

08 Keep Knocking: What to Do When God Says "Wait" or "Not Yet"

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We don't like to wait.

Fast shipping. Credit cards that let you buy now, pay later. Fast food. Fast... everything.

In Western culture, waiting feels like punishment. Delay feels like denial. And when we bring this mindset to prayer, we set ourselves up for devastating disappointment.

Jesus said: *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."* (Matthew 7:7)

So we ask once. We knock once. And when the door doesn't immediately open, when healing doesn't come, when the marriage doesn't save itself, when the addiction doesn't lift - we assume one of two things:

Either Christianity is a hoax, or God doesn't care about us.

But there's a third option we rarely consider: **Our understanding is wrong.**

The Father Decides What "Good" Means

The full context of Matthew 7 matters:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:7-11)

Notice what Jesus is saying: God gives **good** things to those who ask.

But here's what we miss: **The Father decides what "good" is. Not the child.**

If your three-year-old asks for a knife to play with, you don't give it to him. Not because you don't love him. But because you know better than he does what's actually good for him.

When we pray for healing and don't receive it, when we pray for restoration and the relationship still ends, when we knock and the door stays closed - maybe it's not that God isn't listening.

Maybe it's that the Father knows something we don't about what's actually good for us.

When Jesus Asked and Didn't Receive

If anyone had the right to expect immediate answers, it was Jesus.

The night before His crucifixion, He prayed: *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me."* (Luke 22:42)

Translation: "If there's any other way - any way at all - let's do that instead. I don't want to be crucified."

Surely the Father would answer His own Son. Surely if anyone deserved a "yes," it was Jesus.

But Jesus didn't stop there. He added: **"Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."**

And the cup wasn't removed. The door didn't open to another path. Jesus was crucified anyway.

Not because the Father didn't love Him. But because the Father's will - and humanity's salvation - required it.

Here's the question: **When we knock... when we ask, how often do we add "not my will, but yours"?**

If we're honest? Not often.

Because we often assume what we're asking for aligns with God's will - without ever evaluating whether it might not be.

"How Can This Not Be God's Will?"

I know what you're thinking:

How can it not be God's will for my child to be healed?

How can it not be God's will for my marriage to be saved?

How can it not be God's will for me to overcome this addiction?

How can it not be God's will for my loved one to come back to faith?

And any other question you have not received an answer for. These are good questions. Heartbreaking questions.

My father battled prostate cancer. We prayed. He went into remission. We believed God had said "yes."

Then the cancer came back. Worse. Terminal.

We prayed again. Harder. More people. More faith.

And God said no.

Not "no, I don't love your father."

Not "no, I don't care about your pain."

Just: "No. Not this way. Not this time."

My dad died at 72, praising God with his final breaths. The healing we prayed for never came on this side of heaven.

Was our prayer wrong? Was our faith too weak? Did we not knock hard enough?

No. **The Father simply had a different answer than the one we wanted.**

Living in a Fallen World

Here's what we forget: **Even though Christ has finished His work and died for our sins, we still live under the consequence of sin.**

We live in a fallen world. Bodies get sick. Relationships break. Minds struggle. Addictions grip. Children walk away.

This is our fault - humanity's, not God's. And we still live with the consequences.

Romans 8:22-23 says it plainly: *"For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."*

We're waiting. We're groaning. Redemption is promised - but not fully realized yet.

This doesn't mean God is absent. It means **His "yes" is often "not yet" and sometimes "wait for heaven."**

That's not the answer we want. But it's often the answer we get.

What Suffering Produces

Romans 5:3-5 gives us the framework for understanding why God allows the wait:

"Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Notice the progression: **Suffering → Endurance → Character → Hope**

God doesn't cause all suffering. But He uses it.

The wait isn't wasted. The "no" isn't meaningless. The unanswered prayer isn't ignored.

God is producing something in you through the waiting that couldn't be produced any other way.

Endurance. Character. Hope.

Not the cheap hope that says "everything will work out the way I want."

But the deep hope that says "God is with me in this, and He will not abandon me - even if the answer is 'wait' or 'not yet' or 'not the way you're asking.'"

Three Kinds of Answers

When you knock, God's answer falls into one of three categories:

1. Wait - "Not yet, but yes eventually"

My father was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 60. He literally told me that no woman would want a man with a terminal illness. We prayed anyway. He was wrong. In the midst of his doubt he met an amazing woman and at 66 years old he re-married. He didn't get many years with his new wife, but the few years they had were amazing.

God's timing proved: it's never too late for redemption. Even when it feels impossibly delayed.

Sometimes "wait" means years. Decades, even (Moses, David, Joseph). But "wait" isn't "no." It's "trust my timing."

2. No - "Not this, I have something different"

Paul begged God three times to remove his "thorn in the flesh" - some physical suffering we're not told the details of.

God's answer? *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Not healing. Grace.

Not removal. Sufficiency.

Not the answer Paul wanted. But the answer God knew was better.

Sometimes God says "no" because He has something different - something better - that we can't see yet.

3. Not Yet Fully - "Yes spiritually, not yet physically"

This is the hardest one. The healing we prayed for my dad? It came. Just not on this side of heaven.

He's healed now. Fully. No more cancer. No more pain.

But we wanted it here. We wanted more years. We wanted him at graduations and weddings and births.

And God said: "Not yet fully. Wait for eternity."

Ultimate healing is promised. But not always in this lifetime.

Keep Knocking Anyway

Here's what I need you to hear: **Even when God says "wait" or "no" or "not yet," keep knocking.**

Jesus told a parable about a persistent widow who kept demanding justice from an unjust judge until he finally gave in - not because he cared, but because she wouldn't stop asking. (Luke 18:1-8)

Jesus' point? *"Will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily."*

Persistence in prayer isn't about wearing God down. It's about deepening your dependence on Him while you wait.

Don't stop knocking because the door hasn't opened yet.

Don't stop asking because you haven't received yet.

Don't stop seeking because the healing hasn't come yet.

Keep knocking. Keep asking. Keep seeking.

But add: "Not my will, but yours."

Why don't we do this more often? I venture to think it's likely from stigma of a lack of faith. But I would counter that by asking - **did Jesus exhibit a lack of faith when He said this to the Father?**

No. It wasn't weakness. It was surrender. It wasn't doubt. It was trust.

And if Jesus - the Son of God - prayed "not my will, but yours," how much more should we?

What Waiting Looks Like

Waiting well doesn't mean passive resignation. It means active trust.

It means praying boldly for what you want - healing, restoration, breakthrough - while surrendering your expected outcome.

It means bringing your confusion, anger, and heartbreak to God - not hiding them.

It means asking "why" like Job did for 37 chapters - and trusting that God can handle your questions even when He doesn't answer them the way you want.

It means remembering: **God's "no" to your request isn't "no" to you.**

My dad didn't get earthly healing. But God didn't abandon him. God was present with him. God held him through the pain. God brought him home.

That's not nothing. Even though it's not what we prayed for.

For Those Still Waiting

If you're waiting right now - for healing, for restoration, for breakthrough, for your loved one to return to faith - here's what I want you to know:

Your persistent prayer matters.

Not because it changes God's mind. But because it changes you.

It keeps you connected to the only source of hope when everything else is falling apart.

It reminds you daily: **I can't do this alone. I need You.**

Your surrender matters.

"Not my will, but yours" isn't giving up. It's trusting that the Father knows what "good" actually means - even when it doesn't feel good to you.

Your suffering isn't wasted.

Romans 5 promises: endurance, character, hope. None of that comes without the wait.

God hasn't forgotten you.

He sees. He hears. He's present.

And even if His answer is "wait" or "no" or "not yet" - He's still writing your story.

The Author hasn't put down the pen.

The Door Will Open

Jesus promised: *"Knock, and it will be opened to you."*

He didn't promise when. He didn't promise how. He didn't promise it would look like what you expected.

But He promised: **it will be opened.**

Maybe on this side of heaven. Maybe on the other side.

But the door will open.

Until then: keep knocking.

And trust the Father who decides what "good" really means.

If you're in crisis:

- Christian Faith-Based Resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/christian-faith-resources/> or call 1-866-903-3787 (24/7)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 (call or text)

You matter. Your life matters. Please stay.

William James Meyer is the author of "Do You Live in a Castle? Breaking Free from the Walls That Hold You Hostage." He writes from a Christian perspective as someone who's still learning to add "not my will, but yours" to every prayer - even when the answer is "wait."

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