

DEVOTION 3-25-19

See if you can relate to this statement...

“I am terrible at waiting”!

If so, then you share my affliction! In this world where multitasking and fast-paced living are the norm for all of us, it drives me *crazy* to wait for things. When I sit at a long red light, I get antsy over the time I’m wasting. When I text someone a question, I get annoyed if an answer doesn’t come back within the hour. The waiting room of a doctor’s office is my personal purgatory! The magazines have way too many germs to pick up, my fellow patients are too sick to socialize with and I don’t want to touch my phone with the same hands that just opened the clinic door. So I just sit, and it makes me NUTS!

If you can identify with that at all, you can probably associate with this too... Waiting on God is not my strong suit! I want Him to respond to my spiritual texts right away! When I am waiting for His answer to prayer, or for His reassurance, or for His guidance, or even for the feeling of His presence... I want it now!

The worst of all is when I don’t feel His closeness. This one scares me and makes me feel insecure. There are seasons when it seems like the Holy Spirit speaks to me constantly and I am bathed in His peace, feeling confident in God’s guidance on decisions and direction.

Then there are the other seasons... These are the periods when I feel less passionate or inspired in my spiritual walk. When I pray and pray, but I don’t seem to get an answer. These seasons are scary because after a while, doubt can come knocking at my door. I can start doubting whether I have a close relationship with Jesus any more. I can start thinking maybe I disappoint Him. In really long droughts, I can wonder if I will ever experience His personal presence again.

If you have ever felt like this, then I have some good news for you... we are not alone! Recently I read about the personal letters of some of Christianity’s great heroes of faith and how almost **every one** of them experienced these dry times too!

So if even the most mature Christian theologians go through seasons where God seems silent and far away, then what is the point? **Why does God allow us to endure these droughts?**

Here are some possibilities...

- 1) God wants our faith to grow. He knows that being a helicopter parent is the last thing we need. If He immediately answers our every prayer, like a butler, waiting on us hand and foot, it would make us weak. The slightest trouble would blow through and we would snap like a twig. Perseverance builds our spiritual character, and waiting builds perseverance.

- 2) He wants us to seek out His Word and teachings so we understand them. The Bible stands as our spiritual Encyclopedia but if we never have to do research in this resource, we will never understand its importance to us or know how to use it.
- 3) When we are *desperate* for His nearness, it makes us appreciate Him all the more. You know how rainy it has been lately... well after weeks of rain, a sunny day happens and it is like opening an amazing gift! We can't wait to go out and enjoy every bit of it because we know what it is like not to have it. The same is true of our spiritual rainy seasons, it makes us appreciate the *intimate* time with Jesus all the more!
- 4) Lastly, we may not be ready for His answer. If we aren't hearing from God when we pray, He may want us to develop to a point where we *are* ready to receive His guidance. Here is an example that happened to us... When my husband and I were ready to buy our first house, we found one we loved and prayed about it, except stumbling block after stumbling block kept happening. First, they lost our paperwork. Then our realtor went away for a few weeks, then unexpected bills kept popping up forcing us to use part of our down-payment money. Now, you would think we would have gotten the message but **NO!** Instead of waiting on God, we barreled through every barrier. Finally, to get our attention, God caused my husband to lose his job out of the blue so we couldn't afford the house any longer. We thought it was a tragedy, I was literally crying. We felt like – where was God??? Of course, He was right there the whole time! As it turns out, making us wait was the best thing that ever happened! It forced us to get our finances in better shape and our priorities in order. And that house we loved and lost – it turned out to be a nightmare for the people who bought it. That neighborhood went downhill fast, right along with all the home values. God saved us from ourselves by delaying our prayer for a first home until we were truly ready to receive it.

So... what do we do when we are in one of these spiritual droughts and God seems so far away? While keeping up with reading scripture and praying, we may find that these additional steps are helpful...

- 1) We can write God a letter, just as if we are writing a friend. Regularly putting our thoughts and concerns on paper can settle our minds and organize our feelings. It can even help us identify where we need to grow when we see it in writing. It may seem silly, but it works.
- 2) We can spend time in silence, in God's creation. There is something about going for a walk in a beautiful park, or by a lake, or even sitting in a backyard garden that helps to calm and center the soul. If we do it with an open mind, without any agenda, it gives God the chance to speak or at least help us feel His closeness again.

3) We can seek out a trusted spiritual mentor or partner. Someone who will never divulge our thoughts to others, and who loves the Lord too. Sometimes talking it through together really helps. At the very least, it gives us a prayer buddy and the support of someone who knows what it's like to be in that dry place.

Psalm 27:14 says, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" How often do you see exclamation points in scripture?!? I guess the Lord really *does* understand how hard it is for us to wait, but God wants us to be able to trust that He is there, always!

May we remain faithful as we wait upon Him!