

Discovering Wonder in the Long Journey to Your Promised Land

In today's culture, waiting can seem like a constant nuisance. Whether it's waiting in line, at the doctor's office or in traffic, we are often presented with the struggle of not being in control of our own time. Likewise, believing God when a promise is new is easy, but it's hard when the years pass and nothing changes. It's harder still when desperation strikes, plans backfire and God does not seem to fill the emptiness. In *Waiting for Wonder: Learning to Live on God's Timeline* (Abingdon Press), Marlo Schalesky encourages readers to think differently about the waiting periods of our lives.

Q: You have focused on writing books about the wonder of God. Describe what that means to you.

Do you remember when you were young and would climb trees and run through sprinklers? Do you remember when a simple daisy would capture your imagination and a butterfly would capture your heart? Those days when beauty was not so rare and life was painted with the vivid colors of awe? Too often, we lose not only our childlike wonder of the world, but we also lose our wonder of God—that sense of awe, beauty and catch-your-breath, more-than-I-ever-dreamed sense of who God is. We lose it in the waiting rooms of life.

But what if God is more passionate, more wild and more wondrous than we ever dared believe Him to be? What if He is calling us deeper than our dreams? What if He's calling us back to wonder? For me, writing about God's wonder is about pulling back the curtain just a bit during the hardest times of life, during those times when wonder seems the most impossible, so we might glimpse God as we've never seen Him before. In that glimpse, be captured by the wonder of this God who is more than we ever dreamed. I believe our only hope in

hard times is found not in more instructions, more rules, more getting up enough faith, but it is found in encounters with a vivid God. It is found in wonder.

Q: What compelled you to write a book on waiting for wonder?

Because waiting is hard. Waiting well is harder, and God's timing is so rarely our own. It's easy to believe God and walk in faith when everything is going according to plan, but it's hard when the years pass and nothing changes. It's hard to keep praying, keep hoping, keep believing when you're stuck in the waiting place and life isn't turning out at all as you thought and hoped and prayed. In the long wait, it often becomes easier to listen to our fears than to hear the promises of God.

Yet God still asks us to wait. I'm convinced it is precisely in the painful, awkward, awful waiting place that God is calling us to more. He is calling us, as He called Sarah, to wonder, to laughter in the face of the impossible, to a blessing that's not just for us but for the whole world.

This is a book is for people who want to find God in the waiting room, find Him where He seems most absent. It's a book for people who hate waiting but want to find God in all His beauty and wonder, even in the waiting place.

Q: Why do you think we need to learn to wait at all? Isn't it better to do something instead?

Oh, I wish! As I learned through the life of Sarah, Abraham's wife in Genesis, it's a long journey to the Promised Land. When God calls us, we don't instantaneously arrive, which is probably why the Bible mentions waiting in many verses. James tells us, "You also be patient. Establish your hearts" (5:8a). Ps. 31:24 says, "Be strong, and He will strengthen your heart, all you who wait for the Lord." Of course Lam. 3:26 tells us, "It is good that a man should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."

God tells us to wait well, yet when we're waiting for an opportunity, a change, a relationship to be restored, a diagnosis, a call, good news, bad news, I-don't-know-what's

coming news, it is a tough thing to do that without squirming, complaining, trying to make something—anything—happen. But what about when we can't do anything to bring about what we're hoping for? That waiting place is a scary place. It's a frustrating and hope-threatening place.

If we can learn to wait well, we can, like Sarah, bless the whole world. That's the promise: The world will be blessed through us, through the wait.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your personal experience with waiting and why you wrote *Waiting for Wonder*?

I wrote *Waiting for Wonder* because I'm bad at waiting, and I had to learn everything the hard way, from scratch. I often say I should have a Ph.D. in the art of waiting because God has given me many long and arduous lessons in it.

Much like Sarah, I too had a journey through infertility—a 20-year one. Even though *Waiting for Wonder* isn't about infertility (I already wrote a book about that), for me, the journey epitomized what it means to be stuck in a place where there's nothing else you can do to “make it happen.” I tried everything, prayed everything, hoped everything and came to the place where there was simply nothing else to be done, prayed, hoped or said. I was not a pretty wait-er. There was a lot of kicking, screaming, complaining and crying. However, God changed me in the waiting place, much as he changed Sarah. He made me into someone new. The waiting place turned out to be a place where God was especially active. In it, I found a place of wonder. Now all I write about is the wonder of God.

That's why I want to invite others to walk with me and walk with Sarah on her journey through disappointment, doubt and detours. I want to share the God both she and I discovered in the “not yet” places of life.

Q: You also say our world, our culture, doesn't help us wait well. What do you mean?

I've never seen a success seminar on the topic of waiting.

Instead, we're always told we can do anything we set our minds to, reach for your dreams, get out of that rut or, as Nike put it, "Just do it!"

Our culture is about frantic doing, striving, trying to fix it and solving the problem now. Don't wait; it's all up to you right now. Not only are we not taught how to wait well, but we're told waiting is inherently wrong. Action gets the job done.

There are many instances in life when you have no choice but to wait. Contrary to our culture's mantras, much of life is not in our control. We are not God, and life just doesn't go according to plan.

But as the world shouts that we can only make an impact if we "do do do," God says to bless the world we need to learn to wait, to trust, to act in His timing (which, honestly, I usually find to be too slow). So learning to wait well? Wow, how do you go about doing that? {eoa}

Learn more about Marlo Schalesky and *Waiting on Wonder* by visiting , following her on Facebook (MarloSchalesky) or via Twitter (@marloschalesky).