

5 Ways to Keep Trusting God in the Waiting Room

The waiting room can be the hardest place to be. It is often filled with questions and doubts—not only about what will happen next, but whether God is even paying attention. In the waiting rooms of my life, I've been tempted to believe that God is angry with me, that this season is obviously a punishment for something. I find myself searching my heart and my past, looking for something I could or should confess to hurry myself out of this mess.

To make everything even worse, when we obsess and persevere over the passing of time, everything seems to go so much slower. When it becomes all you can think about, then impatience melds with sadness, depression and often a heavy dose of self-absorption. Think about it. When you want to be in a relationship, all you see around you is the coupling of the world, everyone paired off in groups of two. When you're waiting for a baby, all you notice is the sheer number of pregnant women at the park, the mall, the airport—everywhere. When you are looking for work, you feel painfully aware of the gainfully employed. When you are waiting for yes, all you hear is no.

So what is the answer? If we can't rush the timeline, what can we do while time creeps along so slowly? How can we keep trusting when it feels as if nothing is changing?

Let yourself be honest with God. When David wrote his psalms, he was generous with his emotions. He showed us—and God—the bright sides and the dark corners of his soul. Sometimes you need to start with how you really feel. In your waiting, do you feel overlooked? Acknowledge the ways you feel forgotten. Make your list. Address each item you have written down. Give each one time and attention, as longing deserves to be named.

Be honest with the Lord, and say what you really mean. He is patient with our honesty; that's where healing begins.

Serve someone else. Ann Voskamp wrote, "If you're waiting on God—do what waiters do: serve. Break free of your comfort zone and do something ... help someone, pray for someone, serve someone, be the gift for someone." When you are feeling sorry for yourself, get out and serve someone else. Look up. Look around. Other things are happening in the world that have nothing to do with you. Step into the action. Become a servant of something that is separate from your own interests. You'll be amazed at how much more there is to think about.

Circle your prayers. Mark Batterson introduced this practice in his book *The Circle Maker*, and this discipline changed my life during seasons of waiting. I began praying differently. I wrote down just a few words at a time, and I circled them with my trusty pen every day. There is nothing magical about drawing the circle, but it gave me something to do with my hands, something to watch on the page, as I prayed for big things. I watched the circles pile on top of one another. The circle grew darker and thicker until the individual lines became one bold, dark band of fortitude. Write down your prayers and start circling. Before long, you'll have before you a visual representation of long obedience, a faithful reminder to stay in the game.

Remember when God was faithful in the past. He doesn't play favorites, though I confess it's very hard to imagine that He loves me as much as He does His buddies James, David, Moses and Job. But the fact is true whether I believe it or not, whether I feel it or not. He was with them; He is with me. I can return to Scripture to find His faithfulness and His promises in verses like these: "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:10, ESV). Promises like these help me to shift my focus. I need to stop thinking about what I'm waiting for and

focus instead on who God says he is.

Take a step. Even while you are waiting for a giant yes, there are things you can do now, starting today, no matter what season you are in. You can begin learning. Reading. Studying. Imagining. Dreaming. Working on your attitude and your relationships. Taking responsibility for your responsibilities. If you are waiting to begin, ask yourself why you are stuck in neutral. Are you putting it off because you can't figure out how you'll finish it when it gets bigger than you? Are you waiting for more instructions? Just start with the information you have. Concentrate on what God has given you to do. Take a step and get started.

We can take practical steps to choose to trust in the waiting room.

Take a walk. Take a class. Take up a hobby. Take notice.

Choose a skill. Choose a topic. Choose a place to volunteer. Choose someone to serve.

It doesn't mean you stop waiting. It doesn't even mean you stop wanting.

It only means you can stop staring at the clock. {eoa}

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