



Wait and See

Finding Peace in God's Pauses and Plans

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When the Wait Begins

Meet Ashley, Samantha, Dianna, Scott (my husband), and David. These are real people who waited on God. As we journey together, you will see how each individual applied the principles of waiting well.

When she was thirty years old, Ashley sensed God leading her to teach women the Bible. Thinking she had it all figured out and certain of God's desire for her life, Ashley jumped right in to preparing her Bible study class at church. She organized her materials, started the sign-up process, and counted on God to fill her classroom. Only one woman joined, and she later withdrew because of a scheduling conflict. Did Ashley hear God wrong?

God shows you His design for your life. He whets your appetite for all He has planned. Excitement overwhelms you as you sit on the edge of your seat. Then you wait.

Ashley waited.

In her early twenties, Samantha began to seriously ponder if it was the Lord's will for her to be married. She felt Him give her a green

light, so she prayed daily for her marriage and her husband—even though she didn't yet know him. She studied scriptures on marriage and about being a wife, and she gleaned wisdom from many married women. Year after year, Samantha continued hoping for a husband, trusting that her desires to marry were from the Lord. Yet year after year, she remained single.

God tucks a dream deep into your heart. You believe Him for the completion of this dream. You patiently do all the “right” things. Then you wait.

Samantha waited.

Dianna felt the call to full-time ministry. With her husband's job secure, she walked away from a \$75,000-a-year career to pursue her calling. Her *yes* to God was followed by the 2008 market crash, which devastated her family. Her husband, a builder of custom homes, lost his job. Losing their own home was just the start of some tough years of waiting and rebuilding. During the family's five moves, including a two-month stay in a hotel, Dianna contracted severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Things looked hopeful when the family found a wonderful home to rent—only to receive an eviction notice because the landlord had not paid the mortgage. Facing homelessness again, a disease, no health insurance, and no job, Dianna felt betrayed, helpless, abandoned, and hopeless.

The timing seems right. You step out in faith and say *yes* to God, then you lose your home and health.

Dianna waited.

Scott stood six foot three—a strong, healthy man. He and I were busy doing life and raising our two children. Everything seemed

picture perfect for our family. Without warning, the picture became blurred, literally, when the vision in Scott's left eye began to fail. He went from one specialist to another. Each doctor ordered new tests and, with the best intentions, prescribed new treatments. We prayed for healing. Our church family rallied around us and prayed. I invited my blog friends to pray. We had people all over the world asking God to heal Scott's eye. Yet after eighteen months, there was still no definitive diagnosis or change in Scott's condition.

You pray. You anoint with oil. You pray some more. Then you wait.
We waited.

Jesse was a farmer and breeder in Bethlehem. David was the youngest of his eight sons, who worked the land with their father. Can you imagine if any hopes or dreams were left for you when you're the youngest of eight?

The prophet Samuel called on Jesse to anoint one of his sons as the next king of Israel. Jesse brought each son one by one to Samuel. After meeting the boys, Samuel still had not heard God's voice of confirmation. The prophet asked Jesse if he had any more sons. Imagine Jesse's internal response: *Um, this isn't my hope or plans for David. He's just a shepherd boy. He deserves to stay home.* Jesse answered truthfully and called David from the pasture.

Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one."

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah. (1 Sam. 16:12–13)

I can only imagine what might have been going on inside of David's mind (and Jesse's). David did not dream of being king. He thought his life's path had already been chosen for him: he would be a farmer and breeder, just like his father and brothers. But God's plan for David's life was different. Samuel appointed and anointed David king of Israel, but David wouldn't fulfill that position for many years.

David waited.

Do you see yourself somewhere between the lines of these waiting stories? Maybe you are praying for a husband or waiting for God's plan for your life to come to fruition. Perhaps your life has fallen into place just as God revealed but something or someone is blocking the way toward what you really hope for. So you wait, hope, believe, and yet sometimes second-guess the plan.

*The wait is more about experiencing
God than enduring the delay.*

WANTING AND WAITING

I don't know anyone who likes to wait. Life in our technologically advanced world has taught us that waiting does not have to be an option. Let's face it—within seconds of posting to Instagram and Facebook, everyone can see pictures of your lunch with your best friend.

Snapchat allows us to instantly picture chat with anyone, anywhere, anytime. Text messaging is faster than a telephone call, and email is quicker than the postal service. Our dinner can be paid for, cooked, and placed in our hands in a matter of minutes without us

even leaving our car. Yes, the message we've received from our have-it-your-way world is "You don't have to wait." But, friend, we have been deceived.

We may want our food served quickly; however, in waiting we are more likely to be served healthier food that's better for us. I am sure at one time or another we all have burned with an urgency to express our thoughts in an email, text message, or Facebook update concerning something that has made us angry. On the other hand, if we push through the want with a timely wait, we have the opportunity to thoughtfully respond so others will see Christ in us. Can we collectively agree things usually turn out better when we wait?

When I was young, my family had one television. My brother and I had to take turns watching our favorite television shows. This got old fast, so I decided it would be nice for me to have my very own television in my bedroom. I took this bright idea to my parents. To my surprise, they said yes, but they wisely turned my want into a wait.

Instead of buying the television for me, they made me earn the money. After months of babysitting and doing extra chores, I finally saved the eighty-nine dollars needed to purchase the thirteen-inch, black-and-white set. While sitting on *my* bed, watching *my* favorite shows, without my older brother pestering me, I determined that small television I had wanted so much to be worth the wait.

As adults, the value of what we wait for is far greater than the cost of a black-and-white television. We wait for the salvation of our loved one, the healing of our friend, the end of our own long-term health issue, deliverance from addiction, a positive result on a pregnancy test, or the end of unemployment. The value of what we wait for is so great that we can easily become derailed from life.

These things are important to pray about, for sure. But when they become all consuming, their value is magnified—especially the longer we wait. Some carry greater weight than we originally thought, while some carry less. As the days, months, and years pass, we can put more energy, effort, prayer, conversations, and, yes, sometimes manipulation and guilt trips into making these things come to pass. We easily become derailed, sacrificing our time with the Lord, relationships with loved ones, and enjoyment of life in general. When we do, we become bankrupt: spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and sometimes even financially. When we value the things we wait on more than we value the commands of the Lord—not to worry, to accept His peace, to live by faith—we lose sight of what’s really important: our relationship with God. Without realizing it, we exchange the Person of our faith for the object of our wait.

THE PERSON OF OUR FAITH

Too often, we consult the Person of our faith (God) only after we have exhausted our efforts to push through our wait on our own. If we want to be women who wait well, we will invite God to be part of the process at the beginning, setting our focus on the Lord, not that for which we are waiting. In Scripture, we see the prophet Isaiah helped the Israelites turn their focus on God with a promise. A woman waiting can adjust the lens of her focus with the same truth.

Since ancient times no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,

no eye has seen any God besides you,
who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.
(Isa. 64:4)

This invitation is an act of surrender and does not deemphasize the worth of her husband's salvation, a friend's healing, or anything else she's waiting on. The invitation directs the lens of her hopes, desires, and dreams to her great God, rather than the object of her wait.

What encouraging words! God is speaking to His people concerning their restoration after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Although this verse is about Israel's return to Jerusalem, we can find ourselves in the reference to "those who wait." We share in the hope that no ear has perceived, no eye has seen. That means we are the benefactors of something that no one has ever seen or heard when we wait on God. Now that is shoutin' worthy news right there (insert your own shouts and amens here)!

The news gets better as we find the word *prepared* used in the King James Version of Isaiah 64:4, "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath *prepared* for him that waiteth for him." "Prepared" is the Hebrew word *asah*, which means "to do" or "make" in the broadest sense and widest application. "Those who wait" have access to unlimited and mind-blowing futures when they are willing to wait on God to work on their behalf. That bears repeating: in the broadest sense and widest application. If you weren't shoutin' before, you should be now! This truth is the first of many we'll discover that will change our perspective about waiting.

***We all know the unlimited, mind-blowing lengths
that God went to in creating our world.***

As my son would say, “There’s always a catch.” The unlimited and mind-blowing future God has for us has a prerequisite: we are required to wait.

“Wait” in Isaiah 64:4 is the Hebrew word *khaw-kaw*. God teaches us through the word *khaw-kaw* to tarry for Him to act on our behalf. This means “those who wait” are to delay in acting or starting anything. Waiters are to linger where they are, doing what they know to do until they receive instructions.

Words such as *delay* and *linger* don’t sit well in the spirit of a girl like me who prefers to move, take action, and make things happen. However, as we delay and linger, we can know for certain the future we move toward is from the hand of God, not by means of manipulation or anything we can add to the equation. What a relief! We don’t have to do anything to get what only God wants to bring us. Isn’t that awesome to remember?

The Hebrew word *khaw-kaw* helps us understand that waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under His command. Second, it means readiness for any new command that may come: we pray for His direction. Third, waiting involves the ability to do nothing until the command is given.¹ Honestly, all of this sounds well and good on paper, but we all know waiting isn’t easy and waiting well is even more difficult. As our wait begins, our mind conjures up all manner of fallacies and misunderstandings. But equipping ourselves

with these truths will empower us to do what seems impossible—to wait well.

WAITING MISCONCEPTIONS

When times get hard and the wait seems too long, we begin to doubt God as well as the unlimited and mind-blowing future He has planned for us. We begin to question God: *Did I hear You correctly? Do You see what I am going through? Why does this have to be so hard?* We blame God because our circumstances seem more difficult than before we invited Him into our wait. It is during these times that we have to fight to maintain our focus on the Person of our faith rather than the object of wait or distracting circumstances that surround us. One way to do this is through prayer.

The Lord longs for us to reach out to Him and ask for help, clarity, and direction. See what James 1:5–8 says: “If you don’t know what you’re doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You’ll get his help, and won’t be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought. People who ‘worry their prayers’ are like wind-whipped waves. Don’t think you’re going to get anything from the Master that way, adrift at sea, keeping all your options open” (THE MESSAGE). In this verse, James clearly tells us we are to ask our Father for what we need. James says God *loves* to help. I certainly like the sound of that—how about you?

Let’s keep this verse handy as we revisit and expand on the wait-and-see stories (of Ashley, Samantha, Dianna, Scott, and David) from earlier in the chapter to identify common misconceptions “those who wait” encounter. Recognizing these misconceptions will

empower us to wait well, stay present in the present, and experience God in our delay. Notice how each person asked for and experienced God's help along the way.

Ashley sensed God moving her toward teaching a Bible study. She prepared and did everything necessary to give the class a great start. But all her efforts seemingly went unnoticed and were in vain. When it was time for the class to start, she didn't have any students to teach.

Misconception #1: If I am waiting, I must not have heard God correctly. Ashley learned that waiting doesn't necessarily mean you heard God incorrectly. Ashley says, "We give up too easily because we don't see what we want to see when we want to see it."

We can redirect the negative thoughts we often receive by revisiting the moments when we sensed the Lord's nudging. Reliving the moments of pure excitement we experienced when we felt the prodding of His Spirit will extinguish uncertainty that tries to creep in to steal our joy. We may have to travel down memory lane many times during our wait. Ashley had to make the trip several times throughout her ten-year pause, asking for God's clarity and assurance.

This is why it is so important to invite God into our wait from the very beginning, instead of after we have tried everything we know to make things happen. As we spend time with Him and in His Word, we gain confidence in His plans. A quick visit to the past fills us with the peace we need to make it through the pause. Waiting well teaches us to trust His delays rather than doubt His ways.

Misconception #2: If I am waiting, I must desire something not in God's will for my life. Samantha desired to be married. She knew God ordained and approved marriage, but did He want *her*

to be married? There are plenty of verses in the Bible about marriage, relationships, and how to be a loving spouse. Yet Samantha also knew the verses in which Paul clearly states that some people are called to remain single. When passages seemingly conflict, it can be difficult to determine God's will for your life.

Samantha asked her family and several close friends to pray for her. She committed to taking each step she felt God asked of her—whether that was toward meeting her future spouse or remaining single.

*We need to prepare in the pauses so we're
ready to embrace God's plans.*

Misconception #3: If I am waiting, I must not be praying enough. Day after day, Dianna prayed and sought the Lord. Many days, she ate only one meal so her family could have all the food they needed. She watched her husband take odd jobs here and there just to make ends meet. Dianna spent weekends at the laundromat because she did not have a washer or a dryer. She fought the spirit of discouragement on her knees.

She knew in her heart God would supply their needs, but she had to keep telling her head. Dianna faithfully followed the teaching of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Never stop praying” (NLT). Her wait didn't end because she prayed, but her resolve strengthened, helping her to face each day.

Misconception #4: If I am waiting, I must not have enough faith. This was the lie I believed as we agonized over Scott's declining health. His faith is quiet and personal. As we lived out this mystery, I

watched his discreet faith become deathly silent. His attitude toward prayer and the things of God grew cynical.

While Scott's faith is quiet, mine is vocal. When I wasn't serving or teaching at church, I was leading women's conferences and writing devotions and book contributions. My prayer life and Bible study were more than routine. Each morning, I had, and still have, a standing appointment with the Lord. Certainly I was doing enough work for the kingdom to get God's attention concerning Scott's health. All of this surely proved my faith was strong enough for the two of us and was worthy of a little healing.

What was I doing wrong? Was God holding my past against me? Had I not done enough to earn His favor? Sometimes waiting has less to do with the strength of your faith and more to do with the perfection of God's timing.

Here's the thing—I *should* have prayed and read my Bible, but not to work my way back into God's good graces. He is a gracious and merciful God. My praying and Scripture reading do not make Him more gracious. Somewhere along the way, I'd convinced myself otherwise. God makes us wait at times so we can glean valuable lessons. But He never does so out of spite. This is something David taught me as I continued to wait for God to heal my husband.

Misconception #5: If I am waiting, I must not be working hard enough. We will look further into David's wait from the pasture to the palace in the upcoming chapters, but I want to remind you now of a significant point concerning David's kingship. David did not ask to be king. David did not dream of being king. He wasn't born into a royal family line from which he would naturally

be appointed king. God chose David to be king. It is possible you and I could find ourselves waiting for something we never desired but God desires for us. He knows better than we do what we need to fulfill what He's called us to do.

***Waiting well pushes through the pause
by doing what we know to do.***

David had twenty years to work through his wait. Boy, did he work! Read his psalms to feel the agony of his wait as he cried out to God, "How long?" David worked hard, obeyed God, and ran from an enemy. His wait wasn't easy, but he pushed through the difficulties by doing what he knew to do: tend sheep, serve faithfully, and obey God patiently.

In each circumstance, these individuals sought God through prayer. They asked hard questions when they didn't understand His ways. We see that God may not have ended their waits, but He responded with loving faithfulness to all their needs.

FASTPASS, PLEASE

A few years ago, our family took a vacation to *the place where dreams come true*, Disney World. To prepare for the trip, I read websites and blogs and interviewed Disney World experts (aka, friends who call Disney World their favorite place on earth).

In my research, I discovered something called a FastPass, which is a printable ticket that gives you access to the most popular rides without having to wait in long lines. You get a ticket ahead of time,

allowing you to go to the front of the line at an appointed time. It is ideal for girls like me who don't like to wait.

Each evening, my family would map out our ride plan. When the park opened the next morning, we would rush (notice that we rushed) to the FastPass machine. Our ride plan could not have worked out any better, but of course we were at Disney World, where dreams come true.

Real life, though an adventure, is far from Disney World's Adventureland. Too often, we want a FastPass straight through God's pauses to move directly to His plan. God seldom hands out passes so you can avoid the wait and skip to the front of the line. That's not a bad thing, as painful as it is at the time. A rush through the wait has the potential to stunt our spiritual growth and dull our senses to what God wants us to learn as a result of our wait. As the apostle James tells us:

Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way. (1:2-4 THE MESSAGE)

James advises those who follow Jesus not to take the FastPass through tests and challenges. He says that a pause will actually work in our favor. Our faith will mature, and we will become well-developed women of God, ready for all the good works He

has prepared for us. God is the creator of time. We can trust His pauses to be purposeful and perfectly arranged. God will make the most of our pause, and we should too.

As “those who wait,” we find ourselves in great company. Noah waited 120 years for the flood. Abraham and Sarah waited nearly a hundred years to become parents. Jesus waited thirty years to start His public ministry. These and countless others waited on God and in the wait experienced Him in remarkable and miraculous ways.

I know what you are thinking: *But he was Noah. They were Abraham and Sarah. And He was Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God. They are all in the Bible.* Rest assured, they are indeed all in the Bible, but not because of their perfection in waiting. All had moments when they questioned God. Not one was superhuman. They were men and women like you and me, but each was willing to wait and do the work necessary for God’s plan to come to fulfillment.

Waiting isn’t meant to be a grueling process. What if we view it as a pause or an interlude, a place we can experience the peace of God while He works in us so He can work through us? He is actively working while we wait—a promise that never disappoints in the end—and that work sometimes gets personal.

THIS PRINCIPLE IN THEIR PAUSE

Ashley easily became derailed from everyday life as she hurried to make sure everything was “just right” for her Bible study. She was sure of God’s tug on her heart to teach and a bit confused when

the class had to be canceled, but she realized she had rushed rather than rested in God's timing.

Samantha could have become entangled by the everyone-is-getting-married season of life. She asked herself the hard questions, prayed, and invited others to pray for her also. Samantha fought to keep the Person of her faith front and center in her wait.

Dianna waited for God to provide as she prayed. He proved faithful Jesus's words in Matthew 6:11, "Give us today our daily bread." Each day, her family had what they needed. She was fervent in her prayers, so why was God allowing things to be so hard? She wasn't opposed to the testing of her faith, but it seemed God was tightening the screws, and at times seemed unfair.

Our story: We started this health journey hopeful. *Scott will go to the doctor, get some medicine, and everything will be fine.* Our hope diminished quickly when the medicines were ineffective and Scott's condition worsened. Scott spent the better part of the year lost in the maze of various doctors who prescribed various medications. The ride left us weary and certain of one thing: our future was uncertain.

THIS PRINCIPLE IN YOUR PAUSE

Now it's your turn. Use the "Worth the Wait" pages in chapter 10 to examine your current wait in light of the lessons outlined in this chapter. Here are some prompts to help you get started:

Do I really believe that God is good and His blessings are not dependent on my "works"?

In what ways am I rushing through my wait? What *misconception* resonates most with me?

Misconception #1: I must not have heard God correctly.

Misconception #2: I must desire something not in God's will for my life.

Misconception #3: I must not be praying enough.

Misconception #4: I must not have enough faith.

Misconception #5: I must not be working hard enough.

Digging Deeper with David: Psalm 13

Read Psalm 13.

A wait doesn't sound terribly awful in the beginning. But as time passes, we become antsy and even question God about the length of our wait.

In the Principle in Your Pause section for the introduction, I asked you to write details about your current wait, including how long you have been waiting. Can we all agree that these are difficult seasons? Our emotions are up, down, and all around like an amusement park roller coaster. Spiritually speaking, we trust God one day and doubt Him the next. The "how longs" can even wear us down physically. This is where we find David.

It's undetermined when David wrote Psalm 13, but his words give us a snapshot of his circumstances. David, living in a *how long* season, was at his wit's end.

How many times did David ask God "how long"? _____

Can you hear the desperation in David's voice? Read verses 1–2 out loud for greater impact. I love that David asked these questions. Because he asked, you and I can feel the freedom to ask too.

LIVING "HOW LONG"

When I was a little girl, my daddy had a talk with my brother and me. "One day your momma will not be able to brush her hair and she will

need help getting dressed. Her fingers will become crooked, making it difficult to do everyday, simple things. She has a disease called arthritis.” I couldn’t imagine this ever being a reality. My momma was a strong woman who loved the Lord and could do anything. And I knew God. He healed. And He would heal my momma. So at eight years old, I began to faithfully pray and believe that God would indeed heal my mother.

Like David, I tried to depend on God but sometimes cried out for answers. I was sure He could give this arthritis to someone else. There weren’t immediate answers to my questions and cries, but leaning on God’s strength made the “how long” bearable and my young faith stronger.

As our heavenly Father, God expects us to cry out to Him. He longs to lift the burden of our how long. The burden is lifted when we cast our cares and concerns on Him.

Read 1 Peter 5:7.

Why should we cast our cares on God? _____

What cares and anxieties of your current wait can you cast on God?

PRAYING IN "HOW LONG"

As the years passed, I never stopped praying for God to heal my mother. Praying made my young faith strong. Sadly, the longer I

waited, the less I prayed. I remember being anxious, wondering why He was taking so long. Even through my anxiousness and wondering, it never occurred to me that He would choose not to heal her.

Despite his anxious heart, David's spiritual response to pray superseded his natural instinct to doubt. He directed his fretful and question-filled thoughts to God. David's natural instinct had become spiritual. He knew praying would, in time, bring peace of mind.

Read Philippians 4:6–7.

In what types of situations should we pray? What happens when we pray?

Through prayer, our natural instinct becomes spiritual. This transformation of thinking and responding enables us to dwell in our "how long" with hope for deliverance. Our response to this new hope is the impulse to praise. Yes, you can praise God in a season of waiting, no matter how long.

PRAISING IN "HOW LONG"

In just a few short verses, David's prayer changes from *how long* to *hallelujah*. Through prayer, David remembered God's past faithfulness, encouraging him to trust in God's future provision. Had his situation changed? Had his enemy suddenly decided to

surrender? No. David was not delivered from the situation, but he was released from its despair. His anxiety was replaced with a new song of praise.

Read Psalm 40:3.

Who provided David with a new song? _____

As we pray, God will not only guard our mind and heart with peace, but He will also put a hymn of praise on our lips. Peace and praise produce endurance and unity with God, making a waiting period worthy of praise.

Are you living in the unbearable days of “how long”? Maybe like David you feel God has abandoned you. Praying and praising will not only make the long wait bearable, but they will also cause your faith to flourish. Your relationship with God will grow stronger even if your situation doesn’t change.

Write verse 5 in the space below. Take a moment to read it aloud as a prayer to God.

We can trust God in our “how long” waiting period. He will sustain us until He is ready to deliver us. Oh, and we can be confident that our deliverance will be perfectly timed.