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WHEN GOD'S TIMING IS TAKING TOO LONG *(Some words to think about during the pandemic)*

We all want good things to happen in our lives, but too often we want it now ... not later. When it doesn't happen that way, we're tempted to ask, "When, God, when?" Most of us need to grow in the area of trusting God instead of focusing on the "when" question. If you're missing joy and peace, you're not trusting God. If your mind feels worn out all the time, you're not trusting God.

The tendency to want to know about everything that's going on can be detrimental to your Christian walk. Sometimes knowing everything can be uncomfortable and can even hurt you. We often spend a large part of our lives being impatient, frustrated, and disappointed because there were things we didn't know. But God teaches us to leave things alone and quit feeling that we need to know everything. It's important to trust the One who knows all things and accept that some questions may never be answered. We prove that we trust God when we refuse to worry.

"Let go and let God" is one of my favorite expressions. Only when we're willing to say, "God, I can't figure this out, so I'm going to trust you to give me the insight that will set me free," can we be comfortable in spite of not knowing. Trusting God often requires not knowing how God is going to accomplish what needs to be done and not knowing when he will do it. It's often said that God is never late, but generally he isn't early either. Why? Because he uses times of waiting to stretch our faith in him and to bring about change and growth in our lives.

Wait with Patience

We spend a lot of time in our lives waiting because change is a process. Many people want change, but they don't want to go through the waiting process. But the truth is, waiting is a given – we are going to wait. The question is, are we going to wait the wrong or right way? If we wait the wrong way, we'll be miserable; but if we decide to wait God's way, we can become patient and enjoy the wait. It takes practice, but as we let God help us in each situation, we develop patience, which is one of the most important Christian virtues. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit (see *Galatians 5:22*). It's developed only under trial, so we must not run from difficult situations. *But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing* (James 1:4).

As we develop patience, the Bible says we finally feel completely satisfied – lacking nothing. Even our relationship with God involves progressive changes. My relationship with God is so much different now than it was in the early days of being a pastor. It's not nearly as emotionally exciting ... and yet it's better. Every change I've gone through has made me more mature, solid and well-grounded. We learn to trust God by going through many experiences that require trust. By seeing God's faithfulness over and over, we let go of trusting ourselves, and gradually we place our trust in him. Looking at it like this, it's easy to see how timing plays an important part in learning to trust God. If he did everything we asked for immediately, we would never grow and develop. Timing and trust work side by side.



Accept God's Timing

God gives us hopes and dreams for certain things to happen in our lives, but he doesn't always allow us to see the exact timing of his plan. Although frustrating, not knowing the exact timing is often what keeps us going. There are times when we might give up if we knew how long it was going to take, but when we accept God's timing, we can learn to live in hope and enjoy our lives while God is working on our problems. We know that God's plan for our lives is good, and when we entrust ourselves to him, we can experience total peace and happiness.

Learn to Rely on God

Proverbs 16:9 says, *we can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps*. In Proverbs 20:24 it says, *The Lord directs our steps, so why try to understand everything along the way?* When God directs our steps, he sometimes leads us in ways that don't make sense to us so we're not always going to understand everything. If we try to reason out everything, we will experience struggle, confusion and misery – but there is a better way. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take*. This sounds so simple, yet too many people make the mistake of trying to figure everything out themselves. Most of us have spent our lives trying to take care of ourselves, but when we accept Christ as our Savior, we must learn to entrust our lives to his care. When we do, we can say with the psalmist, *I am trusting you, O Lord, saying, "you are my God!" My future is in your hands...* Psalm 31:14-15).

When we humble ourselves by saying, "God, I don't know what to do, but I'm trusting you," God gets in gear to help us. God won't allow us to succeed at anything unless we're leaning and relying on him. But *when we humble ourselves under the mighty power of God, at the right time he will lift us up*. (1 Peter 5:6). The "right time" is God's time – when God knows we're ready, not when we think we're ready. The sooner we understand and accept that, the sooner God can work his plan in our lives.

God causes things to happen at exactly the right time! Our job is not to figure out when, but to make up our mind that we won't give up until we cross the finish line and are living in the radical, outrageous blessings of God! The more we trust Jesus and keep our eyes focused on him, the more life we'll have. Trusting God brings life. Believing brings rest. So, let's stop trying to figure everything out, and let God be God in our lives!

Let God's peace and happiness be with you today and always!