

The Work You Must Do While You Wait

Waiting creates an ache. But there are degrees to that ache, a spectrum of patience required. Waiting for the barista to call your name and announce your drink is far different from waiting for the doctor to call with the test results. Waiting to go into labor is far different from waiting to see the face of the baby who died before she was born. Waiting for relatives to arrive for Christmas break is far different from waiting to see someone who has died, someone who is gone from this earth forever. There are some waits that don't end on this side of heaven, and we must be patient with ourselves—and with others—who are waiting for something this world cannot provide. Don't try to fix it. Just be with them.

I think the verses in Job 19 are some of the most important in the entire book. Job is taking the heat from Satan and the unwarranted advice from his friends.

Job says:

Oh, that my words could be recorded.

*Oh, that they could be inscribed on a monument,
carved with an iron chisel and filled with lead,
engraved forever in the rock.*

*But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
and he will stand upon the earth at last.
And after my body has decayed,*

yet in my body I will see God!¹

I will see him for myself.

Yes, I will see him with my own eyes.

I am overwhelmed at the thought! (Job 19:23-27, NLT).

Basically, he tells his friends, “Listen, guys, I wish there

were some way to write down my words so you could see them and never forget them. I want them written down forever, even as tattoos on your hands. Hear me well: When this is all over with, you'll see—and I will, too—that my God is real, He is here and He has loved me all this time. He will rescue me. I cannot wait another day, but I will. Because I know that I know.”

I read those words, and I want to raise my coffee cup to Job right now. Yes, Job. I hear you. I know that my Redeemer lives, and someday I will see him. I—and everyone else—will see that He is real, He is here and He has loved me all this time. Sometimes the wait is so painful, it breaks my heart all over again. I cannot wait another day, but even on the hardest of days and the darkest of sunrises, I will wait another day. Because I know that I know.

I choose to trust that I will someday see what I have been waiting for all this time.

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We can know that God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and He doesn't play favorites. So how He leads other people will explain how He leads us as well. It's why Bible stories matter. If you want to learn about the nature and character of God, then you can read stories of God's interactions with His people to see examples of how he wants us to live.

What do the stories of the great waiters show me about waiting? What did they do while they waited?

While Adam waited for Eve, he explored the garden, named the animals and learned how to be a human being.

While Noah waited for the rain, he got busy with what he had: a lot of wood and some specific measurements.

While the father of the Prodigal Son waited for his boy to come home, he kept his eyes on the horizon, waiting for good news.

While Daniel waited, he remained faithful in prayer and firm in his convictions. He didn't change his mind, even when compromise would have made more than a few things easier for him and his friends.

While Joseph waited in prison, he didn't waste his energy on the question Why? (Though I imagine he asked that word, he didn't let it drain him with dead ends and nonanswers.) Instead, he focused his sights on answering What should I do now? He did his best with each small task given to him, and he stayed close to God. As his situation began to turn around, he was ready for every opportunity because he had not wasted his time.

While Job waited for answers, he felt how he felt. He asked honest questions in the face of his darkest hours.

While David waited in the cave, he wrote poems and songs (see Ps. 57, 142).

While Paul waited in prison, he wrote letters.

And while Jesus waited for permission from his Father to begin the ministry he was sent to do, He spent every single day loving the person in front of Him.

Here's what I see in all of those stories: There is always work to be done in the waiting. Sometimes the work is hands-on and physical, and other times it is a solitary journey of soul-searching. Sometimes the work is a discipline of noticing, a practice of being alert and aware; sometimes it is about being patient, loving and present. But when we choose to surrender to the moment, when we seek to believe this moment is part of a larger story and when we embrace the ache of the longing, the wait is never wasted.

The Lord enters the journey of those who wait. He shows himself.

Take courage, my heart, stay steadfast, my soul

He's in the waiting.

"Take Courage," Bethel Music

"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." (Ps. 27:14, NIV).

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