As a culture, we are obsessed with speed. We give gold medals to the men and women who can run or swim the fastest. The Triple Crown of horse racing immortalizes the fastest horse in the country. We watch NASCAR races where drivers hurtle around an oval track at speeds approaching 190 mph. Computers boast faster processing abilities and lightning fast connections. We agonize if we have to spend extra time at the printer or copier.

Having grown up in Southern California, I honed my driving skills on the Los Angeles freeways. I always thought I was a fast driver. That was until I took our family on a road trip to the East Coast.

We discovered that the farther east you go, the lower the posted speed limit is. 75 mph in Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota. 65 after that. Not that it means anything, of course. People still drive whatever speed they like.

On the Pennsylvania Turnpike, the posted speed limit was 65 mph or even 55 in some places. However, I was rolling along at 70-75 mph and still couldn’t keep up with the flow of traffic. At that speed, it was also a bit disconcerting to look in the rear view mirror and see an 18-wheeler climbing up my backside while he was doing at least 80+.

As fast as Pennsylvanians drive, they cannot hold a candle to Carolina (both North &

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South) drivers. I was continually amazed when traffic on I-95 was moving at 80+mph in a 65mph zone. Semis, cars, everybody was flying. You quickly become a hazard if you are just driving the speed limit.

With this kind of emphasis on speed and quickness, it’s no wonder that we develop road rage when we cannot get to where we want to go and fast as we want to get there! You begin to understand why people go ballistic when they are told to “wait” or “yield.”

Knowing people’s aversion to waiting, amusement parks have developed a “fast pass” system whereby you can bypass the line for selected rides. You receive a pass that tells you what time you can ride the attraction. In the meantime, you can enjoy other attractions in the park. When you return, you can jump to the front of the line. Personally, I think it’s a great system, as long as I am the one cutting the line. But when I’ve been standing in line for 30, 45, or 60 minutes, I must say it irritates me to see all these other people zooming to the front.

Our obsession with speed makes it difficult to understand, let alone practice the instruction, “wait on the Lord.” It bothers us when we have to wait. It’s even worse when we have to wait on someone else to make a decision rather than be in charge ourselves.

I first became acquainted with the concept of waiting on the Lord a number of years ago. As a young ministerial intern, I was tagging along with my pastor learning and observing how he conducted hospital visits. On one such occasion we visited a man named Jeff.

Jeff lay on a gurney, waiting to be wheeled into the operating room for exploratory surgery. Life had not turned out as this 65-year-old gentleman had hoped.
His wife had died five years previously, he was forced into retirement before he was ready, and now this. After praying with him for a safe and successful surgery, my pastor said, “Well Jeff, now we have to wait on the Lord.”

To be honest, my first thought was not, “What a comforting and encouraging thought. Waiting on the Lord is the answer.” No, in reality, my initial thought was one of disgust, “What a cliché! What is that supposed to accomplish? That’s no comfort or encouragement. He probably thinks that waiting on God is a waste of time.”

A few weeks later, as I found myself sitting in my doctor’s waiting room, I began to reflect on that phrase, “Wait on the Lord” and my own frustration with waiting. You see, whenever I visit my doctor, I always set aside extra time for each visit. I generally have to sit in the waiting room before I’m summoned to be examined. And then I have to wait again in the examination room before the doctor comes in.

My wife recently took our two daughters to the doctor for a checkup. The last time they went, they waited for 45 minutes before seeing the doctor. As they took their seats in the waiting room, they started taking bets as to when their names would be called.

“It will be at least 20 minutes,” said one. “I see your 20 minutes, and raise you three songs on my iPod,” said the other. “I see your three songs, and raise you four emergency visits,” said the first. “I see your emergency visits, and raise you one screaming child,” said the second, as a mother with a crying baby entered the room.

Mortified, my wife told them to be quiet.

The waiting room is a land where time seemingly stands still. It is a place where life is put on hold. In my doctor’s office, it feels like hours have passed, and yet when I
look at my watch, it has been only 20 minutes. I’m tempted to think my watch stopped working. When we are in the waiting room, it seems as if progress had come to a screeching halt. We find ourselves going nowhere fast.

When I’m in the waiting room, it seems like I’m just hanging around waiting for something to happen. Since the doctor may come at any time, it’s not worth starting anything. I can’t settle down. I yawn and fidget. I flip through dated magazines, not bothering to get involved in any of the articles. Up till this I always had too little time. Now there is nothing but time. So many roads once, now so many culs de sac.²

Perhaps you feel like you are in the waiting room. Maybe one of your loved ones is ill and you’re praying that God would heal them. Perhaps you’re in a job situation that you consider unbearable and untenable, and yet you have no other choice than to endure it. Possibly you’re single, and you’re searching for Mr. or Mrs. “Right.”

Maybe your children are in preschool, and you can hardly wait for them to grow up so that you can be pardoned from the ball and chain years and have more freedom. Perhaps you’re a teenager and you just can’t wait until you learn how to drive or are old enough to move out on your own. Maybe it’s a family situation where your kids or your spouse is causing you grief and you are begging God to change them.

Perhaps you have just returned from the doctor on Friday afternoon. He said that they have some questions about the test results on your unborn baby, but that they won’t know any more until they run additional tests on Monday. You spend the weekend wondering, worrying, wishing, and waiting.

You feel like you are in the midst of a crisis, and it seems as if God has led you down a long hallway and has ushered you into a room with a blinking neon sign over it
that says, “WAITING ROOM.” And you enter that room, and you wait, and you wait, and you wait, and you wait, and . . . . Time, for you, has now stopped. It seems as if life has been put on terminal hold. The cobwebs are collecting. The computer hourglass has stopped turning. The elevator music is stuck in a continuous boring loop. You have entered the waiting room and you have no idea how long you’ll be there.

Well-meaning friends stop by and say, “I’m so sorry. Wait for the Lord. Yes, wait for the Lord.” In your anguish and frustration, you feel like crying out, “How long, O Lord? When are you going to do something! I don’t know how much more I can take! I feel like this is all a big waste of time.”

Any time we enter the waiting room, we have an abundance of questions: Who? What? Why? How? How long? In God’s waiting room, on the coffee table by the door, there is a manual that helps us to understand the waiting room. It discusses many questions. What does it mean to wait? How do we do it? Who are we waiting for? Why are we waiting for him? What do we accomplish when we wait? What do we expect to happen? Is waiting on the Lord just a waste of time, or is it worth the time spent in the waiting room? Let’s examine the manual to see what it says about these questions.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “WAIT ON THE LORD?”

When we think of waiting, we usually think of waiting for time to pass. When we come to a red light, we wait for the light to turn green. If I want to watch the 6 o’clock news and it’s only 5:30, I wait for a half hour to pass. When my son was four years old, he desperately wanted to play baseball, but he had to wait until he was five to sign up for T-ball. If your son or daughter is 12 or 13 and they ask you for the keys to the car, you tell them to wait until they’re 16 and they can get their driver’s license. On a typical
family vacation, the question asked most often is “Are we there yet? When will we get there? How much longer?” Children often bombard their parents with a bazillion questions like, “How many more days until ________ (pick your choice—my birthday, Christmas, school’s out, swimming lessons, summer vacation, the camping trip, grandma comes to visit, we go to the baseball game)?” We wait for time to pass.

But waiting involves more than simply the passage of time. It also means to anticipate or to expect something to happen. Psalm 130:5-6 says, “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.” Waiting involves the essence of a person’s being, their very soul. Deep down in our souls, we look forward to something taking place.

My brother used to work the graveyard shift as a security officer. He said that the last few hours before sunrise seemed to drag on and on. And yet, he looked forward to the sunrise with great anticipation because he knew that when it rose, his shift would end and he could go home and get some sleep.

Some years ago, we were camping in Yosemite. We rose before dawn so that we could watch the sunrise in Yosemite Valley. As we stood in the meadow waiting in the cold, we anticipated the sun peeking over Half Dome and a glorious sunrise as its rays spread throughout the valley. As we waited for the early morning light, our thoughts turned to warmth and light. “It will be light soon. It will be warm again.”

In the same way, waiting on the Lord is more than just waiting for time to pass. Waiting involves anticipation and expectation.
Waiting also involves being confident of what God is going to do. Psalm 52:8-9 says, “But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever. I will give Thee thanks forever, because Thou hast done it, and I will wait on Thy name, for it is good, in the presence of Thy godly ones.” Waiting means enduring patiently in the confident hope that God will decisively act on our part.

Psalm 52 was written while David was being pursued by King Saul. 1 Samuel 22 tells the story about how David was betrayed and how he had to flee. In spite of that situation, David says in verses 8-9 of Psalm 52 that he will wait on the Lord. Not only will he wait, but he will trust in God’s lovingkindness and he will give thanks for what God will do in the future.

When we think of waiting, we think of just passively sitting back, waiting for something to happen. Waiting is something which happens to us, not something that we do. It is a passive activity. We stare at the clock as the minutes and hours tick by. We idly stare at the calendar as the days are checked off.

However, Scripture points out that waiting is active, rather than passive. As Lamentations 3:25 tells us, “The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the person who seeks him.”

Jeremy had been out of work for six months. After the initial shock of being laid off, he settled into the routine of resumes, interviews, and closed doors. After a couple of months, he began to feel sorry for himself and to lose hope. He knew that he had to wait on the Lord to provide a new job, but he was frustrated when one didn’t open up the first month.
During the interminable days of waiting, a friend explained that one of the ways that we wait for the Lord is by seeking him. He said that whenever we enter the waiting room, we need to spend time seeking God.

With that challenge, Jeremy decided that rather than indulge in self-pity, he would dive into God’s Word, looking for answers about his situation, about prayer, and about walking with God. In addition to the usual routine of resumes and interviews, he would use the time as a sort of mini-sabbatical, a time of learning and growth. Rather than whine and complain, he would spend time on his knees, pouring his heart out to God in prayer. He would use time to seek the Lord as he waited. When he returned to work, he would go with a greater sense of intimacy with God.

If you’re anything like me, waiting involves a great struggle, namely, being patient. When I have to wait in line at the bank or the grocery store, I look for the one that seems to be moving faster than my own, and I jump out of line into the other one. But when I discover that it is moving and I am now stalled, I jump back into line, hoping I don’t offend the people behind me who think I’ve lost my mind.

I’ve discovered that there is a great difference between waiting and waiting patiently. Psalm 37:7-8 talks about this struggle when it says, “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret, it leads only to evildoing.”

While we may agree with God that we will wait for him, it is extremely hard for us to be patient. Waiting chafes at us. We fidget and squirm to try to get out of the situation. A typical night at the family dinner table includes a million questions like, “Is
it time for dessert yet? Can I have it now? Why do I have to wait for everyone else to finish when I’m already done? Can I go watch TV now? Can I go back to my room to finish my homework?”

We also get into trouble when we begin to look around and compare ourselves with other people. We become envious and we worry. It bothers us that these people don’t have to wait. One of the great struggles is looking at our peers and seeing what they have and what we don’t have. We feel like saying, “God, it’s not fair that we have to put our dreams for ________ (home, career, family, children, finances, retirement, vacation, cars, promotion, etc.—you fill in the blank) on hold. Why can’t we be like them? Why do we have to wait when they don’t?!!”

God’s solution is for us to rest and to wait patiently for him. He wants us to stop comparing ourselves with others and to stop being envious of what they have. He will accomplish his plan for us in HIS time, not ours.

As you can see, any definition of waiting must contain five basic elements. Obviously, one is the passage of time. But waiting is more than that. It means having the expectation that God will do great things in your life and being confident that he will do what is best for you. It also means actively seeking him. Finally, it means being patient while he is working.

ANSWERING THE WHY QUESTION

A former professor of mine was fond of saying that until you answer the why question, the price is always too high. That’s true of waiting as well. Knowing what it means to wait on the Lord is not enough to motivate us into action. We must also understand why we should wait on him. Psalm 52:8-9 tells us that we are to “wait on Thy
name.” To us, a name doesn’t mean much. We pick names for our children on the basis of what sounds good with our last name. Or we pick a popular name, or the name of a famous person.

But in the Old Testament, a person’s name indicated their character. Over the past few years, I’ve been challenged and intrigued by the names of God. Each name reveals a new and different dimension of God’s character.

In Genesis 14, Abraham was returning from the war of the kings in which he rescued his nephew Lot. On the way back, he met Melchizedek, who was a priest of El Elyon, the “Most High God.” As a result of this encounter, Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the spoils and turned down a gift from the king of Sodom. When God promised that he would have a son, Abraham believed and took God at his word. Abraham has encountered the Most High God, and it transformed his life.

In Genesis 17, Abraham was facing an impossible situation. When Abraham was 75 years old, God promised that he would bless him and make a great nation. Yet at the age of 99 years old, Abraham is still waiting for God to keep his promise. When God reiterated his promise, he revealed himself to Abraham as El Shaddai, the “Almighty God” for whom nothing is impossible. Later, when the promise was given to Sarah, she laughed at the prospect of becoming pregnant at the age of 90. Yet God responded with the question, “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” The name, “God Almighty,” revealed to Abraham that nothing was too hard for God, even becoming a father in his old age.

In Genesis 22, God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham obeyed and as he prepared to make the sacrifice, an angel intervened, stopped him and
instead provided a ram for the sacrifice. God revealed himself as Jehovah-jireh, “the Lord will provide.” Abraham learned that God would provide for him and meet his needs.

In Exodus 3, at the burning bush, God revealed himself to Moses as YHWH, or Jehovah, the “I AM.” This name comes from the Hebrew verb, “to be,” and means, “the self-existent One who reveals himself.” This name helps us to know that God is eternal and that he communicates with men and women.

We could look at many other names of God and discover that he is loving, kind, faithful, just, true, and everlasting. While we wait, we can think about God’s name because it reveals his character. It lets us know that God is who he says he is and that he can be trusted.

What if we were in a situation that seems impossible and we felt like there’s no hope for the future? Knowing that God’s name is El Shaddai, “Almighty God,” can remind us that no problem is too hard for God. Corrie Ten Boom used to say that no matter how deep the pit, God was deeper still.

Knowing that God is Jehovah-jireh, “the Lord will provide,” can help us to understand that God will provide for and meet our every need, even in the midst of our loneliness and longing. Knowing that we serve the Most High God can help us resist the temptation to compromise our standards.

Knowing that God is kind and that he does whatever is best for us can help us cope with the illness or death of a loved one. Knowing that God is just can help us to endure a job situation where we are being discriminated against. We can wait on the Lord because he is true to his name.
We can also wait on God because he is the source of our security. In Psalm 62:5-6 David expresses it this way, “My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold I shall not be shaken.”

For David, a man involved in many battles, a rock and a stronghold were extremely important. They were his front line of defense. He was dependent on them for security. When he was behind the rock or inside the stronghold, he was safe from his enemies. He was safe as long as he took advantage of his defense system. Once he ventured outside the stronghold and in front of the rock, he was vulnerable to attack.

Just as the rock and the stronghold protected David in battle, so God is the source of our security when we face our daily battles. As long as we are depending on him for security, we are safe and we will not be shaken. But when we start depending on money, possessions, jobs, or relationships, we are on shaky ground.

Just north of Los Angeles is an amusement park known as Magic Mountain. In the park is an observation tower that rises into the sky. From the top of that tower you can look down at the park and the surrounding countryside. When it was being built, the designer had to insure that it could sustain and endure the force and shaking of an earthquake. So it was designed with a sway factor of 7 feet in either direction at its uppermost point. In the event of high winds or an earthquake, the tower can rock 14 feet back and forth! The tower will be shaken, but it will not crumble, because its foundation is secure.

In the same manner, the one who waits on God will not be shaken. He can go through a battle and endure great loss, but his foundation remains secure because it is founded on the Rock.

Mark S. Wheeler © 2008
John was diagnosed with cancer in February 1997. He endured a full round of chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery. While it was a stretching experience for him and his family, they came through it with their faith in tact. As he went to his final doctor’s appointment, he anticipated coming home with a clean bill of health. Instead, he got the troubling words on a Friday afternoon, “There’s something wrong with your blood count. We think you may have leukemia. We’d like to run some more tests on Monday.” That message plunged them into the vortex of another two-year cycle of radiation therapy, bone-marrow transplant, and medication for graph vs. host disease.

Throughout the four years of physical trials, this family learned to wait on the Lord and to trust him for the outcome.

THE RESULTS OF WAITING

Why bother waiting on the Lord? What happens when we wait for him? Scripture tells us that three benefits come to those who wait for the Lord. Psalm 145:14-16 describes the first of these benefits. “The Lord sustains all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to Thee, and Thou dost give them their food in due time. Thou dost open Thy hand, and dost satisfy the desire of every living thing.”

The first benefit is that God provides for and meets the needs of those who wait for him. He sustains and encourages. He gives them their food in due time. He opens his hand and satisfies the person’s desire. He meets each person’s daily needs.

Do these verses describe you as you sit in the waiting room? Fallen? Bowed down? Looking to God? If you are waiting on him, he will raise you up and meet your needs in his time. However, be very careful about setting time limits for God. God meets
our needs and answer our requests in his time, not ours. He operates on his schedule, not ours.

When we encounter a problem situation, we have to make a choice whether or not to wait on the Lord. When we choose not to wait on God, we become impatient and worry. We doubt that God is good and loving. We doubt his ability to provide for us and to solve our problems. When we respond like this, we are prime candidates for ulcers, migraine headaches, high blood pressure, and even heart attacks. This was certainly the case for Joyce.

Joyce never met a problem she couldn’t worry her way through. She worried about her kids, the rumors of layoffs at her husband’s architectural firm, and her mother’s failing health. She fretted and stewed about everything in her life. She had constant headaches and at her last checkup, her doctor informed her she had developed an ulcer. When asked how she was doing, she immediately listed a litany of problems. Her friends began to label her as a “whiner,” and stopped asking how she was.

We suffer physical problems when we take these burdens upon ourselves. God doesn’t want that for us. The second benefit that he wants to give us is refreshment. Isaiah 40:31 describes what God does for those who wait: “Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”

While people all around are collapsing due to exhaustion, the people who wait on the Lord will be refreshed. When your business associates suffer from ulcers due to worry, you can experience God’s peace if you wait on him. God can refresh and renew
those who are weary because he himself does not become tired or weary. And he wants to
give that refreshment to those who are willing to wait on him.

One of my greatest fears in waiting on the Lord is that I’ll come to the end of my
waiting period and discover that I wasted my time. I’ll find out that there was something
else I could have been doing.

The monster of impatience whispers, “You’re wasting your time. Get up and do
something. Why spend time praying? God’s not going to answer. If something is doing to
be done, it will be because you took matters into your own hands to made it happen.”

In spite of those fears and concerns, I take great comfort in the fact that God not
only provides for and refreshes those who wait on him, but he also promises that waiting
will be worth the time spent doing it.

In Psalm 25:3, David says confidently, “Indeed, none of those who wait for Thee
will be ashamed.”\textsuperscript{18} In this psalm, David is asking God to teach him his ways and to lead
him in truth. He confesses his dependence on God, and he asks God to protect, guide, and
pardon him. As he reflects on his request, he declares confidently that the time he has
spent with God has been worth whatever he sacrificed to do it. He knows that God will
not allow him to be ashamed.

There have been several times in my life where I have faced a problem or
circumstance that was bigger than my resources and one that I could not control.
Sometimes I have worried my way through them and been an emotional wreck at the
other end. At other times, I have done everything that I could do and then waited on God
for the outcome.
On one occasion, I was leading a team preparing to go to Russia for a short-term ministry trip. We had to raise $40,000 within 90 days. I told everyone that God was going to answer our prayers and not to worry about it. Then I went home and worried and prayed that God would bail me out.19

Hindsight tells me that I feel despondent, perform badly, and the future looks bleak when I take the pressure on myself and act impatiently as I worry and fret over the outcome. I’m often ashamed by my behavior and outlook when I don’t trust God. Hindsight also tells me that when I do what I can and then put my trust in God and wait patiently for him, I am always surprised and pleased at the results. I am never ashamed by what God does. And I wonder why I can’t live that way all the time.

Are you in the waiting room? Are you facing what seems to be an impossible situation? Are you lonely, crying out for companionship and comfort? Has the monster of impatience paid you an unwelcome visit? Has he whispered his lies in your ear?

Are you asking God to meet your needs? When you pray, does it seem like you’re getting a busy signal from God? Do you wonder if he hears and answers?

If you are asking these questions, my answer is the same as the psalmist, “Wait for the Lord.” As you sit in the waiting room, take the time to read the manual. Spend time seeking God. Find out who he is and what he has promised to do in your life. Find out what he wants you to do. Continue to pray, confidently expecting him to do great things in your life. Be patient and allow him to work in his time. He can be trusted because he is true to his name. He is our source of security. As we wait for him, he will refresh us and renew our strength. He will give us the grace and strength that we need in order to soar like an eagle about the problem.
“Wait for the Lord; Be strong, and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.”

Tell the monsters that it’s their turn to wait.

### WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOUR LIFE IS STUCK ON HOLD:

1. Learn what it means to wait on the Lord
   - Waiting involves the passage of time
   - Anticipate and expect God to work
   - Be confident of what God is going to do
   - Spend time seeking God
   - Be patient and rest

2. Understand why you should wait on the Lord
   - God is true to his character
   - God is the source of our security

3. Remember what happens to those who wait
   - God provides for and meets our needs
   - God gives refreshment and renewal
   - We will never be ashamed of having waited on God

### QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU TURN ON THE NIGHT LIGHT

1. How do you respond when you are told to wait?

2. In your own words, what does it mean to “wait on the Lord?”
3. Do you find that it is easy/hard to do that? Explain your answer.

4. How does knowing God’s name affect your trust in him?

5. Which of the names of God presented in this chapter do you find to be the most helpful or comforting at this time in your life? Why?

1 Ironically, those same people will gladly spend $30-50 to go to an amusement part where they will willingly stand in line 60-90 minutes for a three-minute ride. Go figure!


3 NASB

4 NASB

5 NASB


7 Genesis 14:20-21.

8 Genesis 15:1-6

9 Genesis 12:1-4

10 Genesis 17:1.


12 Genesis 22:14.


14 NASB

15 Personal conversation with a ride operator.

16 NASB.

17 NASB.

18 NASB.

19 In a tremendous answer to prayer, God provided all that we needed, and more besides, in 60 days!

20 Psalm 27:14, NASB