

12 The School of Waiting: When You Rush Ahead

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What do you do when God says "wait" but everything in you wants to run ahead?

When the promise feels so close you can almost touch it, but God hasn't opened the door yet?

When you've been faithful, done everything right, and still... nothing?

Do you keep waiting?

Or do you take matters into your own hands?

Maybe you're waiting for healing.

The diagnosis came years ago, and you've prayed - hard, faithfully, desperately. But the symptoms are still there or have returned.

Maybe you're waiting for a job or exhausted in one and desire something new.

Or a spouse.

Or for a broken relationship to be restored.

Maybe God spoke a word over you 10 years ago - 15 years ago, 20 years ago - and you believed it. You stepped out in faith. You started moving in that direction.

And then... nothing.

Silence.

Delays.

Detours.

And now you're wondering: Did I hear Him wrong? Did I miss it? Has He forgotten?

I know that feeling.

Because it's been over thirty years since God told me to teach His word.

Thirty years.

I thought that might have meant seminary. Maybe some ministry opportunity. Probably something that would happen within a few years.

I had no idea it would take three decades.

No idea that "teach My word" would look like raising four kids with Bible studies and devotionals around the kitchen table.

No idea it would mean writing a book about castles - a metaphor for the walls we build - that God gave me the idea for in 1999 but I wouldn't finish until 2025.

Twenty-six years to finish one book.

Thirty years to begin understanding what "teach My word" actually means.

And I'm still learning.

Still waiting on some promises.

Still discovering what God meant.

Maybe your wait has been 5 years. Or 15. Or 30 like mine.

And you're tired.

Wondering if the promise was real.

Wondering if God remembers.

He does.

And you're not alone.

The Pattern: Promise → Wilderness → Fulfillment

Here's what I've learned about how God works from scripture and in my own life:

He gives a promise.

Then He sometimes makes you wait.

Often longer than makes sense.

Sometimes decades.

And during that wait - that wilderness - He's doing something in you that couldn't be done any other way.

He's refining. Testing. Preparing. Shaping you into the person who can actually handle the promise when it finally comes.

Because the promise given at 25 often requires the person you'll become at 56.

And you can't rush that.

No matter how hard you try.

But we do try.

Don't we?

Why We Rush Ahead

Here's why waiting is so hard:

Because we live in a world that doesn't wait for anything.

Fast food. Fast shipping. Fast answers. Fast results.

We've been conditioned to believe that if something doesn't happen quickly, it's not happening at all.

And then God gives us a promise and says: "Wait."

And we wait a year. Two years. Five years. Ten years.

And we start to wonder: Did I hear Him wrong? Did I miss it? Is this ever going to happen?

And the temptation creeps in:

Maybe I should help God out.

Maybe if I just take this one step, it'll speed things up.

Maybe God needs me to make this happen.

So we manufacture our own solution.

We force the door open instead of trusting God to open it in His time.

You've tried to force it, haven't you?

Tried to manufacture your own solution because waiting felt impossible.

Maybe it worked for a while.

Or maybe it cost you more than you expected.

Either way, you're not the first person to run ahead of God.

Abraham: When "Helping" God Backfires

Abraham was 75 years old when God made him a promise:

"I will make you into a great nation." (Genesis 12:2)

Great. Except Abraham had no children. And his wife Sarah was barren.

But God said it, so Abraham believed it.

And then he waited.

One year. Five years. Ten years.

He's now 85. Still no child. Still waiting.

And Sarah has an idea: *"The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my servant; perhaps I can build a family through her."* (Genesis 16:2)

In that culture, this wasn't scandalous - it was an accepted solution. A practical workaround.

So Abraham did.

Hagar conceived. Ishmael was born.

Problem solved, right?

Wrong.

Hagar despised Sarah. Sarah blamed Abraham. Abraham sent Hagar away. Family conflict erupted.

And Ishmael? He wasn't the son of promise. He was the son of impatience.

God's plan was Isaac - born 15 years later when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90. Impossible by human standards. But that's the point.

The promise required impossibility so only God could get the glory.

Abraham's "solution" created problems God never intended.

Ishmael's descendants (Arabs) and Isaac's descendants (Jews) have been in conflict for thousands of years.

All because Abraham felt he had maybe heard God wrong and took matters into his own hands.

Moses: Wrong Timing, Wrong Method

Moses was raised in Pharaoh's palace but knew he was Hebrew.

He knew God had a plan to deliver Israel from slavery. He could feel it.

So at age 40, he decided to get started.

He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. Moses looked around, made sure no one was watching, and killed the Egyptian. Buried him in the sand.

Problem solved, right?

Wrong.

The next day, Moses tried to break up a fight between two Hebrews. One of them said: *"Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?"* (Exodus 2:14)

His secret was out.

Pharaoh heard about it and pursued Moses.

Moses fled to the wilderness. Spent the next 40 years herding sheep in obscurity working for a his father-in-law.

Forty years.

From palace to pasture.

From deliverer to shepherd.

All because he tried to fulfill God's promise his own way, in his own timing.

Then, at age 80 - **eighty** - God showed up in a burning bush and said: "*Now I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt.*" (Exodus 3:10)

Same mission.

Different timing.

Different method.

God's way required Moses to be broken, humble, and completely dependent. At 40, Moses was none of those things. At 80, he was ready.

The 40-year wait wasn't wasted.

It was necessary.

The Other Side of the Lake

I learned this lesson the hard way in 1997.

I'd just attended a men's retreat where John Eldredge spoke about *The Sacred Romance*. I attended because I wanted relationship, thinking I would be bored, but left with my heart full. God had been moving. And on the drive back I decided to go through Rocky Mountain National Park, I was listening to Chuck Swindoll's message on Moses called "The Desert - School of Self Discovery." Learning about the desert – and waiting.

But I was on a mission.

The sun was setting, and I wanted the perfect sunset photograph. I was racing to Bear Lake but realized I wouldn't make it in time. So I pulled into Sprague Lake, grabbed my camera, and started running around the trail to get to the other side where I thought the shot would be.

And then I heard that voice. Maybe you've heard it before - not audible but in your spirit, and you know it's not you.

"Stop."

I ignored it. I was on a mission.

"Stop!"

"No, Lord, I need to get to the other side to get my photograph."

"STOP!"

So I stopped. Perturbed. "Okay, I've stopped. What now?"

"Go to the edge of the water."

I made my way down to the water's edge. And the sun was literally dipping behind the mountains. I snapped a few images before it disappeared completely.

Had I kept running to the other side where I thought I could get the image I wanted, I would have missed it entirely.

But the Lord didn't stop me to get a picture of a sunset.

He stopped me to teach me a lesson I've never forgotten.

As I walked the rest of the way around the trail, the Lord spoke to my heart: **"Bill, you often do this - when I give encouragement and direction you run on ahead of Me instead of waiting. And in so doing you often miss the blessings I have for you along the way."**

I wept. Because He was right.

Too often in my life I took whatever word I received and just took off, leaving the Lord behind and encouraging Him to catch up.

I asked forgiveness that evening for my eagerness as the Lord taught me a needed lesson in waiting.

I returned to my vehicle with new revelation and continued listening to Chuck Swindoll's message about Moses spending 40 years in the wilderness being prepared for what God ultimately had in mind for him.

The wilderness wasn't the goal.

But it was needed to prepare Moses.

The time was needed.

So here I am, 29 years later, thinking back on that day the Lord told me to stop running ahead of Him and to be patient and wait for His timing.

Maybe the waiting and the wilderness has been what God intended all along.

Where are you running right now?

What "other side" are you racing toward, convinced that's where your blessing is?

What if God is asking you to stop - right here, right now - because He has something for you at the water's edge that you'll miss if you keep running?

The Castle of Impatience

In my book *Do You Live in a Castle?* I talk about the walls we build to protect ourselves from pain.

But there's another kind of wall we build when God's timing doesn't match ours:

The wall of impatience.

When the promise doesn't come on our schedule, we react.

The Moat widens.

We create distance between us and God. Not because we stop believing. But because if He's not moving when we think He should, maybe He's not moving at all.

So we pull back.

We guard our hearts.

We stop trusting as deeply because we've been disappointed too many times.

The Walls get higher.

We build our own solutions. Our own workarounds. Our own "Hagar plans."

Because if God won't give us Isaac, we'll settle for Ishmael.

If God won't deliver Israel through divine intervention, we'll do it ourselves with Egyptian blood on our hands.

If God won't move on our timeline, we'll manufacture our own breakthrough.

And we tell ourselves we're being proactive.

Faithful.

Responsible.

But we're not.

We're just impatient.

And impatience always costs us.

What walls have you built while waiting?

What moat have you widened between you and God because if He's not moving on your schedule, maybe He's not moving at all?

What Ishmael have you produced trying to speed up Isaac's arrival?

What Egyptian have you killed trying to deliver yourself instead of waiting for God's burning bush?

I know those walls.

I've built them too.

What the Bible Says About Waiting

Scripture doesn't shy away from the tension of waiting.

It acknowledges it. Embraces it. And calls us to something higher.

Isaiah 30:18 says:

"Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him."

Read that again.

The Lord waits.

Not because He's slow.

Not because He forgot.

But because His timing is tied to His grace. His mercy. His justice.

And those who wait for Him? **Blessed.**

Not punished. Not forgotten. **Blessed.**

Psalms 27:14 says:

"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

Twice. He says it twice.

Because we need to hear it twice.

Wait. Be strong. Take courage. And wait again.

Waiting isn't passive.

It's active trust.

It's choosing strength when everything in you wants to give up.

It's taking courage when fear whispers "it's never going to happen."

And **Proverbs 19:2** gives us the warning:

"Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way."

Haste.

Rushing.

Running ahead.

It makes you miss the way.

Abraham missed 15 years of peace trying to manufacture Isaac.

Moses missed 40 years of purpose trying to deliver Israel his way.

I almost missed the sunset at the water's edge racing to the other side.

And you'll miss what God has for you at the water's edge if you keep running to where you think it should be.

The Lesson

Here's what Abraham and Moses teach us:

God's promise requires God's timing AND God's method.

You can't have one without the other.

Abraham got the "what" right (a son) but tried the "how" wrong (Hagar).

Moses got the "what" right (deliver Israel) but tried the "when" wrong (age 40 instead of 80).

Both cost them.

And both eventually learned: **wait for God to do it God's way.**

Not because God is slow.

But because the wait is part of the preparation.

The promise given to 75-year-old Abraham required the faith of 100-year-old Abraham.

The promise given to 40-year-old Moses required the humility of 80-year-old Moses.

The promise given to 25-year-old me required the brokenness of 56-year-old me.

And maybe - just maybe - the promise God gave you years ago requires the person you're becoming through the wait.

Don't rush it.

Don't manufacture it.

Don't settle for Ishmael when God promised Isaac.

Wait for God's timing.

Trust God's method.

And let the wilderness do its work.

Because when the promise finally comes - and it will - you'll be ready.

Not because you figured it out.

But because God prepared you.

But what about when you DON'T rush ahead?

What about when you wait faithfully - but it still hurts?

What about when you do everything right and still end up in the pit, the prison, the years of barrenness?

That's Joseph and Hannah's story.

And that's next week.

If you're struggling:

- 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. And your wait is not wasted. Please stay.

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