

A Primer for the Impatient On Waiting

What I want to share with you today is that God has asked us to wait for things, and we will talk about what He has asked us to wait for. We will talk about what waiting means, about why we wait, the Lord's perspective on waiting, and some tips for waiting.

What are We Waiting For?

Probably, the first thing that comes to mind when someone says something about waiting is that we are waiting on the Lord's return. That is the thing that usually pops to my mind.

Luke 24:34-36—"The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon."

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus began to relate their experiences on the road to the other disciples and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you."

The Lord is talking about His second coming, His return. The key thing here is that we are to keep on the alert. There will be a lot of things happening, but we are to keep on the alert and watch and pray that we will be strengthened.

Also, in waiting for the Lord there is a Scripture in which there is a lot of talk about waiting for His appearance. In Luke 2 we find Anna and Simeon who have been waiting all their lives for the Lord to appear the first time. And because they were waiting, they were ready when the Lord appeared, and they recognized Him. Even as a baby they recognized Him. And Simeon said that he was very relieved that his wait was over, and the consolation and the redemption of Israel had arrived. He then departed in peace.

Another thing that we wait on is for the Lord to move, and although this is not the one that comes to mind immediately when we are waiting on the Lord, it is the one that we actually have day to day practice in as we wait for the Lord to move in situations.

Brenda and I have been praying for a while for some of our children to return to the Lord and for the Lord to move in their lives. It is a hard process, but the Lord is working in us in that waiting. We trust and we expect and we hope that He is going to move in His time. We just need to wait and watch for that.

There is an example of not waiting in the Scripture. Actually, there are lots of examples of not waiting in Scripture, but the one I want to talk about today is the message in I Samuel 13 in which Saul was waiting for Samuel. But Saul did not wait very well, and when you read the situation, you can hardly blame Saul for not waiting. Things were falling apart, the people were leaving, the Philistines were gathering by the thousands. It says that they were more than the sand on the beach. And they were prepared to swarm Israel because Israel had become odious to the Philistines. (I like that term 'odious;' I'll have to use that in my work sometime.) Samuel had told Saul to wait for seven days, but on the seventh day Saul could not wait any longer. And as a result he did not wait until completion. He took it upon himself to do what Samuel the Lord's prophet was appointed to do. Saul did not have the faith that day to completely wait and do things the right way. That day he lost his kingdom. The Lord said, "Your kingdom will not last."

But Saul's successor David did wait. There were lots of opportunities for David to take the throne from Saul with his own hands, but he did not do that. He waited for the Lord to provide the throne of Israel to him.

What else do we wait on? We wait on answers to prayer. And this is very similar to waiting for a move of the Lord. We can ask and pray for the Lord to do something, but it is all in His timing to do it. And like our sister said a couple of weeks ago in her testimony, the Lord works on an eternal time scale. But we can pray and wait with hopeful expectation and watch for an answer.

What does waiting mean?

Sometimes the simplest words can be the most difficult ones to explain. We wait in traffic, we can wait for somebody, we can wait for me to get done so you can have lunch. When I was younger, I occasionally had to wait for my mother to pick me up from school, and I would get so angry, just furious if she were even a few minutes late. I was very much a brat and very impatient then. I would get furious at wasting time, but that is not the kind of waiting we are going to be talking about today.

There are a couple of different definitions and uses of the term 'waiting' in Scripture. The first one is lying in wait. And although when you are hunting, you lay in wait, that is not the type of waiting we are going to be talking about today.

The second one is just passing time, and that has the connotation of just sitting and doing nothing. That was my conception for a long time of waiting on the Lord. I am just going to sit and do nothing and maybe one day the Lord will do something. That was my attitude when I was waiting on my mother. I am going to just sit and do nothing and waste my time. That is why I get so frustrated in waiting sometimes because it is a total waste of time. But that is not the type of waiting we are talking about here. When we think about waiting as passing time, we always look for ways to pass time faster.

I am going to take a kind of extremely practical tangent here. If we think about waiting as just passing time, we now have the ability to make time pass faster. If we are waiting and doing nothing, just idling we can whip out our phones and start looking at them and look for any kind of interesting post that somebody has put on, or some salacious tweets on twitter, or videos on YouTube, or see if anybody likes any pictures we have posted. We can just fall down this rabbit hole and spend hours just passing time doing nothing, looking at that screen. But that is not waiting in any sense of the word. We are wasting time, just passing time. And the apps that we have on our phones have been designed by some very clever people to hold our attention. It is called engagement, and that is how they make money, by keeping your attention which stimulates portions of your brain. Then the brain becomes addicted by those little stimulations. We go looking for a tweet or looking for a post and we get this little hit of instant gratification. In this process our minds become addicted to it. Actually it takes something that the Lord meant for a time of contemplation and prayer which means being still. It takes it and turns it into something that is basically feeding our flesh with junk food. It turns these times that should be for contemplation into just a neural chemical frenzy of instant gratification, and that actually kills

our ability to sit and contemplate the Lord. So as an encouragement, try putting your phone away for several hours and see if the Lord can actually talk to you then.

The waiting that we are going to be talking about today is the ultimate example of delayed gratification. The phone gives us instant gratification which may be the ultimate example, and waiting on the Lord is the ultimate example of delayed gratification. It is delaying because we are putting the satisfaction of our desires and our wants totally in the hands of the Lord, in His timing. We just hope and trust that our desire will be satisfied when He is ready.

Waiting and Watching with Hopeful Expectation

So that leads to the third type of waiting which is what we will talk about today, and that is waiting with hopeful expectation. The first use of this term is in Genesis 49:18 and it says, “For your salvation I wait, O Lord.” Now the Hebrew word here for ‘wait’ is translated several different ways in the Scriptures, and these different translations are very illuminating to the meaning of the word beyond just waiting. It eagerly awaits, expects, hopes, hopefully expects, looks, and looks eagerly.

This is the type of waiting I want to talk about today. When I was a kid, and even just the other day, I would confuse the second type of waiting, passing time, with the third type of waiting, which is waiting or watching with hopeful expectation. When you are really waiting, you are waiting on something and you have a hopeful expectation. You are hopeful, you are looking, and you are eager.

What does this kind of waiting look like? First of all, it is expecting something to happen. When we are waiting on the Lord, we are expecting the Lord to move, and this expectation is much stronger than just expecting the light to turn green or expecting to have lunch today. Those are very surface types of expectation because there is really not any real engagement or involvement or ownership in that; it is something that is eagerly wanted. But the expectation we are talking about here in Scripture is a much deeper, stronger expectation. I would liken it to the expectation of a groom waiting for his bride to walk down the aisle, waiting for the birth of your first child or the birth of any of your children. Every day you find yourself checking on the progress of the birth of your children. Is it time? Is the baby coming? Is it going to arrive soon? It is something we are excited about seeing.

Before my first hunting trip I was actually very anxious about being able to sit quietly in a hunting blind, waiting for hours for something to show up. But when I got there, I was able to sit and wait quietly for hours for something to show up because I was waiting with anticipation; I was waiting with expectation. I was excited about what was going to show up. So having faith that the Lord is going to move, that He will return, is our expectation that allows us to wait on Him. If we are not excited about what He is going to do, the waiting become much more of passing time in idleness.

What happens if you lose that expectation? As you are waiting you may decide that it is not really going to happen. This happens sometimes when you are hunting. It is too windy, too rainy or cold or too hot, and you just know the animals are not going to show up. At that point you lose hope, you lose the expectation, and the waiting becomes torture because you are just sitting

there doing nothing, expecting nothing to happen. Then it just becomes a matter of will-power. I am going to sit here until the time is done because that is what I am supposed to do. It is just torture to wait without expectation. It is something that we have all done, something I have done and it is probably something I will do again very soon. So you need hope to wait, and if you do not have hope the waiting is torture.

Without the hope of Christ's return, or the promise of His answering our prayers, waiting on Him just becomes a matter of will-power, and that will-power is going to eventually run out. So the faith that He gives us is the expectation to wait on Him.

It is also a matter of watching for that thing to happen. The waiting and watching are often mentioned together in Scripture, and there is a reason for that. If you are waiting with expectation, you are going to be watching for that thing to happen just like we were watching for our children to be born. We have expectation that the Lord is going to do something, therefore we are going to be watching for Him to do it, we will be expecting Him to do it. We will be looking for it to happen, even looking for signs that it is happening. But to do that, you need a clear view that is not cluttered or obstructed by other things. If I am sitting in a blind waiting for an animal to show up, I do not know from what direction it is going to come. It can come from behind me, on the right or the left, way out in a distance. You really do not know, so you need a clear unobstructed view. And if we are honest about these things, whether it is waiting on the Lord for His return or for answers to prayers, we really do not know exactly how the Lord is going to answer that or how He is going to move.

The Pharisees in Christ's time were waiting for the Messiah, but they thought they knew exactly how the Messiah was going to appear when He did come, and they completely missed Him. They were not looking with an uncluttered view. They were looking to their own biases, and they had very strong blinders on. But we can see in Scripture and in our own lives and the lives of other saints around us that the Lord moves in unexpected ways. He moves even in discarded vessels, but He always moves in ways that are perfect for the situation.

Listening Ears

We also need listening ears. When you are out hunting and you sit in the woods for a little while, you can begin to hear the woods do things as the animals are moving around. You begin to hear different animals, and sometimes you can tell when your quarry is coming. But you need to be very still and very quiet to hear it, and it is something that is not immediate. It can take from twenty to thirty minutes for the woods to calm down after you have moved in the woods before you start to hear things.

Likewise, if we are waiting on the Lord we need to be listening for Him as well. We need to be listening for Him and to Him to sense His movement. And it is not something that is immediate either. I think it is something that takes a while for us to get settled and to be able to hear the Lord. We cannot be rushing along doing all kinds of things and stop for a millisecond and say, "Lord, speak to me," and just keep going. We need time to settle and to listen and commune with the Lord. We cannot just say, "Lord, speak to me," and then whip our phones out, shove it in our face and expect the Lord to speak to us. We need to be still and know that He is God.

Praying for Those Things to Happen

What else does waiting look like? It looks like praying for those things to happen. This area is very different from hunting. It's not that I don't pray when I am hunting. I do pray for things the Lord brings to mind. I pray for my family, pray for the assembly, pray for friends, pray for work situations. I pray for animals to show up, but I do not pray *to* the animal to show up.

When we are waiting on the Lord, we can actually commune and pray for the One we are waiting on. Praying to the Lord and communing with Him actually increases our expectation and our hope that He is going to move. It is kind of a paradox, as it increases our expectation it increases our peace that the Lord will move. So it is a paradox to have strong expectation, building expectation and peace at the same time.

Why do we wait? We know that the Lord does everything for a purpose; He is not a purposeless God. So what is the purpose for our waiting with expectation on Him? The short answer is to make us like Him, and that is very true. But I want to dive a little deeper today and talk about how that transformation works through that waiting.

Why We Would Not Wait

But first before we get into that I want to talk about the reason why do we not wait sometimes. So the main reason that we do not wait is because we think we know better. We know what is best. We think that we are the center of the universe, and we have a complete view over everything that is happening. When you read the verses in I Samuel about Saul's not waiting, you can get some clues to what he was thinking and seeing.

I Samuel 13:10 says, "And Saul said, 'Because I saw that the people were scattering from me and that you did not come within the appointed days, and the Philistines were assembling at Michmash.'" Notice what Saul said here. "I *saw* that the people were scattering. I *saw* that You did not come. I *saw* that the Philistines were gathering."

It appears that Saul was thinking that he was seeing everything and the Lord was seeing none of that. When we choose to act outside of the Lord's timing, we are essentially saying that we see the situation better than the Lord does. So let us not get impatient and think that we know better than the Lord because we are seeing the situation better. He sees all. He is the only One who is Omniscient.

Learning Submission

So the first way that waiting transforms us into the image of His Son is through learning submission. Waiting on the Lord is letting the Lord be in control. It is submitting our timing to His timing, and it is a training in submission that is one of the aspects of waiting that transforms us into His image.

There is a Machiavellian tactic in business where somebody will make someone else wait for no good reason just to make them submit to their authority. The victim goes into the boss's office, and the boss makes him/her wait for a few minutes just because. It is a control thing; it is "submit

to me, submit to my time.” It is a very sick thing when people do this to each other. If you have a boss that does that you should go and find a new job.

I am not talking about person-to-person submission; I am talking about God-to-person submission. When the Lord asks us to submit to His timing, it is proper submission. It is not a malevolent Machiavellian submission, but it is a submission in which we are being trained to be sons. You know, God is not on some power trip where He has to force us to submit. Christ is the ultimate example of that submission. He fully submitted Himself to the will of the Father throughout His life and to the timing for the will of His Father. He waited thirty years to start His public ministry. And seeing how much the Lord loved people and wanted to minister to people, that was quite some submission.

There is a verse in I Peter that kind of sums up this type of submission and the results of this type of submission.

I Peter 5:6-7—Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

We are to humble ourselves before God, and that includes waiting on His timing. We are to cast our anxieties on Him because He knows what He is doing and because He cares for us. In His time, at the proper time, it says that He will exalt those who have humbled themselves before Him.

Learning Dependence

The next transforming factor of waiting is to learn dependence. We are depending on the Lord to move when we are waiting on Him, and we are not trying to force that move. When Saul was waiting on Samuel, he was not fully dependent on the Lord, and he knew he needed the Lord’s blessing to win the battle, but he acted on his own to get that. He acted independently instead of waiting for the Lord’s representative.

As a consultant in my professional life I am expected and paid to act independently, to be independent and get things done. But what I do professionally really runs contrary to how the Lord would have us behave in regards to waiting for Him. We are not to act independently to try to move the Lord’s timing ahead. He is going to move when He is going to move, in His proper time. The only way that we can affect His move and His return is to be dependent and submissive to His will. In other words, the only way that we can hasten the day of the Lord is to wait with hopeful expectation on Him, to live in that hopeful expectation. Through those we experience transformation, and I do not think someone can wait on the Lord and stay the same. It is letting go of our own desires and submitting to the Lord. When we are acting in dependence on the Lord, it is transformative. It is not the waiting, in and of itself, that transforms us into the image of Christ, but it is the submission and the dependence on the Lord that opens the way for the Holy Spirit to do His transforming work in us. He is not going to transform an unwilling and an uncooperative person. Also, another purpose in waiting is to exercise faith. Again, it is letting go of control and letting God do the work in His timing.

Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith is the evidence of things hoped for.” Now waiting, and the things that we do while we are waiting, are the evidence of what we are hoping for. So waiting is an exercise of faith, and it is always good to exercise those faith muscles.

Also, there is a tremendous payoff as a reward for waiting. There is a tremendous release when what we are expecting finally appears. It is like Simeon in the temple when he saw Christ. He was relieved that he had seen the redemption and consolation of Israel. Waiting for the Lord and then seeing Him move after waiting is a tremendous blessing that we will always remember, and that reward seems to solidify the transformation that the Lord is doing in us.

You know, in this country and this world we are pretty big on instant gratification in these days. Almost our entire economy is based on instant gratification. But these things that we wait on with the Lord have much deeper and longer lasting gratification and satisfaction than any instant gratification our flesh may desire.

There is a saying that we have in English “It was worth the wait.” I just want to say that waiting on the Lord is always worth the wait because when He moves, He always moves in the right way at the right time in the perfect way. It is a gift to wait; it is a wonderful blessing to see the Lord move in His perfect timing and have our hopeful expectations fulfilled.

The Lord’s Perspective on Waiting

So what is the Lord’s perspective on waiting? He wants a bride who is waiting on Him, waiting and looking for Him in hopeful expectation. In our country now we are not very used to a patriarchal view of marriage. We like to share things fifty-fifty. But our relationship with Christ is very patriarchal, and He is in control of everything. He is the ultimate Head of the relationship. He has ultimate authority in the relationship, and there is no fifty-fifty sharing of authority. Imagine if a groom was standing at the altar and his bride did not show up because she was too busy shopping. Or since most of us have not been at the altar for a while, imagine if you had arranged a special date night with your wife. You had nice reservations and you are ready to go, but she did not get ready because she was too busy looking at Instagram. The Lord wants us wait, He wants a bride that is waiting and looking for Him and ready to move when He moves.

The Lord also wants bondservants who are fully attentive to Him. If we are waiting with hope and expectation, by definition we are going to be attentive towards what the Lord is doing. The thing that we are waiting on, which we have hopeful expectation for, becomes the center of our universe. The Lord is the center of the universe, and He just wants us to make Him the center of our universe.

Tips for Waiting

Watching

These are more practical things that the Lord has shown me and this is where we get into more of the hunting analogies. The first thing is to watch. Abraham looked for a city, Saul looked for Samuel, and if we are waiting with hopeful expectation of the Lord’s move, we need to be watching for the Lord to move. It is only natural, if we have hope and faith that He is going to move, that we will be watching for it. This watching is not just a quick gaze, it is not just glancing

around. It is actually examining over time, in detail, looking for those little detail changes, looking at different perspectives to see what is really going on. It also involves looking in the right direction and in the right places.

When you are out hunting, you need to be alert and looking around. If I am sitting in a blind and I am looking at my phone or I close my eyes for a few minutes of rest, my quarry may just walk by me and I would not see it or hear it. I have a picture taken by a game camera of me sitting in a blind while a deer walked behind me. I was not looking in the right direction. So we need to be looking in the right place.

So what is the spiritual application of this? We need to be looking in the direction that reflects His character. To illustrate this I am going to tell you a story. I had a friend in college whose name was Daniel. He was a really nice guy. I went to homecoming about five years after graduation and some of our friends were sitting around talking, and Daniel said, "I am really praying and waiting for the Lord to send me a godly Christian wife." "Wow, that is really great, Daniel; that is wonderful!" Another friend said, "Daniel, are there any Christian women in the church that you go to?" He said, "Well, I have not been going to church. I do not really have a church that I have been going to. Someone else said, "Daniel, how are you expecting God to bring you a Christian wife? He said, "Well, I have been going to bars and nightclubs hoping the Lord would bring her there." True story. So Daniel was definitely looking but looking in the wrong direction; he was not looking in the direction of the Lord's character.

In the Pharisee's time they were waiting for the Messiah, and they were watching for the Messiah, but they were watching based on their own piety. They were looking for a Messiah that had a character which matched theirs, a Messiah that was harsh and legalistic. They completely missed the mercy side of God. They missed the side in which God valued mercy more than sacrifice. So they missed the Messiah when He did come.

Maybe this is one of the insidious dangers of the whole prosperity movement or of the 'Love Wins' movement that plagues modern churches. It teaches people that God is just a rich grandpa. That is a quote from C. S. Lewis. Grandpas just give us stuff. I look forward to giving my grandchild stuff. And grandpas do not discipline; we just take the baby and hand it back to the parents. We do not discipline. So we are looking for just a cuddly avuncular God who just gives us good stuff. If all we are looking for is a God who gives us stuff, when the Anti-Christ appears and he brings peace and fixes the economy, we may fall for that. If we are following the prosperity gospel, prosperity doctrine, and all we expect is a God who gives us stuff, when the Anti-Christ comes and gives us stuff, we may think he is God. We could fall for it. If we do not expect righteousness and justice and mercy in addition to love we may miss God when He does move because we are waiting on the wrong thing, and we are looking in the wrong direction.

Here is another warning about watching. A funny thing happens when you are sitting in the woods hunting and watching, and I think this happens to everybody that hunts. After several hours of watching with hopeful expectation for an animal to appear, everything starts to look like that animal.

When you are hunting for pigs, that stump you have been looking at for three hours, suddenly looks like a pig. You see the slightest move, “Oops that is a deer. I am going to shoot it.” Or you hear this rustling behind you, “Ahh, that is the biggest bear in the woods.” We have such a strong expectation that our minds begin to fill in the blanks. It begins to make you see things that aren’t there. This is why many hunters are shot every year even though they wear blaze orange. If someone wants something bad enough, everything begins to look like it.

This can happen when we are waiting on the Lord also. We can become susceptible to false prophets and false teachers who will lead us to a false Messiah, and it is because we are so eager, we begin to fill in the blanks. But we need to be like the Bereans in Acts who, when they received a teaching, they would take that teaching and examine it from all angles. They would examine it in light of the whole Scripture, and we need to do the same thing. When we hear a teaching, especially the one today, you need to examine it in the light of full Scripture and not just your favorite parts.

Another funny thing that happens when you are hunting is that the noisiest animal in the woods is probably not the animal that you want. The same thing can be true when we are waiting on the Lord. When you are sitting in the woods in a blind, there can be a huge distraction with all kinds of noise. And you think it is the biggest animal you have ever seen in your life, but it is just a tiny little squirrel. You can be looking at a squirrel over here, but what you really want is over there in a different place. So when there is a bunch of noise, that noise may not be what we are looking for. We need to examine things from all angles and look with intense detail at what is happening. But as an encouragement, if we are waiting on the Lord and looking for Him, He will send encouragement that He is moving. If we are praying for someone’s salvation and they just mention something about the Lord or ask questions about the Lord, that can be an encouraging sign that the Lord is moving in their life, that the Lord is on their mind. But we only see these joyful signs if we are actually looking and waiting with hopeful expectation.

Do Not Hinder

The next thing is not to hinder. Going back to our key verse in II Peter, we need to be “looking for and hastening the coming of the Lord.” So what does it mean to hasten the day of the Lord?

Before I answer that I will revert back to some hunting analogies. When you are hunting, there are many things that you should not do in the woods. If you are hog hunting, you should not be eating because hogs will smell it and not come around. You are hindering the arrival of the hogs or you are definitely not hastening the arrival of the hogs. If you are shuffling around and making noise, you are hindering the arrival of the animal, and these things do not hasten the arrival of the prey. So the key principal here is that the things that we do while we are waiting on the Lord need to be centered on what we are waiting on. If I am sitting in a stand waiting and I am eating potato chips, I am centered on my hunger and not on my prey.

Now we can take this analogy too far and say, “We need to stop doing everything while we are waiting on the Lord.” That is not the case, but we do need to consider the things that we are doing. Do those things hinder or hasten the arrival of the Lord. We need to consider what impact the things we are doing have on the church. We need to consider the things that we are doing

and what impact they have on our own spiritual health as part of the church. We need to ask questions: “Is this this thing that I am doing an encumbrance of the world? Or will this build the body of Christ? Yet the key principal here in not hindering is that we should take in consideration what we are waiting on as we are doing things. Our actions should take in consideration what we are waiting on. And if the actions hinder what we are waiting on, then we should not be doing them.

Study

The next tip is to study. When you are out hunting, you are studying your surroundings. This is again a deeper way of looking, of watching. In studying your surroundings it can help you to anticipate what is going to happen when the animal shows up. Likewise, when we are waiting on the Lord, we need to be studying Him and understanding Him and the things that He is doing. This study can help us weed out impostors that can show up and take our attention. Studying the Lord and His character will help us recognize Him when He does move. Sometimes when I am out hunting something new or something that I have never hunted or seen before in the wild, I wonder if I will really recognize it when it shows up. What is it going to look like? How big is it going to be? Studying beforehand helps you to recognize that. It helps you to know what it is going to be like. But even if I know what a bear look like, there is always some surprise when the animal does show up. There is something unique and something that you learn. So when we are waiting on the Lord, even after studying, there is always some wonderful surprise that the Lord shows us when He does move, when He does show up.

Wait with Others

The next tip is wait with others. A couple of weeks ago Brenda and I went up to Maine to go bear hunting, and when I got up there, I was not really excited about going and sitting in the woods to hunt bears. I was looking forward to being in Maine and seeing the beautiful scenery. I was looking forward to disconnecting from work for a week. I was looking for a lot of things, but I was not excited about hunting bears.

The first night after supper we sat down with the guide and the game warden, and for about an hour with the other hunters we talked about bears. We talked about how bears behaved, what they look like, what you should do when a bear shows up—all the things you should know about bears. After that hour of talking about bears, then I became excited about going to sit in the woods and try to catch a bear. I had been completely distracted by work, all the stuff going on, the trip and other things. So it was not until I was actually talking about bears with other people that I became excited about waiting for them. So hopefully you can see the analogy here.

We can easily get distracted by the world and become weary and just lose sight of what we are waiting on. But fellowship, talking with other believers about what we are waiting on, encourages us, encourages our soul, and our spirit to wait. When we are waiting with others and the Lord begins to move, we can share that with others and others can share what they are seeing with us, and it is encouraging. It strengthens our spirits and increases our faith so that we can continue to wait. Also, if this waiting is a shared experience, it gives us the opportunity to

recognize what is real and what is not real. Just the fellowship with others helps us to see the actual details and watch better.

Those Who Are New to Waiting

For another aspect of waiting with others, I will go back to a hunting experience. The first several hunts that I did were with other people. I sat with other people while we hunted, and that was really helpful for me as a novice because I had no idea what to do while hunting sitting in a blind. Do I keep my rifle loaded? Do I keep it up? What do I do while I am waiting. All these questions.

Likewise, waiting on the Lord and waiting with others can be a great opportunity for older believers to encourage younger believers. We are probably more experienced at waiting than younger believers. So if you are an older believer, and you are waiting on something, pull in a younger believer and help them wait with you as a way of instruction and discipling the younger believer and helping them to know what it is like to wait. If you are a younger believer and you are waiting on something, feel free to reach out to an older believer and say, "Can you pray with me and wait with me on this matter?"

Trust Your Guide

The next tip is trust your guide. In my short time of hunting most of the hunts that I have done have involved guides. These guides have always been men who have hunted since they were kids, hunting almost all their lives. They hunt as often as they can; they know the land, and they know the animals because they have seen them so many times. Best of all they want you to succeed at your hunting trip; they want you to get an animal. They want you to succeed. So hopefully you can see the analogy here also.

We have a Guide to help us in our waiting, and this Guide has been guiding since the dawn of time. He knows the situation, He knows the land, He made the land. He knows us, and best of all He wants us to succeed. He wants us to receive the thing that we are waiting on. So trust your Guide, the Holy Spirit, when you are waiting.

Do Not Seek Comfort

The next tip from hunting, may sound kind of harsh, but believe me it is not. Do not seek comfort. Often times when you are out hunting, you are in uncomfortable situations. You may be sitting at the side of a tree, and you are cold, you are hot, there are bugs, all kinds of things that will make you uncomfortable. These things may happen all at the same time, and when you are sitting there, you can be tempted to try to get rid of that discomfort in any way possible. So you find yourself shifting around trying to find the perfect seating position. You can be swatting mosquitos, you can be putting on bug spray. But if you are not careful these things you are doing will actually hinder the arrival of your quarry. If you are swatting mosquitos your quarry is never going to show up. And when we are working on seeking comfort, our focus has stopped being on the animal that we are hunting and is now on our comfort. It is easy when you are uncomfortable to lose sight of that final goal of getting an animal, just for the relief of some discomfort.

So the spiritual analogy of this is that when we are waiting on the Lord, it can lead us to discomfort, the cross. We have people, both believers and unbelievers, who question our hesitancy to do something because we are waiting. They can question our inexplicable desire for the Lord to return. That questioning can bring some subtle and not so subtle pressure on us to conform, and that pressure can be uncomfortable. When Saul was waiting on Samuel, he was pretty uncomfortable about the thought of being defeated, so he looked for a way to relieve that discomfort. But when we begin to look for ways to relieve the discomfort, we are focusing on our own comfort rather than focusing on the Lord. We are seeking comfort; we are not seeking the Lord. So if we are looking for our own comfort, trying to get comfortable, we are probably going to miss the Lord.

Do Not Settle for Less

The next tip: do not settle for less. When I was out bear hunting a few weeks ago, I waited for several days to see a bear, but I had not seen anything. Actually, I saw one bear, but by Thursday I was ready to shoot anything that might come along that I could shoot. I decided if a coyote showed up I was going to shoot that coyote, but doing that would have been settling for something less. I was waiting on a bear not waiting on a coyote.

So when we are waiting on the Lord, sometimes other options will be presented to us. The other option for Saul was to do the sacrifice himself, and that was the lesser thing that he chose. This all goes back to watching and studying to know what is the thing that we are waiting on and what is the lesser thing. Do we really desire the true answer, the true move or a lesser move? Studying can show us if this option is really from the Lord or is it a lesser thing. Or do we just want some instant gratification and have an answer now and move on? If we are waiting on the Lord to move in our children, are we satisfied when they turn their own lives around **without** the Lord? That can be a lesser thing that we are waiting on. You know, the enemy will present to us many options to shorten our wait, but we need to be aware and discern whether these options are really of the Lord.

Enjoy the Wait

The last tip is enjoy the wait. Waiting can be hard, it can be a struggle to wait, but we should have joy in knowing that the Lord is working. We should have joy in knowing that He is doing the best thing in His best timing, the proper time. We should have joy in knowing that He is working out transformation in us, and He is transforming us into the image of His Son.

Sometimes we are like Eeyore, and we are so glum and down; "Oh, woe is me. I am so horrible." But the Lord is so much better, and what we are waiting on is so much better. The things that He is doing in us and around us are so much better. What do we really have to be glum about when the Lord is moving even if we cannot see that move directly? We can be joyous in our waiting because He is doing things in it. That should be a joy to us. That joy is there even if we cannot see the Lord immediately moving.

Conclusion

So in conclusion I just want to summarize things. The Lord wants us to wait, and in that waiting He transforms us by leading us to dependence on Him and submission to Him. He wants us to wait in hopeful expectation, and in that waiting He is going to bring joy and gratification beyond what we can imagine. So I hope that my talk today has been encouraging, and hopefully it has pointed you to the Lord.

Let's pray:

Father, we just thank You for giving us opportunities to wait. And may this word make sense that waiting is a good thing. We know that Your timing is perfect, and Your timing is the best timing. I just ask that You would give us excitement and joy in our wait and help us to wait with each other. We pray this in Your name. Amen.