

Slow Down in God's 'School Zone'

Have you ever wanted to go to a secluded place and scream at the top of your lungs, "God, why are you taking so long?" I have. Everything about my life has seemed too slow. My last name even means "gradual."

Some people might look at my life and say, "Lee has had a fruitful and successful life." But you should know that I waited a long time to see that fruit. Nothing came quickly. My first job lasted eight difficult years, and the pay wasn't adequate. Then, at age 31, I watched a ministry implode.

After that, I went through lengthy seasons of dryness. I often wanted to quit. I watched as many of my friends seemed to achieve financial success, while I felt stuck. God's blessings eventually came, but not as fast as I expected. I didn't start preaching until I was 43, and I didn't enter full-time ministry until I was 52.

Now, I'm mentoring younger Christians who are eager to be used by God. But they are also encountering delays, disappointments and total roadblocks. They are asking tough questions:

- Why am I not married yet?
- Why does it seem like I can't get ahead financially?
- Why can't I discover God's purpose for my life?
- Will I ever have a family? And should we even try after a miscarriage?
- Why can't I develop a strong network of friends?
- What do I do with promises from God that seem like they have expired?

What I've learned through all my delays is that we must learn to drive the speed limit on the road of life. I've also learned that when we are in God's "school zone," the speed

limit is much slower! When God wants to change us into His image, He often slows down the process.

British preacher Charles Spurgeon wrote: "God is in no hurry. His purposes can be accomplished without haste, and though He would have us redeem the time because our days are evil, yet in His eternity He can afford to wait, and by His wisdom He so orders His delays, that they prove to be far better than our hurries."

God's blessings rarely happen overnight. The Lord's timing is different from yours. We want Him to answer our prayers instantly, but before He answers He may lead us into a wilderness of testing to shape our character. The apostle Peter wrote: "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time" (1 Pet. 5:6). The "proper time" is God's time, and it rarely syncs with your schedule.

If you rush through life, anxiously pursuing your own goals, or manipulating people and circumstances to force your own desired outcomes, you will miss His best. Give God your schedule and take your hands off of it. Let Jesus reign over your hours, days, months and years. Be patient and you will see a harvest in the end.

If you are going through a "school zone" right now, slow down and enjoy the journey. Revving your engine won't help. God's delays burn out the spoiled attitudes in our hearts. Waiting on Him crucifies the flesh. Adjusting our speed limit kills our anxieties and fears.

We see this painful process in the life of David. During his long journey to become king, David ended up in an obscure town called Ziklag. Scholars aren't sure where this place was, only that it was in the remote Judean wilderness. Ziklag means "pressure," and it refers to the process of shaping molten metal. While David was in this dark place, he wrote, "My soul

thirsts for a dry and weary land where there is no water” (Ps. 63:1).

David didn’t lose faith while he was in that school zone. He stayed thirsty for God. He prayed constantly—knowing that he was in the fire of testing. God was applying heat and pressure to shape him for greater responsibility. In the end, David got out of Ziklag and sat on the throne in Jerusalem. The pain prepared him for the promise.

✘ What was David’s secret to enduring trials? Just as the apostle Paul and Silas sang hymns of praise in the Philippian jail, David wrote most of his psalms in the bleak wilderness, and he sang them there. He worshipped while he waited. He trusted God when there was no visible sign of a breakthrough.

Paul told the Corinthians: “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17). God uses our delays to shape our character and spiritual fruitfulness. If we understand this deep truth, we will respond differently when He imposes a speed limit in our lives.

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