

GOD'S WAITING ROOM

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Text: Psalms 130:1-6

Psychologist Kim Hall writes, “People seem to believe that they have an inalienable right to be happy—‘I want what I want and I want it now.’ No one wants to wait for anything and, for the most part, no one has to anymore. Waiting is interpreted as pain. ... People walk into my office and say they are Christians, but I see no difference except that they want to be happy and now expect God to make it so.

The problem is that, in this country, you can have what you want when you want it most of the time. ... People like the fact that they can buy a 50-foot tree and instantly plant it in their yard. Why on earth would anyone want to wait on relationships or wait on God?”

-- Psychologist Kim Hall, interviewed in *The Door* (Sept.-Oct. 1992). *Christianity Today*, Vol. 37, no. 9.

Waiting on God isn't discussed very much, but it's done quite often. We don't like to admit that we're waiting on God—maybe we think someone will doubt our prayer life or faith because we didn't get an instant answer. But the fact remains that often we are left in God's waiting room—just waiting. For the human mind it can be maddening.

However, there is a way we can survive the waiting room with our nerves intact. We can do it by understanding that God's waiting room is much like other waiting rooms that we have encountered. Consider a few simple *observations* about waiting rooms that have come to me over the years. The first is kind-of obvious.

I. WAITING ROOMS ARE DESIGNED FOR WAITING.

A. However, the last place we feel comfortable is in a place of inaction.

In hospitals, as in other places, the personnel often offer coffee, drinks and sometimes-even food to those who are waiting in order to make them more comfortable. There are magazines to read and even TV's to watch. But does that really make us comfortable? Even with those amenities, who would chose to spend their off day in a waiting room?

The Psalmist expressed his uncomfortable feelings when he wrote in Psalms 130:6, “My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning....” (NIV)

When our desire to hear from God is that strong, we want to do something in hopes that God will respond. But what we must do is show faith and wait.

I like what G. Campbell Morgan said about waiting on God. “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 command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given.”

--www.sermonillustrations.com 5/16/00

But how can we just wait? What if...?

B. Our greatest enemy in the waiting room is FEAR.

In Psalms 46:10 the Lord says, "Be still, and know that I am God..."

When you're in God's waiting room there's nothing to be gained in rushing about and trying everything under the sun—you're in the waiting room—*be still and rest in knowing that the Lord is God.* “He will never leave you or forsake you!”

Someone said, “Never think that God's delays are God's denials. Hold on; hold fast; hold out.”

II. WAITING ROOMS ARE WHERE WE HOPE AND PRAY FOR THE BEST.

A. It takes faith to hope when all we see is the unknown.

Some may think that there is no faith in hoping but really they go hand-in-hand.

Look at what Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is being sure of **what we hope for** and certain of what we do not see.” *(NIV) bold added*

B. It takes faith to wait on God in prayer when what we want to do is take action.

■It’s been said that, “In prayer, we are aware that God is in action and that when the circumstances are ready, when others are in the right place, and when our hearts are prepared, he will call us into the action. Waiting in prayer is a disciplined refusal to act before God acts.”

-- Eugene Peterson, *Leadership*, Vol. 8, no. 2.

III. WAITING ROOMS ARE WHERE WE ARE REMINDED THAT GOD IS IN CONTROL.

A. It’s harsh but simple, in the waiting room we either, grow up and go on or we give up and fall apart.

“Second only to suffering, waiting may be the greatest teacher and trainer in godliness, maturity, and genuine spirituality most of us ever encounter.”

-- Richard Hendrix, *Leadership*, Vol. 7, no. 3.

B. We must chose to trust God because He is God and for no other reason.

Max Lucado writes, “Don’t go to God with options and expect him to choose one of your preferences. Go to him with empty hands—no hidden agendas, no crossed fingers, nothing behind your back. Go to him with a willingness to do whatever he says. If you surrender your will, then he will ‘equip you with everything good for doing his will’ (Heb. 13:21).” (Lucado, 104)

CONCLUSION

In his book *Waiting: Finding Hope Where God Seems Silent* (InterVarsity, 1991), Ben Patterson...tells a story from his personal life:

"In the summer of 1988, three friends and I climbed Mount Lyell, the highest peak in Yosemite National Park. Two of us were experienced mountaineers; two of us were not. I was not one of the experienced two. ... The climb to the top and back was to take the better part of a day due, in large part, to the difficulty of the glacier that one must cross to get to the top. ... As the hours passed, and we trudged up the glacier, the two mountaineers opened up a wide gap between me and my less-experienced companion. Being competitive by nature, I began to look for short cuts I might be able to take to beat them to the top. I thought I saw one to the right of an outcropping of rock--so I went up, deaf to the protests of my companions. ...

"Thirty minutes later I was trapped in a cul-de-sac of rock atop the Lyell Glacier, looking down several hundred feet of a sheer slope of ice, pitched at a forty-five degree angle. ... I was only ten feet from the safety of a rock. But one little slip and I wouldn't stop sliding until I had landed in the valley floor about fifty miles away! ... I was stuck and I was scared" (pp. 100-101).

Patterson's words are non-religious ways of describing the predicament that more than a few of us fall into. People get stuck because they're competitive; they want to make an impression. They think they have all of life under control, so they take short cuts to beat other people. They take the right-hand turn around an outcropping of rock, suspecting that at the end there will be nothing but joy and roses. Instead, they find themselves stuck.

Back to Ben Patterson, who was stuck and scared: "It took an hour for my experienced climbing friends to find me. Standing on the rock I wanted to reach, one of them leaned out and used an ice axe to chip two little footsteps in the glacier. Then he gave me the following instructions: 'Ben, you must step out from where you are and put your foot where the first foothold is. ... Without a moment's hesitation swing your other foot across and land it in the next step. [Then] ... reach out and I will take your hand, and I will pull you to safety. ... But listen carefully: As you step across, don't lean into the mountain! If anything, lean out a bit. Otherwise, your feet could fly out from under you, and you will start sliding down.' "

Patterson says, "When I'm on the edge of a cliff, my instinct is to lie down and hug the mountain, to become one with it, not lean away from it! But that was what my good friend was telling me to do as I stood trembling on that glacier. I looked at him real hard. ... For a moment, based solely on what I believed to be true about the good will and good sense of my friend, I decided to say no to what I felt ... to lean out, step out, and traverse the ice to safety. It took less than two seconds to find out if my faith was well founded. It was" (pp. 101-102).

-- Gordon MacDonald, "Repentance," Preaching Today, Tape No. 121.

Too often we want to rush ahead of the Lord and we end up in a most uncomfortable situation. "If we had only waited," we say later, "God wouldn't have had to come to our rescue."

If we will wait on the Lord we will spend more time rejoicing and less time being rescued.

References

Lucado, Max (1985). *On the anvil*. Wheaton, ILL: Tyndale House Pub.