

Is God Ignoring Your Prayers?

After procrastinating far longer than I'm willing to admit, I finally assembled my list and loaded my boys into the car. Costco bound, where buying in bulk is a lot more fun than PAYING in bulk, but I could put it off no longer.

Having always come up with ways to make mundane responsibilities exciting, I proved my "go with the flow" mentality as the boys squealed with delight upon seeing superhero costumes in a large display near the entrance. My mind stayed on the grocery list, but my legs carried me to the display as my ooohs and ahhs chorused with those of my boys.

As luck would have it, a well-meaning sales associate just happened to pass near us, mentioning it was a brand-new shipment and it was a good thing we were there, because they'd be gone soon and there wouldn't be another order coming. The horror on the faces of my children looked as if someone had stolen our car and we'd have to walk home with groceries on our backs. Total dismay, and even though they know not to beg, their eyes hadn't learned the lesson as well as their mouths.

After a short mental conversation with myself, I justified the purchase as I knelt down to their eye level, carefully explaining that in order for me to buy these, they'd have to be a Christmas present. Not an *early* Christmas present, but rather a present they got *on* Christmas. They heartily jumped, squealed and agreed as they picked out the one they wanted. Trevor, 8, began rethinking this situation as I finished up the grocery list. As we neared the register, the questions erupted. By the time we were in line, desperation had set in.

Clutching the costume to his chest as he begged, "Please Mama, I *promise* I'll still be happy at Christmas! Please, Mama! Please! Please don't make me wait, I'll just be *miserable*! I'll *never* forget that they are there, somewhere, and I'm not

getting to enjoy them. Please don't make me wait, Please!" He even tried a little manipulation as he pulled away from my arms with eyes set, determined to do whatever necessary to break my will so I would give in, granting him his own way. The pleading continued until I could tell he was working hard to fight back the tears. Cupping his face in my hands, I reasoned with him. I explained that surely it'd bring him peace to know that I have it, no other kids could buy it and it was waiting just for the right time to be his. "Doesn't that make you feel good to know that?" After a split second, he firmly voiced his answer, "Noooo, Mama. That doesn't make me feel better! Please! I just can't wait!"

At this point, I knew reasoning was out the door, so I knelt in front of him (We are obviously free entertainment for anyone who shops at Costco) and laid out the law. I explained with sternness in my voice that I was buying this because I knew he would really enjoy it. I loved him and wanted good things for him, but he had to believe me that on Christmas morning, as he unwrapped it, he'd be so extremely thankful that he waited. It'd be worth it. With doubt pooling in his eyes, I closed the book at that. "Trust me." He had to trust me that the wait would be worth it.

As we left the store, I'm sure they were chattering, but my own thoughts were louder than their voices. I suddenly realized that I have been guilty of the exact same thing.

Year after year, I've sought God for wholeness in my family. I've pleaded for a Dad who would love my boys as his own. A man who would value God and family and partner with us in this thing called life. How tired I find myself of fighting my own battles always alone. With consistency over time, I've reminded God that I can just *never* be whole (or happy) without restoration to my family. I've even fasted for days, all in a sub-conscious, childish effort to manipulate the plan of God in hopes he'd look down from heaven and have pity on me,

declaring that He'd better hurry and make things happen or I might starve to death! Oh, pitiful me.

I have a word for me. That word is "brat."

A brat demands their own way in spite of anything else.

We tend to consider people to be bratty when they're selfish or demanding something rude, but we shouldn't be exclusive. If I long for something perfectly wonderful, yet demand it in my own time frame, I can wear the "brat" title with pride. If the shoe fits, we might as well stomp in it.

As I realized the lesson that I'd just learned from my own child, I made a choice. A choice to stop hoping for good? To stop hoping to be loved and love in return? No, Not at all. I made a choice to take all those positive elements and bundle them into one well-meaning heap and set them aside. To carefully tuck them away. A choice to stop demanding, stop fasting for my own way, to stop spending my life, prayers and energy pleading as if we were in line at Costco, assuring my Father that I can never be happy to wait.

Just as I now have those costumes put away in the closet, waiting for Christmas, so are my dreams. They're there. They're alive, but I've made the choice to put them away. I don't have to fear. Just as I *have* those costumes, God has my future. Just as Trevor can know that when he opens that present on Christmas morning, his joy will be boundless and he'll wrap his arms around me, proclaiming that I was right, and he's so happy he waited. In like manner, there *will* be a day when restoration comes to me, and when it does, I know that my joy will be boundless. I'll pour my love on God, proclaiming that He was right, and admit that I'm so happy I waited.

Trevor has forgotten the costume for now. It doesn't take away his daily joy, he doesn't talk about it and he doesn't think about it. It doesn't consume him. It doesn't *have* to, because

I've got this. I'll make sure he's not disappointed. He can trust me. The same applies with myself. My lack no longer takes my daily joy. No more allowing what I don't have to consume me any longer. I don't have to. God's got this.

How often I've delayed writing the tune of my heart, thinking it'd be so much better to be granted full restoration and then write the details accordingly, but honestly, not all of us are restored yet, including myself. Seemingly proper closure would be to write this story after Christmas, when the gift is in Trevor's hands and hind sight is 20/20. But just like with my own story, I choose to write it from the middle. I don't see the end, and neither does my son. I don't hold the gift yet and neither does he, but I am confident in the giver of all good things. I trust God as Trevor trusts me. He makes everything beautiful in His time. I trust His way, and I trust His plan.

(Update: As we have just packed away our Christmas decorations, I can say with confidence that their wait was worth it. They couldn't have been happier to be handed what they'd waited on!)

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