

Women & More

The Value of Waiting

17 November 2011

God has created boundaries around every event in our lives—there is always a beginning and an end—and it is a mistake for us to break through those hedges. It's a vital principle of guidance for a Christian never to move out of the place in which she is sure God has placed her, until she hears from Him—waiting on and for God is *time* spent, yes, but never *time* wasted!

Waiting takes time! God is not bound by *time*, though, and he lives and reigns, **today** (describing our time), in **eternity** (his)! The past, present and future are all together with him and **he is there!** God does not have a past, a present or a future! While we remain tethered to *time*, he works in and through us within that framework. All of the events, situations and circumstances that God allows to come into our lives are bounded by *time*, so that we can endure them—they have a beginning and an end.

Knowing that God dwells in **eternity** while we live in *time* will go a long way to help us practice waiting **on** and **for** God. When we wait **on God, he may be waiting until we are ready.** And when we wait **for God, we may be waiting until he is ready.** We need to remember and acknowledge that God is Sovereign and rules over all the earth! He is in control of everything and, therefore, he's never out of control. The world is out of control, but God is not! God will take our out-of-control lives and bring them to order if we will submit to his plans and his rule in our lives. Jeremiah 29:11 "*For I know the plans I have for you,*" declares the Lord, "*plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*"

God has His plans marked out for each believer. In *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer says: "The challenge for us, more often than not, is our unwillingness to wait. '*Wait on the Lord*' is a constant refrain in the Psalms, and it is a necessary word, for God often keeps us waiting. He is not in such a hurry as we are, and it is not his way to give more light on the future than we need for action in the present, or to guide us more than one step at a time. When in doubt...continue to wait on God. When action is needed light will come."

God can give us such a clear exercise in waiting right at this time of the year. Some of us can't wait for Christmas to come while harried others can't wait until it's all over. And God knows all about our individual needs. We are to make plans, yes, but we need to give them over to the Great Creator and Editor to make any changes he knows are necessary. Scripture says that is how our Sovereign Lord operates, if we are just willing to wait.

God wants to order our lives down to the smallest detail, for his purposes and for his glory. He did that throughout the Bible. He wants to be involved in the intimate details of our lives...revealing his plans and helping us accomplish them. Psalm 25:5 *“Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.”*

In the Old Testament: Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Ruth, Esther and Hannah endured waiting on and for the Lord to answer fervent prayers, deliver them and their people from desperate situations, and fulfill their life’s calling. We also remember Sarah, Abraham’s wife, who didn’t wait for God’s promised son, and moved ahead of God!

In the New Testament: Mary, Elizabeth, Martha, Mary Magdalene, Steven, Paul, Peter, John and many others saw God order their lives as well. Jesus, during his time on earth, met men, women and children on the road of life and offered them salvation and an ordered life through His Lordship. Again Packer: “The same wisdom which ordered the paths which God’s saints trod in Bible times orders the Christian’s life today. We should not, therefore, be too taken aback when unexpected and upsetting and discouraging things happen to us now. What do they mean? ...Simply that God in His wisdom means to make something of us that we have not yet attained, and is dealing with us accordingly.”

- Let’s look again at our two main points:

I. When we wait on God, he may be waiting until we are ready.

God is readying us for the plans he has and notice, that he’s waiting, too! He’s waiting until we are ready. This waiting on God is so often dependent on our willingness to learn what God wants us to learn or go through before he is ready to do what he wants to do in our lives. What are some examples of this? Packer again: “Perhaps He means to strengthen us in patience, good humor, compassion, humility, or meekness, by giving us some extra practice in exercising these graces under especially difficult conditions. Perhaps He has new lessons in self-denial and self-distrust to teach us. Perhaps He wishes to break us of complacency, or unreality, or undetected forms of pride and conceit. Perhaps His purpose is simply to draw us closer to Himself in conscious communion with Him. Or perhaps God is preparing us for forms of service of which at present we have no inkling.”

Isaiah 30:18 **KJV** says, *“**And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you for the LORD is a God of justice; **blessed are all they that wait for him.**”** **Let’s examine this:***

• In Matthew 15:21-28 Jesus is approached by a woman from Canaan—a woman with great faith, who had to wait...for her answer to prayer. 21“*Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.’* And Scripture records in verse 23a: “*Jesus did not answer a word.*” Charles Spurgeon commenting on this passage says, “The Savior did not at once bestow the blessing, even though the woman had great faith in him. He intended to give it, but he waited awhile.... There may be certain reasons calling for **the trial of faith, rather than the reward of faith**...Many in waiting upon the Lord find immediate delight, but this is not the case with all.”

Let’s ask some questions about this woman from Canaan:

- 1) Was she asking Jesus for something worthy and good?
- 2) Was her request a needy one (vs 22 her daughter was demon-possessed)?
- 3) Did she ask in earnest and was she sincere (vs 22 have mercy on me)?
- 4) Did she ask believing she would receive—in faith?

Every answer to these four questions is “Yes.” Not only did this woman of great faith—as Jesus describes her later—wait on Jesus, but she had to endure tribulation while waiting. Verse 23 continues: “*So his disciples came to him and urged him, ‘Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.’*”

24“*He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.’*”

25“*The woman came and knelt before him. ‘Lord, help me!’ she said.*”

26“*He replied, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.’*”

27“*‘Yes, Lord,’ she said, ‘but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.’*”

Surprisingly, tribulation came from the disciples, and then trial and testing of her faith came from Jesus himself. Why? Jesus was using her as an example to his disciples and others of someone who had not only great faith, but persevering faith, and *waiting* faith—the kind of proven faith that was going to move Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter!

28“*Then Jesus answered, ‘**Woman, you have great faith!** Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.*”

II. When we wait for God, we may be waiting until he is ready.

He’s waiting for the moment in time when he will implement his plans for us. Because God knows everything, he knows the perfect time for everything. He has absolutely perfect timing, which will always produce the best results! God has eternity’s perspective, and can see the beginning from the end without moving an inch. Romans 5:6 says, “*You see, **at just the right time**, when we were still powerless, **Christ died for the ungodly.**”*”

We always want to wait **for** God—until he is ready to do for us, and in and through us the plans that he has. This is where I can mess up, if I don't wait, consistently, I may jump ahead of God. I may think I see what he wants me to do in a situation and jump in without 'waiting' to see what he really wants to do. I am so prone to that. Proverbs 19:2 *"It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be **hasty** and miss the way."* Mrs. Charles Cowman: "Oh for the faith that does not make haste, but waits patiently for the Lord. *She* has attained to an eminent degree of Christian grace who knows how to wait."

To have goals and plans is not wrong. But when they consume us and cause us to move ahead of God so that we can't wait for him, then we display a lack of faith. And without faith...what? **Hebrews 11:6**. It is impossible to please God...*right!* When we submit our goals and desires to the Lord, then we can be sure that he will give us what is best. Hold out for the best! Isaiah 40:31 KJV *"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."*

In a nutshell...why wait?

- 1) Because God is in control,
- 2) Because God rewards patience, and
- 3) Because God is working things out!

A. What do we do while we wait on God? How are we to wait?

1. **Wait patiently** with expectance—James 5:7 *"Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains."* While we're waiting, God is working; waiting is a time for preparation on our part—to get ready for it. Psalm 62:5 *"My expectation is from Him"* (KJV), and Romans 8:25 *"But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."* Andrew Murray: "God is a wise husbandman. He cannot gather the fruit till it is ripe. He knows when we are spiritually ready to receive the blessing to our profit and His glory."
2. **Wait quietly**—Psalm 37:7 *"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him...."* We have a tendency not to wait *quietly*—if we wait at all—and to talk ourselves out of the *faith* to wait. Worry, speculation, doubt and comparing causes us to gripe, complain and grumble. We so need to let God's calm, rest and peace come as we wait quietly in His presence until we hear from Him. How much energy is wasted and time is lost by not letting down the wings of our spirit and getting very quiet before Him? James 5:9 *"Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. **The Judge is standing at the door!**"*

3. **Wait confidently**—James 5:11 “As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.” C. H. Spurgeon: “Delayed answers to prayer are not only trials of faith, but they give us opportunities of honoring God by our steadfast confidence in him, under apparent repulses.”

B. How do we know what to do next? When is the ‘wait’ over?

Wait for God’s direction! He speaks to us and gives direction in at least four ways: 1) **His Word**, 2) **His Spirit**, 3) **His people**, and 4) **in circumstances**. Remember that God never keeps us at a post without assuring us of his presence and sending daily supplies. We must never presume to know what God wants, and we must never presume that we will live long enough to do what we plan. When we go with God’s plans for us, it’s up to him to give us the time and means to carry them out.

We must give all our presumptions over to God and his will for us. That’s why we say in James 4:15: “***If it is the Lord’s will***, we will live and do this or that.” Henry Blackaby: “Only God can reveal his plans and he does so in his way, on his time schedule, and to whom he wills...God does not reveal himself on people’s terms; he does so on his terms. **Far too often we have rushed in and out of God’s presence before God was willing to speak.**”

The Psalmist said: “*I waited patiently for the Lord, he turned to me and heard my cry*” Psalm 40:1. Waiting is one of the hardest things for people to do—and it’s even hard for Christians. But there are big, big kingdom dividends for the follower of Christ who will wait on and for God, and perhaps only eternity will reveal them.

Charles Swindoll said, “Because it is short, life is packed with challenging possibilities. Because it is uncertain, it’s filled with challenging adjustments. I’m convinced that’s much of what Jesus meant when He promised us an abundant life. Abundant with challenges, running over with possibilities, filled with opportunities to adapt, alter and change. Life’s most challenging opportunities are often brilliantly disguised as unsolvable problems.”

No matter what we’re going through in our own lives right now, let’s be careful not to break through our Creator’s hedges and move out of the place in which we are sure he has placed us until he says so. When he says “come” we should come, and when he says “go” we should definitely go! But let’s exercise our faith in God and wait for the certain sound—His direction!