

The Waiting Room

As I write this reflection, I am in a waiting room. Life is like that. We are often waiting for something - waiting in line at the grocery store, waiting for the traffic light to change, waiting for the mail to come, waiting for the end of the work day, waiting for the week-end, waiting for a call from a loved one, waiting for an airplane (to take us off to a destination or to receive a loved one), waiting for the chance to go to bed and get some much needed sleep, waiting for graduation, waiting for the right job, waiting for a spouse, waiting for the birth of a child or a grandchild, waiting for the adoption papers to come through, waiting for retirement, waiting for a visit from family, waiting to heal from an injury or a surgery, waiting for another opportunity - waiting, waiting, waiting. Actually, it seems that life is more about waiting than doing.

God tells us about His people who had to wait years for the fulfillment of the promise He had given them:

- Noah, years spent building the ark, waiting for the rain, waiting for the rain to recede
- Abraham, waiting years for his promised son (when God promised to give Abraham a son, his wife was already past childbearing age)
- Jacob waiting to marry Rachel, working seven years for her (then being tricked into marrying Leah as well and having to work another seven years)
- Joseph waiting to be freed from jail, to see his brothers and father again, waiting for the years of plenty and the years of famine
- Moses waiting in the wilderness for years with a disobedient people, waiting to enter the promised land and only getting to see it from afar

You get the picture. Even though the promised Messiah has actually come and fulfilled His promise to redeem His own, His believers are now waiting for His second coming.

Years ago, I remember one of my teachers saying, "Life is a waiting room. If you see an open door, go through it. It won't stay open forever!" That is a true statement, but most of life is spent in the waiting room. What is to be learned there?

In brief waiting periods, practical planning can help "redeem the time." For instance, today, I knew I would be in a waiting room for an indefinite period of time. I brought my Bible and my computer - thus, this reflection. Sometimes when I know I am going to be waiting, I bring along cards that need to be written or my prayer journal - things that are difficult to do in a day filled with other activities, but can be done in a waiting room.

Waiting in line at the grocery store often gives me an opportunity to chat with someone around me - possibly giving a word of encouragement or the Holy Spirit may prompt me to share about Jesus. Waiting in an airport gives me an opportunity to catch up on my reading or some writing. Waiting for the end of the work day should be productive. How much can I accomplish in this day before I call it quits? Time is a valuable commodity. Waiting, waiting, waiting - if that time is spent in prayer, or some other productive endeavor, the time is not wasted and passes so much faster.

Waiting is hard for all of us, but some of our best relationship development with God occurs during our waiting times. When we are going full speed ahead and accomplishing the things we want to do, we tend to believe the work has been done in our own effort. It is in the waiting times we remember we need God's direction.

"What do I do now, Lord? I'm stuck and cannot seem to go forward." That must have been the way that Joseph felt in jail in Egypt, knowing God had a plan, but unable to see it from his perspective. Because he refused to take matters into his own hands and did wait upon the Lord, God enabled him to be part of the reason his family survived through the famine and grew to be a great nation. As he and his brothers reflected on why he was in Egypt (his jealous brothers had sold him!), Joseph said, *"Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good"* (Genesis 50:19-20).

God does not waste His time - or ours. Every moment is precious. What we consider as an unfruitful time in our lives, God may see as a time of growth and preparation. Waiting is part of the process of being productive. A butterfly would not exist without having spent time in a cocoon as a caterpillar. A plant will not bear flowers or fruit without the seed having spent time in the ground. In John 15, Jesus reminded us that before we can ever bear fruit, there must be a bonding, cleansing and pruning process.

While Abraham was waiting for his son, he was learning more about God and his involvement in his life. While Joseph was serving undeserved jail time, he was strengthening his faith and his resolve to do what God wanted, no matter what. While Moses dealt with the finicky Israelites, he discovered that he, too, had that element of selfishness in his own spirit. The waiting room can indeed be a great school master.

God is in control of the world and circumstances surrounding the lives of His children. The waiting room is part of His plan. God gives strength to those in His waiting room. *Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say on the Lord!* (Psalm 27:14). *But those that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint* (Isaiah 40:31). When the time of action arrives, strength is needed. Spiritual strength is a result of time spent with God in the waiting room.

God does have a plan for each of His children. Only He can work that plan out so that it dovetails with the plans He has for the rest of His family. In our impatience, we are prone to go ahead of His plan, thus sometimes missing the opportunity He had reserved for us at a given point in time. A committed child of God wants the best God has for him in His time. Are you so focused on what God wants to do in your life that you are comfortable in His waiting room? *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths* (Proverbs 3:5-6).

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