

Waiting for Prayer to be Answered

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Date: 24 May 2020

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[0 : 00] I don't know about you but I hate waiting, I hate having to queue, I hate traffic jams, I hate being put on hold if I'm phoning a call centre or something.

And I really hate that music that's supposed to make me not mind about having to wait. I hate the sense of not knowing the outcome of worrying situations.

To be honest I hate any awkward stuff being left unresolved. I don't suppose people have ever particularly enjoyed waiting.

My guess is that our own digital generation has become the worst at doing it. Basically because we now expect everything to be instant.

Our online culture has shaped us into a mindset of having everything on demand. We've lost the art of waiting. Not just waiting but waiting creatively.

[1 : 02] Yeah okay I know that's a bit of a weird term perhaps but I think that creative waiting is probably an important dynamic when it comes to understanding what Jesus was saying about praying.

So he said knock and the door will be opened. Now there's three things going on there. First there's the knocking.

And then there's the opening. But in between those two there's the waiting. And that's the hard bit.

And I think we need to understand it properly. Because when we think about waiting. I guess we probably naturally think it means doing nothing.

Just passively hanging around while nothing much happens. That's not the sort of waiting that goes with prayer. Waiting in prayer is not passive.

[2 : 03] It's active and it's creative. The prophet Isaiah wrote. But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings like eagles. Now what can an eagle show us? How might it help us to understand what it means to wait creatively on God in prayer?

I don't really know much about ornithology. But apparently eagles can often be seen flying around mountains. Because that's where they get the best air currents.

The upward shape of the ground helps to produce strong upward drafts of air. And once an eagle catches one of those, it can ride up and over the mountain.

Now think about that. The very obstacle the eagle wants to get past can actually play a part in finding the power to rise above it.

[3 : 09] Our circumstances, including our difficulties, can produce the updraft for our thoughts to set our minds on things above.

Now Paul talks about this in Colossians when he says, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. So in practical terms then, to actively wait on God involves filling your mind with the truth about God's character, especially as it pertains to your particular situation.

Now it may take a bit of practice to deliberately set your mind on anything except your problems. But in your waiting, between the knocking and the opening, you can use your worry to generate reminders to set your mind on things above.

Why not give it a go? So if you're waiting with a sense of worry over health, each time you get that nervous feeling about the situation, allow it to prompt you towards thinking about the scriptures and stories that describe God as a healer, as the One who created your body and who promises resurrection.

or if you're waiting and worrying over making ends meet, immerse yourself in the truth that God promises to take care of his children, or if you're waiting on direction for your life or for a specific situation, dwell on the fact that God has promised to guide us.

[4 : 52] You get the picture. Jesus says that in praying, in bringing our needs to God, we are to knock. That is, we're not to just sit back, but to commune with God actively and expectantly, and indeed persistently, to seek and to go on seeking, persevering in prayer.

Remember that a river cuts through rock, not because of one blast of power, but because of its persistence. And it's in the waiting that God can and does move.

We're not called to actually open the doors ourselves, mind. It's God who does that. And one last thought.

When you're on this side of the door, you can't see what's on the other side of it. But the one who promises to do the opening can.

And who knows what surprises he has in store.