

Hope...for the uprooted woman

What Are You Waiting For? by Ann Kelley



I'm writing this as the 2020 pandemic continues its rampage into 2021. In the U.S. it's been nearly a year of struggle, heartache, grief, uncertainty, and WAITING. Waiting for a vaccine. Waiting for schools and businesses to reopen. Waiting to gather freely again with others. Waiting for life to return to normal. Waiting for the pandemic to end.

In this waiting, many of my sources of identity have been cut off. The community involvements that helped to define me are on hold as I isolate at home. The spontaneous exchange of ideas with my colleagues at the office is no longer possible. Bouts of loneliness and yearning are not infrequent. Simply buying groceries at my local market feels like I'm entering enemy territory. Armed with a mask and hand sanitizer, I quickly find the few items on my list while making tactical moves to maintain social distance from others and to check out as quickly as possible.

I know my suffering pales in comparison to the suffering of others, but it is suffering none the less.

Plus, it's become all too obvious to me that I've bought into our impatient, instant culture that rebels against having to wait. I don't WANT to wait. Every day I do what I can to AVOID waiting. To ease my impatience, I turn to my iPhone to distract me from the reminder that I am waiting.

What are you waiting for, God? When will you bring an end to this waiting?

A thought keeps intruding on my mind. As the waiting drags on, is God trying to get my attention? Does He have a purpose for this waiting period?

Is God waiting for me?

Waiting for me to open to Him and allow Him to deepen my faith in a time of uncertainty?

Waiting for me to relax my grip of control and surrender all to Him in a decision of total trust?

Waiting for me to have eyes to see that my source of identity has been wrapped up in what I do, how I look, and how others see me?

Waiting for me to embrace my identity as His beloved child—accepted and loved as I am?

I've learned that God doesn't force His way into my heart and mind. He waits. He waits for an invitation.

What would happen to our level of anxiety, stress, boredom, and unhappiness if we invited God *into* those struggles and invited Him to be our Source of peace and patience while we wait, our Source of strength while we persevere, our Source of love and gentleness while we reach out, and our Source of trust while we live each day?

Let's invite Him in and find out!

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Let Your Waiting Say, 'I Love You Lord' by Jani Ortland

We all struggle with questions like, "How long, Lord, will you ask me to wait? Why me? Why this? Why now?" As we press God for an answer, we try

to remind ourselves that we belong to the God "who acts for those who wait for him" (Isaiah 64:4). But we feel that this waiting is forced upon us, and we wrestle with it. Wouldn't a good God lift this oppressive burden? Why doesn't he? When will he?

Patient in Our Waiting

That's where patience comes in — patience both with our own personal faith and with the God who calls us into this patience-producing faith.

Patience is not quite the same as waiting. While waiting is something we *do*, patience is something we *offer*. We wait because we must — we have little choice in the matter. But patience is our gift to our Father while we wait. In the silence, in the waiting, patience chooses to declare, "Lord, I love you. I know I don't love you as I ought, but I want to love you more than your answer to my prayers. I will try to offer you my patient heart as long as you ask me to wait on this."

Patience proves our love for God and our trust that his plan is worth waiting for. Patience offers to our heavenly Father a calm heart. We repent of our agitation and annoyance at his seeming silence. We look calmly into the darkness around us, and we choose to believe what he tells us about himself, resting in the knowledge that truly he does see, he does know, he does care, despite how it appears in our present situation.

Love Lived Out

Patience is a beautiful way to live out our steadfast love for God. Paul tells us that real love is patient (1 Corinthians 13:4), and so we love God through our patience as we

- tenaciously keep praying for that wandering child,
- calmly absorb the dreaded diagnosis,
- courageously bear up as we face our grievous goodbye,
- diligently think through that unavoidable debt,
- faithfully persevere through that less-than-exciting job, or
- quietly accept God's plan for our future, even when it differs from our dreams.

All We Need

Patience is *loving* God enough to say, "Thank you," even for the difficult things. True patience, throughout the life-altering and soul-shattering experiences between birth and heaven, is a humble gift we offer up to God. And he is the one who enables us to offer him that gift.

Paul tells us that it is the might of his glory that strengthens us with all power "for all endurance and patience with joy" (Colossians 1:11). Ultimately, patience is the risen Christ living in us as we proclaim, "If I have Jesus, I have all that I need."

Jani Ortland (@RenewalM) is the wife of Ray Ortland, serves as vice president of Renewal Ministries, and podcasts at He Restores My Soul. Used by permission. Read the entire blog at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/let-your-waiting-say-i-trust-you>

Seven Ways to Feel More in Control of Your Life by Anthony Rao & Paul Napper

Developing greater agency can help you make important life decisions and feel less overwhelmed, stuck, and lost

(Editor's note: A prolonged period of waiting can easily lead to a sense that we have no control over our lives. The authors of *The Power of Agency: The 7 Principles to Conquer Obstacles, Make Effective Decisions, and Create a Life on Your Own Terms* suggest that there are things we can do while we wait. These actions we can take on behalf of our well-being are what the authors call "agency." If you are a follower of Christ, you can add *guidance by the Holy Spirit* to the authors' reference to intuition.)

Control stimuli

Agency begins with what you let into your mind—meaning what comes in from your environment. If you are lacking agency, it's likely your attention is being hijacked and you need to figure out how to restore it.

To help you increase your agency, practice going to quiet and screen-free spaces to escape overstimulation. That may mean spending time in nature [or] turning off your phone notifications while at work.

Associate selectively

Set boundaries with difficult people, disentangle yourself from negative online interactions, and be more conscious of how you might be vulnerable to "groupthink"—pressures to behave or think in ways that are contrary to your values.

Instead, surround yourself with friends, family, and communities who encourage you to reach your full potential, nurture your talents, affirm your values and difficult decisions, and give you a reality check when you've behaved badly or are stuck in negative thinking.

Move

Physical movement, along with proper rest and nutrition, puts your body and mind into balance, giving you greater motivation, strength, and stamina.

Position yourself as a learner

People with high levels of agency are continually learning more and expanding their capacity to learn by adopting a more open, collaborative approach to everything in life. This requires nurturing your curiosity and allowing yourself to explore new ideas, skills, and people.

Manage your emotions and beliefs

Increasing your awareness of how your emotions and beliefs drive your thinking, influence your behavior, and affect your judgment will help you navigate life with greater confidence. While uncovering these inner thoughts and emotions may take effort, being more self-reflective helps you keep grounded by slowing down your thinking process.

Check your intuition

Think of intuition as deep inner knowledge that is comprised of millions of data points that our brains have observed over the course of our lives. You can get better at using intuition to inform your decision-making if you learn to quiet your mind, develop a greater awareness of what you're thinking and feeling, and listen to your body.

Deliberate, then act

When making an important decision, it's helpful to stop and deliberate first. Put yourself in an environment conducive to reflection and exploration, and make sure you have time and your emotions are calm. Then, focus on the issue at hand enough to clarify your primary objective and what is at stake. Asking open-ended questions and gathering pertinent facts also helps.

Set your plan aside and come back a while later to reassess it, making changes as necessary.

Excerpt from *Seven Ways to Feel More in Control of Your Life*. Read the entire article at https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_to_feel_more_in_control_of_your_life

Following God's Invitation to Wait by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

Invitation

To let go of my need to control people and circumstances so I can trust that God is at hand and be present in the moment as it unfolds.

Scripture

"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him" (Ps 62:5). "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him" (Ps 37:7).



Roadblocks

- An inability to lay down my agenda and go with what is happening.
- An addiction to hurry.
- Cramming too many things into the time available.
- Unrealistic deadlines.
- The inability to take the long view.
- The inability to see the present as more than a crack between the past and the future.

Awareness

- Notice when I get impatient and stay in the moment with God.
- Become aware of expectations for the day.
- What happens when my expectations are not met?
- Notice what I do when I am not in control.

Practices

- *Practice the presence of God* in the moment, which can be a way of opening myself to God. This practice invites me to trust that God has every moment in his unhurried hands.
- *Say a breath prayer*, which is a prayer of simple trust that opens me to God. I breathe in the adequacy of God and breathe out my impatience.

Calhoun, A. A. (2011). *Invitations from God: Accepting God's Offer to Rest, Weep, Forgive, Wait, Remember and More* (The Transforming Resources Set). IVP Books.

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Waiting on God by Susan Miller

It's hard to wait, isn't it? Even when you have a strong faith. Even when you trust God. Even when you know and believe God's promises.

I know. I've done my fair share of waiting over the years. I've waited on life or death situations, for physical and emotional healing, for relationships to mend, for marriages to restore, and for suffering to end. I've grappled, reasoned, bargained, begged, and pleaded with God as I waited, hoped, and prayed.

You may be worn out and weary of waiting . . . *for something, or someone, to change. For circumstances to get better. For a solution to a family issue. For the doctor's diagnosis. For the next paycheck to come.*

Or maybe you're simply waiting . . . *to fit in, to make friends, to feel at home, to be included, to be accepted, to be seen.*

We don't understand why it takes so long for all the pieces of life to come together again or the answers we want to come. Trust me, I know from experience that the pieces of life will come together—in God's perfect timing, not ours. The answer will come—God's answer, although it may not always be the answer we want.

Above all else, trust our sovereign God. He is faithful in all things—always, forever, and no matter what. Even if you don't understand at the time or get what in the heck He's doing.

This much I do know. It's during the waiting – during the space between the now and then – that much is learned. God's waiting room is not a bad place to be. When I am waiting, He takes me to a deeper level of trusting Him. I hang out in His word and hang on to His promises. He brings me to a point where I have to let go of all my expectations and wants and cling only to Him.

He teaches me a whole lot about patience, and about what I can control and what I can't. So many times in my impatience I try to run ahead of God to fix, change, manage, plan or orchestrate the results I want, rather than waiting on Him. I short-circuit what God is going to do by doing what I think is best. He is all-knowing and His ways are not my ways.

I've learned that at the end of myself and my striving, is the beginning of a deeper yearning for Him.

Be encouraged as you wait. You are not alone. There are many of us waiting right there with you.



Join or lead an ONLINE *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* study group!

When you're new to your community, it's common to feel disconnected and isolated without local friendships and support. Then, when your new community is practicing social distancing and many public places are closed, anxiety ramps up and your sense of isolation may be magnified.

An *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* group gets the conversation going about emotional realities, practical ideas, and paths to spiritual growth as you begin a new stage of life in a new town. Going through the study with others who understand what you're going through can become a life-line – especially during a pandemic.

For an online study, all you need is a copy of *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* by Susan Miller and the companion *Newcomer Study Guide*. **Get \$2.00 off when you buy them together.** Each online group will have a facilitator and will meet via an online meeting platform. For those interested in facilitating, Just Moved will provide guidance and encouragement. Learn more at justmoved.org/online-study-

