

Learning to Wait

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Day One

Have you ever said: "Lord, it's enough! When are you going to do something about this? Why are you waiting so long?" Well, I don't know anyone who hasn't asked those questions of God at some time or another in their Christian walk.

Why is waiting so hard for us? Why do we chomp at the bit so easily when God doesn't do what we think he should do when we think he should do it? Let me share my own answers to those questions and see if you can identify with me.

Waiting is difficult for me because I don't like the unknown. I want to know what lies out there; mysteries frighten me, especially where my own future is concerned. Waiting is tough for me because I'm a here and now person, and I want everything in neat little rows, no strings left hanging, no problems left unsolved.

Waiting is hard for me when I think I know the right solution and can see no benefit in waiting for it to happen. In fact, it usually appears disastrous to me to think it won't happen on my schedule. Waiting is hard for me because I tend to be a controlling person, and I want to feel that everything's on schedule.

Undoubtedly, you can relate to some of my difficulties with waiting and perhaps add a few of your own. When I take a closer look, I have to conclude my problem is I don't want to let go and trust God. I'm afraid to trust God. It is a sinful, though frequently undetected, attitude that I've got better solutions, better schedules, better ideas than God. It is a false trust in myself. That's a little tough to face, but I believe it is the root cause of my struggles—and yours too—when God keeps us waiting.

The truth is the waiting periods of our lives are very important to our spiritual growth and understanding of God, for through them we learn to walk by faith and not by sight.

Day Two

The Bible tells us without faith it is impossible to please God, and we must learn to walk by faith and not by sight.

Let's face it: Walking by faith and not by sight is not very comfortable. Frankly, walking by faith would be a lesson I would never learn if it were left up to me, how about you? Give me my choice and I'll have all my problems solved immediately, I'll choose a predictable, well-planned, and executed life, without problems, without difficulties, without heartaches. Who wouldn't?

And, of course, God knows that, but because he's my heavenly Father, with all wisdom and knowledge, he also knows that would not be good for me. Just imagine what we'd be like if we never had to walk by faith. First of all, we wouldn't please God, for without faith it's impossible to please him and without waiting periods, our faith would never develop.

Secondly, we'd have little character since character is developed through waiting periods; we'd have no compassion for others since we would not be able to understand their struggles; we'd be proud and self-satisfied. There would be no cutting edge on our lives, no reason to turn to God daily with our needs, no learning to feed on his Word and rest in his care. No, a life of ease without those waiting periods would not be good for us, and our trustworthy heavenly Father knows that, even when we don't.

I think if we could grasp the blessedness of trusting God and the freedom and joy that brings into our lives, then waiting periods would look entirely different to us. We see them as great difficulties or at least annoying inconveniences. God sees how they force us to learn to know him and trust him, and of course, that is more important than anything else.

Ask God to give you a different perspective on your waiting periods.

Day Three

When as a Christ-follower you are in a waiting room where there is absolutely nothing you can do but wait, and it looks disastrous to you, then you are backed into a corner where you are forced to learn to trust God more.

We sang a song in my church recently that was new to me, and some of the words really stuck with me. It said,

I'm fighting a battle You've already won
No matter what comes my way, I will overcome
I don't know what you're doing, but I know what you've done
And I'm fighting a battle You've already won

When God's people were facing three enemy armies sure to wipe them out, the prophet of the Lord said to Jehoshaphat and all God's people:

This is what the Lord says to you: Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's (2 Chron. 20:15).

If you're in God's waiting room right now—you don't know what's going to happen with your job, your financial situation looks pretty dismal, that report from your doctor has left you in fear, whatever it is—you're waiting on answers and solutions. I urge you to remember this: You don't know what God's doing, but you know what he's done. Recall all those times when you were worried or fearful, and how God was there for you and got you through. Recall all his promises to you, his totally dependable promises. And just tell him, "I don't know what you're doing and maybe I never will, or maybe it's going to be a long time before I will understand, but I'm resting in the knowledge that I know who you are, and I know what you've done. You are trustworthy, and I trust you."

If some battle has you in a waiting room, the Lord says to you, "The battle is not yours but mine." You're fighting a battle he's already won. He has promised never to leave you, nothing can separate you from his love, and all things will work together for his good. I don't know how or when or if it will work out the way you want it to, but I know that if you have placed your trust in Jesus Christ, and since nothing or nobody can snatch you out of his hand, then you're in a good place. You don't know what he's doing, but you know what he's done. Trust him!

Day Four

I recall a three-year delay God gave me, when I so wanted to leave a job I was in. From my vantage point, no good could be served by my remaining in that job another day. I had a most difficult boss, and I didn't like the work. It was so painful to get up and make myself go to that office each morning. So, in

my usual style, I got the resume updated, and started the job search. I had full confidence I could find another suitable job quickly.

Days turned into weeks and months, and jobs that looked like a shoe-in fell through. "What's happening, God? Why did you let that job fall through? That would have gotten me out of this mess." Those were my sentiments at that point in time.

But finally, I recognized God wasn't letting me out of this one yet. And so, I gave him permission to keep me there as long as it served his purposes, though I couldn't imagine what good purposes could possibly be served. That's the place we have to come to.

Read this carefully: Patience is accepting a difficult situation from God without giving him a timetable to remove it. Read it again: Patience is accepting a difficult situation from God without giving him a timetable to remove it.

Been giving God any timetables lately? If only we can learn to accept those waiting periods in our lives as from his hand, and say, "Lord, it's your timetable not mine. I accept this situation as long as you choose to allow it." That is walking by faith, my friends.

Had I left that job when I wanted to, I would have missed three years of personal development that have been essential to my walk with God and the ministry he has given me. I would have missed the tough lessons I learned that molded my character and helped me mature. And in addition, during those three years I acquired business skills and experience, which allowed me to become self-employed, and that turned out to be absolutely essential in order to begin this ministry. God knew what he was doing.

If you're in that predicament today, wondering why God hasn't done anything yet, try to remember that the day will come when you can look back and see how he was developing you in that time.

Day Five

I wonder if you can now look back on some waiting period of your life and realize what God was doing for you then. I think of a friend who was in a very difficult work situation with a co-worker who was not only unpleasant, but malicious and aggressive. This co-worker deliberately told lies about my friend to upper management and played the political games to win favor with them and cause my friend to be in dis-favor.

Almost every week my friend would come to our Sunday class and share the latest story of what this woman had done to her. She was truly treated unfairly and unjustly, and it wasn't right. But through it all, the one message that God gave her was "wait." She was reminded that vengeance belongs to the Lord, and he would fight this battle for her.

So, she kept her mouth shut, refused to be vindictive, and continued to do her job with excellence. This went on for two long years; that's a long waiting room. But then her difficult co-worker came down with a very serious illness that kept her out of the office for months. And during her absence management came to understand the truth. They saw that my friend was doing all the work; they understood that this sick co-worker had lied to them about my friend.

They proceeded to give my friend a promotion and rewarded her openly in front of the entire large department. My friend was vindicated by God, and she could then see how important it was for her to let God fight her battle and be patient during that long waiting period.

When this disruptive co-worker did return to work, she was placed in another department and was no longer given the prestige and importance she had before. God took care of this person in the right way and my friend was vindicated.

But suppose she had refused to wait. She could have complained and argued and fought with this woman, and in the process destroyed her testimony. Instead, by being willing to wait for God's timing, she became a shining light in a dark world, and God honored her patience and obedience.

So, if God has you in a waiting room right now, learn to wait patiently. He has good plans for you, but you'll mess them up if you insist on your timing. God is totally trustworthy, so let go and wait on the Lord.