

Don't Let Delays Defeat You

A breakthrough is waiting for those who persevere. If you have stopped praying, receive fresh grace to pray again.

George Mueller, the great 19th-century British evangelist, prayed in more than \$7 million during his lifetime to feed the thousands of orphans in his care. He didn't believe in telling people about his financial needs, yet he always had enough to pay his enormous grocery bill because God supernaturally provided.

But Mueller's faith was stretched in other ways. He prayed regularly over a list of five people he wanted to see converted to faith in Jesus. The first man was saved after five years. The second and third men converted to Christ after 10 years. The fourth man was saved after 25 years of consistent prayer.

"Sometimes construction crews in my city erect large flashing signs along the highway near my house. All drivers groan when they see the message: 'EXPECT DELAYS.' Life is littered with these signs, and Jesus said they are part of our training process."

But here's the clincher: Mueller prayed for the fifth man's conversion for a whopping 52 years. The friend made a profession of faith in Christ a few months after Mueller's funeral!

This story challenges me to the core because I'm so impatient. I'm guilty of revving my engine at stoplights and tapping my foot when my Internet connection is slow. Technology is a blessing, but it has also spoiled me into thinking I can get spiritual results as fast as I want them.

Would you pray about something consistently for 52 years if there was no sign an answer was coming? I started praying

about some big requests three years ago, and I realized recently that I had grown weary of the process. Prayer had become painful. Doubts began smothering my dreams. I felt like giving up, but God spoke three simple truths to my heart. They might help you:

1. God never said this would be easy. Jesus gave us many wonderful, rosy promises, but He also said: “In the world you have tribulation” (John 16:33, NASB). That’s not a Scripture you will find embroidered on a pillow or inscribed on a flowery greeting card. But it’s a guarantee. Anybody who attempts something great for God will face difficulties.

Sometimes construction crews in my city erect large flashing signs along the highway near my house. All drivers groan when they see the message: “EXPECT DELAYS.” Life is littered with these signs, and Jesus said they are part of our training process. If Abraham and Sarah had to wait 25 years for the birth of their promised heir, why do we think our answers should be instant?

2. You must persevere if you want to receive. Perseverance is one of those archaic words we’ve stripped from our vocabulary. Waiting is a weird concept for people in the 21st century who have movies-on-demand. If someone tells us to wait, we just find an app on our phone to speed up the process.

But there is no shortcut when it comes to receiving God’s answers. The definition of perseverance is “steady persistence in a course of action or purpose, especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles or discouragement.” Faith is painful because God is stretching our spiritual capacity to receive. Press through the pain! There is gain on the other side.

Speaking of prayer, Jesus said: “Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking [reverently] and [the door] will be opened to you” (Matt. 7:7, AMP). In other words, don’t stop praying no matter how long

the answer takes.

3. The end result of faith is a larger territory. When Isaac sojourned in the land of Gerar, the Bible says he re-dug the wells of his father and then dug new wells. After he dug the first two, the Philistines quarreled with Isaac and tried to claim ownership of the water. But when Isaac dug a third time, the fighting stopped and he named the new well "Rehoboth," which means "a broad place" (see Gen. 26:18-24).

Isaac could have become discouraged after the first well-digging fiasco. Many people back off at the first sign of a fight, but Isaac didn't let the quarrels stop him. He dug a second time and hit yet another roadblock. But he kept on digging. When the breakthrough occurred, Isaac declared: "At last the Lord has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land" (26:22, NASB).

The lesson Isaac learned is still part of our faith curriculum today. There is no getting around it. We must keep on believing when circumstances tell us to quit. We must stretch our faith when it feels like we have no more stretch left. We must pray beyond the delay.

George Mueller said: "God delights to increase the faith of His children. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God's hands as a means. Trials, obstacles, difficulties and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith."

If you have grown weary, or even if you have quit believing, receive fresh grace to pray again. Let patience have its perfect work. God will fortify your faith and empower you to receive a miraculous breakthrough.

J. Lee Grady *is the former editor of Charisma and the director of The Mordecai Project. You can follow him on Twitter at leegrady.*