for waiting is not our forte.

So many things are . . . things like moving ahead, fixing what is wrong, planning what is next, diagnosing the problem, cramming more into one day than one person can possibly do before the sun goes down.

But waiting . . . when we are waiting for the light to shine, when we are waiting for the Word, when we are waiting for a wound to heal, nothing in all th world is harder than waiting.

So in your mercy, Lord, wait with us.

Be our very present help in waiting. Heal our frenzy. Calm our fears. Comfort those who at this very minute are with every anxious breath and thought waiting for they know-not-what.

Transform our in-the-meantime into your time, while we wait with each other, sit with each other, pray each other into hope, surrounded by your presence, even in the darkness. Especially in the darkness.

–Sharlande Sledge

From *Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Seasons*

## Psalm 40:1-3

I waited patiently for the Lord;  
he inclined to me and heard my cry.  
He drew me up from the desolate pit,  
out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock,  
making my steps secure.  
He put a new song in my mouth,  
a song of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear,  
and put their trust in the Lord.

## James 1: 2-4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.