

When God's Answer is

Wait



“Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” Psalms 27:14

When God answers prayer it's either yes, no or not right now and “not right now” means we will have to wait. Have you ever had to wait for something whether it's a job, a promotion, child, marriage, or something else that was really important to you?

If you have then you'll know that the major challenge with waiting is not knowing when the wait will end. Discouragement and sometimes offence can set in if we don't know the reason for the wait, especially if we see others getting what we're waiting on God for. Because God is very intentional about us and wants nothing but the best for us, that gives us an assurance that there must be a very tangible reason He's having us wait.

This series we are looking at the lives of people in the Bible who have had to wait for different things over varying stretches of time. Why did God have them wait? What was their waiting posture? What questions did they ask God and what did they do while waiting? We trust God that as we learn from their examples, we can identify our situations in their lives and how best to respond to and maximize our waiting seasons.

Day 1

Waiting for Promotion

'... I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.'... And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" ' 1 Samuel 16:1,12

David was anointed by God's prophet to be king over Israel in full view of his entire family, yet he didn't ascend to the throne immediately. Rather God had him serve the man he was anointed to replace (1 Sam 16:18-22). In the eyes of people in the know, they may have thought maybe God made a mistake, or David should have performed some form of coup after all, God himself said he should be king. But there were things God wanted David to learn before becoming king.

'Blessed be the Lord my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle'
Psalms 144:1

'...So the Lord made David victorious wherever he went.' 1 Chronicles 18:6

Even though he was anointed, David knew nothing about the protocols of the palace, warfare or leadership, all of which were essential to being successful as king. Even when he was king over Judah, David had to navigate that terrain for some time before he was finally crowned king over all of Israel. There are many things we're asking God for that God also wants for us, but we're simply not ready yet. Because He sees the challenges ahead and the nature of the person we need to be to succeed, God will put us on a specific training program designed to bring those qualities out in us. David learnt humility, leadership, creativity, warfare and above all, how to maintain an active relationship with God. As a result, God could work through David to gain victories for His people Israel.

'If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.' James 1:5

Delays may come from not aligning with His process and trying to do things in our own strength. It may be a character gap that needs to be closed, getting the right skills required for the higher level, or a combination of these and other factors. The answer will vary based on what He's working out in us, so when God seems to be asking us to wait, it helps to ask Him why and what we should do while we wait. God never sets His children up to fail and He always prepares us for what He has for us so we can have good and lasting success – if we are willing to work with His training plan.

Prayer: Lord please show me how to cooperate with Your preparation process because I know You only want what's best for me.

Day 2

Waiting for the Promise

'They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John... He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord..."' Luke 1:7,13

John the Baptist wasn't an ordinary child and God had carefully selected parents who would train him up in the right way to enable him fulfil his role as forerunner of Jesus. The timing of the Messiah's birth had already been scheduled in the spirit, so John couldn't have been born too early/late otherwise the timelines would not align. Therefore, Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah were childless until around the time of the conception of the Messiah in order to for their child John to be His forerunner. God has an agenda and if we are out of sync with Him, there will be times when the timing what we want doesn't align with God's agenda, even if it's His will for us.

'Then I said, 'Look, I have come to do your will, O God— as is written about me in the Scriptures.' Hebrews 10:7

'I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.' Jeremiah 1:5

Jesus always referred to the prophecies about His life and based His entire ministry on what had been written about Him. Do you know that God has written things about our lives also? There are places we are meant to be, things we are meant to do within a particular time frame. So if we're asking God to fulfil His plans for our lives, He will do so according to His agenda – not ours.

Many times the frustration arises when we measure our progress in life by other standards apart from God's timetable. People would have said Elizabeth was late in having a baby, but by God's timetable she was right on time to birth her child of promise. Moses didn't become the deliverer of Israel from Egypt until he was 80, Jeremiah was a child when he started functioning as a prophet. While people would have said one was too old and the other too young, both were right on time to fulfil their mandates from heaven's perspectives. But if we don't have that perspective, we may end up feeling frustrated and disappointed, thinking God has abandoned us.

Prayer: Lord, I feel frustrated that You don't seem to be answering me, please open my eyes to see my life from Your perspective. Give me the understanding, courage and strength I need to stay on Your path.

Day 3

Waiting and Warfare

“... Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard... But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me... And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.” Daniel 10:12-13, 20

Daniel had been praying and fasting about a particular issue for three weeks when he had an angelic encounter. During this encounter the angel revealed to Daniel that God answered from the first day he prayed, however spiritual warfare delayed the delivery of his answer.

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:11-12

Life is spiritual and there is an enemy kingdom whose priority it is to ensure we do not fulfil God’s plans for our lives. So the enemy will do everything possible to frustrate the manifestation of God’s plans and he will win if we don’t fight back. We must understand that we’re in constant warfare and we have to keep enforcing our victory in the place of prayer, declaration of God’s word, fasting and living in a manner that pleases God.

‘Praise the Lord, who is my rock. He trains my hands for war and gives my fingers skill for battle.’ Psalms 144:1

Like Daniel, it’s possible that our prayers may already have been answered and the reason for the wait is that we need to push in the place of warfare. David used different strategies for various battles, Daniel fasted with food for 21 days, Esther fasted for 3 days without food, Jesus fasted for 40 days without food. There isn’t a one-size fits all for fighting every battle. We need to ask the Holy Spirit for His counsel on how to address the specific battle we are facing as He knows exactly what we need to do.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, please give me the strategy to address this specific season of waiting I am in. I commit to being steadfast until I am victorious

Day 4

Warfare in Standing

'Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.' Ephesians 6:13

We often think of warfare as a lot of intense activity, but even standing firm during a tough time is warfare. Holding on to God's promise in spite of the environment saying otherwise is warfare. Choosing to believe God and not trying to 'help' Him fast track your manifestation is warfare. Closing your ears to those who mock you for standing in faith is warfare. Waiting is warfare! But God in His mercy doesn't leave us to stand on our own when we stand for Him.

'And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.'" 1 Kings 19:7

'But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me...' 2 Timothy 4:17

It requires strategy, stamina, consistency, faith, grace, endurance to wait. Waiting and believing isn't easy and we shouldn't pretend that it is. But God gives grace for the journey as He moulds us along the way. Imagine praying for over 20 years for a child (Abraham and Isaac), several decades to see the messiah (Simeon and Anna), decades to take your anointed leadership position (Moses, David). There would have been several times they would have been tempted to give up, but each time they took a decision to stay waiting, God backed them up.

'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!' Psalms 46:10

Waiting doesn't imply inertia or idleness and as much as possible we shouldn't be consumed by what we are waiting for, so we don't miss the purpose of the journey and opportunity we have to tap into a different dimension of God and who we are in Him. As we wait, we receive strength, grace and power not just to do but also to become the best version we need to be to maximize what we are waiting for.

Prayer: Lord having done all, help me to stand and remain standing in strength until I receive what I am waiting for.

Day 5

God's Answer vs Our Expectation

'Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ' Acts 1:6

Israel had been waiting for a messiah to lead them out of Roman rulership based on the prophecies in the scripture. But when Jesus was born, He wasn't what they were expecting. They thought the leader would take on military might as David and other kings in their history had done, not knowing that God had a much bigger plan in mind.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.' Isaiah 55:8-9

Oftentimes when we pray, there's a specific outcome we want and as such there are times when we fail to recognize our season of waiting is over because God's answer didn't look like what we were expecting. For example, we may be praying for increase and God gives us a problem to solve, so rather than a miraculous increase in our account, we receive the capacity to create wealth. We may be looking for a life partner and instead of bringing the person our way immediately, God emphasizes on us first becoming the person we need to be in order to attract the person He has in mind for us. We might be looking for a promotion at work and rather we get difficult bosses who force us to upskill ourselves because of the demands they place on us and develop a servant leader's heart, so we do not treat people the way we were treated. God always sees the end first and works backwards from there to help us get to His desired end for us.

'And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.' Romans 8:28

God is not a wicked taskmaster, if He's asking us to wait it's always for our own benefit. However, as we shared earlier, we must also discern when it's the enemy delaying our answer. As we close this series, let's be encouraged to keep standing as we wait on God – it may not be easy but it will certainly be worth it.

Prayer: Lord help me to discern when and how You have answered my prayer so I can align with the best You have for me.

Day 6

Posture while Waiting

'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.' I Thessalonians 5:16-18

When this scripture was being written, God knew we would read it thousands of years later and there would be times in our lives we didn't feel like doing rejoicing or praying – yet He says we should do so. Rejoicing in every circumstance means not just when things are going the way we like. That suggests that rejoicing can't be done in our strength alone, which is where prayer comes in as we draw on the strength of the Holy Spirit.

'Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.' Psalms 118:1

'And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the Lord, For His mercy endures forever.'" 2 Chronicles 20:21

When we consciously thank and praise God, two things happen. First is that we remember His faithfulness to us in other areas which encourages us. Secondly it reminds us of His character of love and capacity to meet our needs which also encourages us. So that our waiting isn't with an attitude of despondence. Yes, there will be days we feel discouraged – we shouldn't pretend those days won't come. But when they do, we offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise, which the Holy Spirit in His grace and wisdom uses to bring us out of that state of discouragement.

'Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.' 2 Chronicles 20:22

Prayer and thanksgiving activate angelic intervention on our behalf. Remember Daniel was praying when he had the angelic visitation. Likewise, in the scripture above the Israelites were praising God when the angels went into operation on their behalf. Prayer, thanksgiving and praise move things in our favour in the spirit realm, the same way prayerlessness and complaining move things against us.

Prayer: Holy Spirit please help me to be intentional about prayer, praise and thanksgiving as I wait. There are days it will be difficult so I am trusting that You will help me in those days.

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