

Waiting on the Lord

Waiting on God in prayer is perhaps the most difficult part of prayer. We live in an instant age and we want everything NOW. We quickly grow impatient if we have to wait on anything or anyone, whether it's a slow computer, slowed freeway traffic, a long line at a checkout counter, or dawdling children. But the Bible calls us to a very different mindset and attitude regarding prayer. God wants to teach us to wait on Him, and to wait in the right way.

Biblical waiting is not merely biding our time mindlessly; it is not passive. Biblical waiting takes extreme effort, for our souls are lazy, impatient, distracted, and prone to quitting. The primary Hebrew word for *wait*, when speaking of waiting on the Lord, means *to bind together, to expect, to look, tarry, wait for*. To bind together . . . this could very well be the clue to why God calls us to wait upon Him in prayer. Our desires, hopes, expectations, and longings need to come to a single focus before the Lord. As the psalmist prayed in Psalm 86:11, "Unite my heart to fear Your Name" or "Give me an undivided heart." Waiting helps to do that work within us. But the word for *hope* in Hebrew can also mean *wait* or *trust*. And the word for *trust* is sometimes translated *hope*. These three words are used interchangeably in various translations. Perhaps after doing the following study you will begin to see why.

For each verse listed below, ask the following questions and make a list of the answers to question #1:

1. According to this verse HOW am I to wait?
2. Is this my normal experience in prayer?
3. Do you have any experience with this kind of waiting in your personal prayer life?
4. How can you practice this kind of waiting? What would it look like?
5. To which of your specific prayer requests do you need to apply the quality prescribed in that particular verse?

Psalm 25:5

Psalm 37:7-8; 40:1

Psalm 62:5 (3 things)

Psalm 130:5-6

Isaiah 26:8

Lamentations 3:24-26 (What are we to do while we wait? vs. 25)

Hosea 12:6

Take your list of how we are to wait and pray through it. Ask God to help you learn to wait on Him in these ways and to remind you of these things when you are praying. It is not so much the answer to our prayers that we need, but God that we need. When God comes into any given

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situation, everything changes. And often the answers we think we want aren't necessarily the best or the right remedy for the things we are praying for. So let prayer focus your mind and heart away from the situation and onto God. Seek HIM, not your answer. Ask for HIS solutions, HIS ways, HIS answer. In this way we open our hearts and minds to whatever adjustment He may want to make in us and to new possibilities that are outside our personal frame of reference.

I love Jehoshaphat's prayer when the Syrians came against him and he was very frightened: "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You." Read the whole of his prayer in II Chronicles 20:6-12. First, he focuses on God's character in vs. 6. Then he reminds himself and God of their history and who they are in vss. 7-9. In vss. 10-11 he tells God the problem at hand and of the injustice of the situation. Then he admits their weakness and utter dependence on God in vs. 12, ending with the above quote. This is a great model for our prayers! God's character, our relationship to Him, our problem, our utter dependence: This helps us ground our souls in Truth—the truth about God and ourselves.