

Waiting on God sermon February 11th, 2018

God's Waiting Room slide

This morning I rose from bed pretty early in the morning. And I routinely checked my phone for any overnight news and any recent emails. And I discovered an email from an individual, which was sent at 1:54am, who was sharing his or her own personal frustration with having to continue to live in God's Waiting Room. Life in recent years has not turned out the way they'd dreamed it would and they are finding it a challenge to get out of bed every morning and head out into the world with a heart filled with sorrow and loneliness.

Many of you can relate to that frustration and loneliness and heartache.

Many times the Biblical writers took the time to express their frustration with waiting on God as well.

Psalms 6:2-3 (NIV) *Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint; heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?*

Psalms 13:1-2 (NIV) *How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?*

Psalms 89:46 (NIV) *How long, Lord? Will you hide yourself forever?*

Habakkuk 1:2 (NIV) *How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?*

Sitting in God's Waiting Room and waiting for an answer or a solution to your pain and anguish can be very challenging and even frustrating. When you pour out your heart to God and you hear nothing in return it can become extremely difficult.

I believe that not very many of us like to wait on God or anyone else. Waiting is often seen as an unnecessary delay and we've all got busy schedules and lots of things to do. And yet within the pages of the Bible we often see "waiting" as an exercise that God seems to think is important.

- **Joseph** slogged through 13 years of betrayal, false imprisonment, and abandonment before assuming the leadership of Egypt.
- **Abraham** waited 25 years before Sara gave birth to a child, after God promised that he'd be the father of many children.
- **Moses** spent 40 years tending sheep before God called him as a deliverer of His people.
- **David** spent 14 years running for his life before he actually sat on the throne as king.
- **Jesus** waited 30 years before beginning his earthly ministry.

Isaiah 64:4 (NIV) *Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.*

Last week I shared 3 amazing examples of how God acted in people's lives. Two were from the Bible and one involved 3 individuals who were recently baptized in The Vine's worship service right here up on stage. And I ended my sermon with this verse out of Isaiah and said that I personally have found it a challenge to wait on the Lord because I'm more of a get up and go kind of guy who finds waiting a bit frustrating. And yet for many others waiting is an exercise in frustration because they feel they aren't getting any relief or answers. And if I asked to see a show of hands this morning of how many of you can relate to the frustrations of waiting – I would imagine I would see a whole lot of hands raised high.

And so this morning I want to talk about how we go about waiting on God and what that should mean for each of our lives.

The Bible recognizes that we often are waiting, and yet it doesn't see this practice as a waste of time.

I find it fascinating that when the apostle Paul quotes this passage from Isaiah 64:4 in the New Testament he redefines the group of people who wait to the group of people who “*love God*.” (1 *Corinthians 2:9*). Is it possible that he could do that because those individuals that really love the Lord are also those individuals who are committed to also waiting on the Lord?

Earlier, Isaiah had expressed a similar thought that God longs to be gracious, show His compassion and demonstrate His justice on those who wait for Him (*Isaiah 30:18*).

Repeatedly in the Psalms the importance of waiting on the Lord is expressed.

- Waiting in hope on the Lord is seen as a much wiser approach when seeking help from one's enemies than military strength or power (*Psalms 33:16-22*).
- Early on in life, David had learned the importance of waiting on the Lord – whether it was defeating a lion, bear, Goliath or running for his life from king Saul. He apparently had developed the discipline of beginning every day by waiting on the Lord (*Psalms 5:1-3; 38:15; 40:1*). You'll notice if you expand those contexts that David's waiting wasn't just in emergency situations but was developed in the life long pursuit of God. That's our first point as to how to wait.

Principles for Waiting on the Lord:

1. **The practice of waiting on God isn't developed in crisis moments but in the quiet day by day moments of living a life for God.** Teaching yourself to seek Him for each day's strength. It's a life of learning to live a life seeking after God with all of you.
2. **Waiting isn't just sitting and doing nothing. While waiting we seek the Lord's guidance through reading His Word and prayerfully applying it to our lives.** (*Isaiah 26:8; Ps 130:5-6*).

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that God's Word is useful in training us for everything we do in life.

Romans 12:2 teaches us that the path to understanding God's will for your life is through the transformation of your mind. And the way your mind is transformed is not by studying the world's ways or by watching TV or the evening news but it's transformed by being exposed to God's truth and God's character as revealed in the Scriptures. So as you read, study and memorize God's Word, then the Holy Spirit directs you on how to apply what you read to all situations you encounter in your life.

We so often want God to reveal His will for us in individual situations.

God 's more concerned that you have a transformed heart then you have an informed mind. As you read God's Word, let it soak into your hearts and minds. This type of person is compared to a healthy tree in *Psalms 1* where it's roots are constantly going deeper into God and His Word and it's there that this person finds nourishment for their life.

3. **Waiting is the process of becoming what God wants us to be. What God does in us while we wait is as important as what God does for us.**

As we study God's Word we become increasingly familiar with His desires and plans for our life and we become more aware of God's character as revealed in His Word. And as we become more familiar with God's character and begin to allow God to develop His character within each of us, we can more easily discern what God's will is in more and more situations.

As you wait upon the Lord through the constant study of His Word and allowing God to develop His character within you, you begin to trust God's character even though you may not be getting the results you'd prayed for. But each and every time you wait and God reveals Himself – it develops a greater appreciation for His faithfulness and timing. Therefore, we discover that we can wait on the Lord with confidence.

4. Waiting on the Lord develops our confidence in His faithfulness

Psalms 130:5-6 (NIV) *I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. 6 I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.*

“Watchmen” were those individuals who were responsible for guarding a city’s walls. And this watchmen has the night shift. So, they guard it through the night with the confident hope that in a few hours the sun would rise and they’d be relieved of this responsibility. And never once has the sun failed to rise during the entire span of all night watchmen. And the psalmist says that while waiting upon God he can have even greater confidence than the night watchmen has because he knows that God is more faithful than even the sun. If you are faithfully seeking after God and then waiting upon His answer, you can be confident that He will never fail to respond.

5. **While waiting on God, recount past examples of God’s faithfulness**, (either in your mind or recording in a notebook). Many of the psalms that talk about the writer waiting on God – they recount how faithful God has been in the past – and therefore they have hope in the present.

6. Waiting on God reminds us of who’s actually in control of your life – and it’s not you.

7. The confidence to wait upon the Lord flows out of a heart that intensely desires God above all else.

Psalms 27:1 (NIV) *The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?*

Psalm 27 is a fascinating study in the process of waiting on the Lord. It’s written as enemies are once again attacking David and wanting to kill him. But the focus of his heart isn’t upon them but upon God. His confidence is in God and he wants above all else to spend time near God – in his courts. And as your heart has the desire to spend your time in God’s presence, then the outward concerns of this life will begin to diminish in importance. At one point in the psalm David says,

Psalms 27:8 (NIV) *My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, Lord, I will seek.*

David has found God to be faithful, and even though there are many challenges each and every day in his life and he has to constantly be on the run from men that want to kill him – he’s developed a heart that wants nothing more than to seek God and wait upon Him. So, while his eyes and mind might see the enemies – he’s trained his heart to seek after God.

That’s where waiting on God becomes not just a time you spend early in the morning in your quiet time – but waiting upon God becomes a lifestyle of trusting in Him through and in every situation.

Ryan McKenna has become known all over the world because of a selfie he took with Justin Timberlake at this year’s Super Bowl halftime show. At the end of his half-time show, Justin, unexpectedly walked up into the audience and next he knew, Ryan was taking a picture of himself and Justin on his phone. Later Ryan explained that wasn’t where he was seated but that his father said it looked like Justin might be coming up into the audience and that Ryan should try to get over in that area just in case. So, Ryan elbowed and squeezed between a lot of people in order to be in that key location.

Similarly, God, like Justin Timberlake, has been pursuing you. He wants a relationship with you. God’s desire to be with you has nothing to do with how you’ve lived your life – either good or bad. It’s solely based on who God is and that He’s a God of love. As such, He wants to have a relationship with all of His created children. So, he keeps chasing after you in all sorts of creative ways. Waiting on God is putting yourself in a position to respond to God’s initiative. So, be like Ryan – knowing that God is coming after you and wants to lead you into the very best life possible – position yourself and your heart and mind in such a way that you’re ready to respond to God’s invitation.

Summary:

Who's running your life? You or God? The practice of waiting on God is training your heart to desire God above all else. And then in that private space you listen with your mind and heart to whatever God wants to say to you. It may be an answer to your prayer request or it may be that God wants to reveal more of Himself to you so that you can become more like Jesus.

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God's more concerned that you have a _____ heart than you have an _____ mind.

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