By Mark S. Wheeler

Whenever I visit my doctor, I always set aside extra time for each visit. I generally have to wait 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.

The waiting room, 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’s been only 20 minutes. When we are in the waiting room, it seems as if progress has come to a screeching halt.

Perhaps you feel like you’re in the waiting room. Maybe one of your loved ones is ill and you’re praying that God would heal them. Maybe you’re in a job situation that you consider unbearable, and yet you have no other choice than to endure it. Maybe you’re single, and you’re searching for Mr. or Miss “Right.” Maybe your children are in preschool, and you can hardly wait for them to grow up so that you can have more freedom. Maybe 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.

You feel like you are in the midst of a crisis, and it seems as if God has led you down a path of worry and has ushered you into a room with a huge sign over it that says, “WAITING ROOM.” And you enter that room and you wait, and you wait, and you wait. Time, for you, has now stopped. 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!”

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 happens when we wait? What do we expect to happen?

In that manual there are three main questions: What does it mean to wait for the Lord? Why are we to wait for Him? What happens when we wait for Him? Let’s examine the manual to see what it says about these questions.

When we think of waiting, we usually think of waiting for time to pass. When you come to a red light, you wait for the light to turn green. If you want to watch the 6 o’clock news, you wait for a half hour to pass. 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 then you can get their driver’s license. 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 does wait, and in His word do I hope. More than the watchmen for the morning; indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.”

If you have ever worked a graveyard shift, or you’ve ever been camping, you know what it means to wait for the morning. It is more than just waiting for time to pass. You anticipate the sun coming up. It will be light soon. It will be warm again. Waiting involves anticipation, 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 You thanks forever, because You have done it. And I will wait on Thy name, for it is good. In the presence of Thy godly ones.

Psalm 57 was written while David was being pursued by King Saul. You can read the account in 1 Samuel 22. It tells about how he was betrayed and how he had to flee.

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One of the ways that we wait for the Lord is by seeking Him. Whenever we enter the waiting room, we need to spend time seeking God. We need to dive into His Word, looking for answers about our situation, about prayer, about walking with God. We need to spend time on our knees, pouring our hearts out to God in prayer. We need to seek the Lord actively as we wait.

If you're anything like me, waiting involves a great struggle, namely, being patient. Psalm 37:7-8 talks about this struggle when it says, 

**Psalm 37:7-8**

**Best 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 for sake wrath; Do not fret; it leads only to enlying**.

While we may agree with God that we will wait for Him, it is extremely hard for us to be patient. Waiting causes us and squirm to try to get out of the situation. Then we begin to look around and compare ourselves with others. 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 other people my age and seeing what they have and what I don’t have. I feel like saying, “God, it’s not fair that we have to put up with this.” Why can’t we be like them?

Waiting contains 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.

Knowing what it means to wait on the Lord is not enough. 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 preppy name, or the name of a famous person. But in the Old Testament, a person’s name indicated their character. Think of some of the names of God: Jehovah, “the self-existent One who reveals Himself”; El Shaddai, “Almighty God”; El Olam, “Eternal One”; Jehovah-Jireh, “the Lord will provide.”

We could look at many other names of God and discover that He is loving, kind, faithful, just, true, and everlasting. We could 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.

Perhaps you are in a situation that seems impossible and you feel like there’s no hope for the future. Knowing that God’s name is El Shaddai, “Almighty God,” can remind you that no problem is too hard for God. Come 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 you to understand that God will provide for and meet your every need, even in the midst of your loneliness and longing. 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 you understand a 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:

**Psalm 62:5-6**

**My soul, wait in silence for God only; For my hope is from Him. He is the Rock and my salvation.**

**My stronghold I shall not be shaken.**

For David, a man involved in many battles, and a stronghold were extremely important. They were his 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. So as he took advantage of his defense system, he ventured outside the stronghold and faced his enemies. The rock was vulnerable to attack.

Just as the rock and the stronghold protected him in battle, so is God 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.

Why bother waiting on the Lord? What happens when we wait for Him? Scripture tells us that these fruits come to those who wait for the Lord. Psalm 130:4-14 describes the first of these benefits:

**Psalm 130:4-14**

**The Lord sustains all who wait for Him, 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 openest Thy hand, And 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 poor’s desire. He meets each person’s daily needs.

Do these verses describe you as you sit in the waiting room? Have you 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. Meets our needs and answers 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 to wait on God or to wait on the Lord. When we choose not to wait on God, we become impatient and we 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 cutting off Jesus from His people. We are excluding Him from our lives. We are excluding Jesus from our lives. He is the one who will give us the hope that we need. Isaiah 40:31 describes what God does for those who wait:

**Isaiah 40:31**

**Yet those who wait for the Lord will inherit new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not be weary, 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 ailments 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 waiting on Him. Probably one of our greatest fears in waiting on the Lord is that we’ll come to the end of our time period and discover that we wasted our time. We’ll find out that there was something else we could have been doing. However, God not only provides for and meets the needs of those who wait on Him, but He also promises that waiting will be worth the time spent doing it.

“Wait for the Lord; Be strong, and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.”