

How You Can Find Patience to Wait on God to Fulfill His Promises

In the charming story of Ruth, we find two women being a help and succor for each other during hard times. The older woman, Naomi, in the account advises the younger woman, Ruth, to seek shelter under their nearest kinsman, Boaz. After Ruth makes known her desire to marry him in the secret of the night, Boaz consents to make her his wife provided no one else claims her. He sends her back home with the promise to do everything necessary to see that she will be provided for. Back home, when she recounts the matter to her mother-in-law, Naomi utters a profound statement: "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day" (Ruth 3:18, NKJV).

Look at the two contrasting words in her declaration, "Sit still" (to the woman) and "not rest" (to the man). At a time when women are recognizing their potential and coming into their own, to sit still or wait for someone, especially a man—be it father, brother, friend, husband, leader or other—seems confining and constricting, as well as demeaning. Yet it is not so, for God has gifted each gender with distinct capacities: men with aggressiveness and assertiveness that enable them to function as protectors, providers and preservers of life besides all that belongs to them; and women with qualities needed to be conceivers, nurturers and builders of life, family and society. Women have been blessed with emotions that imbue them with passion and compassion. They bring zest and life, which balance the prosaic rationality of men. Yet their intense feelings are often undergirded by a sobering stability of patience, tolerance and forbearance that help them face adversity with grit and determination.

I often find myself fascinated by Mary, the mother of Jesus. She exhibited such strength in the midst of fulfilling the most difficult and unthinkable task any woman of her time could face. Mary was told that she was to become pregnant while still a virgin! I wonder if she ever thought, *How can this be the favor of God?* Yet Mary asks only for a clarification of the process and then offers her body as a living sacrifice for the Lord to use. She didn't ask permission to consult her betrothed, but straightaway placed herself at God's disposal. I wonder whether she fully comprehended the enormous price she would pay and the stigma she would bear all by herself. She lent her womb to the Lord and became pregnant while still unmarried. She must have been plagued with the burden of *How can I explain this to others, especially Joseph!* Yet she didn't falter in presenting herself as a vessel worthy of the master's use.

She goes off to visit Elizabeth, becoming encouraged and encouraging each other in their mutual, though different, states of blessing. Obviously, when she is back and found to be pregnant, people would have assumed that she went wayward. Joseph ponders in his heart to divorce her, since in those days, betrothal was tantamount to a wedding. We have no idea if Mary tried to convince him or how long it was before God sent His angel to convince Joseph of Mary's innocence and fidelity. We have no account of Mary running around distraught at the slur to her chastity and possibility of the stigma of rejection or even stoning. She just waited in the stillness of knowing she was obeying God and left the outcome of her action to Him, trusting Him to work it all out.

The Petrine command to be in subjection and not push or bulldoze but exhibit a meek and quiet spirit is so exemplified in Mary. To sit quietly and wait patiently until the fulfillment of the promise that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your

lives (see 1 Pet. 3:1-2), can raise one's ire and appear to be silly and impractical. Yet there is not only much truth in this instruction from the apostle Peter, but also wisdom for women, particularly wives. By trusting in God and giving room for Him to work, we save ourselves from much frustration and prevent stress from dogging us. As women, we have been given a treasure of emotional wealth that must be preserved and sustained until the end of our days. If we expend this through wasteful worrying and negativity, we will end up becoming sick physically, mentally and emotionally.

Sitting still or waiting in quietness of spirit is possible only if we put our trust in God and not in man, just as "the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves" (1 Pet. 3:5b, NIV). Sitting still does not mean being lazy or lethargic, but being in rest born of the firm conviction and persuasion that God is able and is working on our behalf. We see such persuasion in Hannah, who after pouring her heart out to God (for which she was considered to be drunk by the religious elder of her day), went home in full assurance of faith, and the Bible declares that she was no longer downcast. That brings us to what we must do while we wait patiently and calmly for Him to move.

Guarding our relationship with God and making our prayer closet the place to download becomes paramount as we wait to see change effected visibly. We need to draw our strength from God, which will enable us to wait in pregnant silence for the birthing of that which has been promised to us through His Word and Spirit. If we look to people, we will be disappointed. Once we know something is the will of God, we must trust and rest in Him, just as Mary did. Still waters run deep, and even so, the depth of our communion and communication with God will empower us to be still and know Him.

I remember a time when Mary's example became a beacon of light for my life. As a couple, my husband and I were not in

agreement about a line of action, and I had to take a stand since I knew for sure what God would have us do. My husband was taking a more pragmatic approach, and I had no idea how to handle this. Early one morning as I sat praying, Mary's quietness of spirit spoke to my heart. I immediately committed the whole thing to God and trusted Him to work it out. I then went about my work, but I did not budge from my stand, nor did I bulldoze my husband to change. I had to endure a few hard months of not being in sync with him, a type of cold war that did hurt me. I kept praying and waiting, my heart often stressed by it all since I was not sure how and when the issue would be resolved. But God, who is faithful, did move in His time, and one day, my husband suddenly agreed with me as to the right decision to make. The Lord spoke to him directly, and he had no other course except to change his stand. This taught me a valuable lesson, and I have adopted this course of trust and rest as an intrinsic practice.

May we as His daughters learn to stand, wait and sit still knowing He will not rest until He has done what He has to do.
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