

CHAPTER 17

WORK WHILE YOU WAIT



Biblical Lessons for Students, Athletes & More

Group or Individual Experience

FOCAL VERSE

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.
Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

WISE WORDS

"The work that God does within us while we wait is just as important as whatever it is we are waiting for."
Ben Patterson

INTRODUCTION

In 1981, Tom Petty released a song called, "The Waiting," in which he sings, "*The waiting is the hardest part.*" Can you relate? I can! That's why I appreciate Ben Batterson's quote, "*The work that God does within us while we wait is just as important as whatever it is we are waiting for.*" It's a hopeful quote; hopeful that *something* other than heartache is occurring in the midst of the waiting period. Hopefully, that something includes growth. Areas of growth might include:

- emotional development
- spiritual growth
- character development
- growth in your faith or trust in God
- self-confidence (which comes from confidence in God)
- control issues (surrendering your control over to God)
- your true identity
- development of skillsets
- physical growth (stature/height)
- or a combination of any of these.

Nevertheless, *whatever* is going on, waiting can be agonizing. Let's take a hospital waiting room, for example. Waiting rooms are ordinarily filled with people who are anxious, fearful, uncertain, impatient, and weary. This particular scenario makes playing time seem so unimportant, but I think we can all will agree that playing time is an extremely critical component of any athlete's psyche. If that weren't true, we wouldn't be talking about it.

But first...

During the previous week, did you experience any level of anxiety and look to God's Word to help console you or make an attempt to "cast your anxiety on Him?"

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

We all experienced what it meant to "wait" when much of the world shut down during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

- What are some of the things you vividly remember waiting on?
- Which was hardest? Why?
- How did you fill your time while waiting? Was it time wasted or well spent?
- Were you compelled to turn to God during this hard season?

Waiting is the hard work you must do so that God can do the work that only He can do. Wait well.

Kay Harris

In April 2019, I traveled with my son to Kansas City for a tournament within the Under Armour Rise basketball circuit. Although my son was selected to be on this elite roster, his playing time was minimal on this particular weekend. Upon returning to the hotel one evening, I was in tears over his lack of playing time; he was down but resilient. I said, *"How do you do it? How can you be so strong? You are a better person than I am."* He approached my bedside, wrapped his arms around me and said, *"It's okay, Mom. It's going to come."* He was comforting his mother with the same words I had used to edify him with time and time again. You see, for years, he heard his parents repeat the words, *"Keep working, son. Your hard work is going to pay off one day."* It's the same words Paul used in Galatians 6:9; the same words I want you to hear today: *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

QUESTION:

- **Are you in a season of waiting? What are some of the hard things you are waiting on?** (Possible answers may include: a starting position, more playing time, a prayer to be answered, test results, restoring a relationship, healing, a word from God, a new job, a promotion, etc.)



Stop and read chapter seventeen in its entirety if you haven't already done so. Pages 112-118.

This chapter specifically addresses (1) playing time, (2) a few reasons why an athlete might not be getting playing time, and (3) strategies that can help athletes experience growth in areas of weakness. Getting better at *anything* requires *active* work. Development doesn't happen overnight, and its work is never finished! The same can be said of our spiritual lives. When we decide to follow Jesus, we don't automatically become polished and perfect. We will always make mistakes and have areas of weakness. Our spiritual transformation is never ending—until we meet Jesus face-to-face. Therefore, in order to mature as followers of Christ, we have to actively work at developing our spiritual skills too; our spiritual muscles, if you will.

Development is a process, so naturally, there's a season of waiting before you see results or rewards. (And newflash! That *something* you're waiting on *may not* be in alignment with God's will). As Christians, our ultimate reward isn't playing time, it's an eternal life with Jesus Christ *and* the inheritance we get to share with him! Wow!

So *how* are Christ followers supposed to live as we await our heavenly reward? Additionally, *how* do we wait for earthly rewards, especially when we're going through a difficult season of waiting? On the next two pages, I will offer you three strategies that might encourage you as you journey through seasons of waiting.

NEWSFLASH

"That something you're waiting on *may not* be in alignment with God's will."

NOTE:

Biblical waiting is not a passive activity but is demonstrated by an *active dependence upon God*. Thus, waiting upon God, is a spiritual discipline that we should *practice* with the same kind of zeal you exercise when practicing your favorite sport, skill, or hobby.

3 METHODS TO WAIT UPON THE LORD

1 ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S SOVEREIGN CONTROL

In order to get good at waiting, we first need to acknowledge that God is sovereign and *nothing* we are presently experiencing is outside of God's watchful eye. He has not overlooked you! Here's what the wise King Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 7:13-14:

*"Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?
When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made
the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future."*

Naturally, most of us like to be in control. When we have to wait, we have little power, and that can be very scary and difficult. Oftentimes, the only way God can show us He's in control is to put us in situations that we can't control.

- **Who is winning the battle of control in your life, you or God?**
- **Are there any ongoing battles in your life that you need to fully surrender control to God?**

2 ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WAITING IS A PROCESS, NOT PUNISHMENT

In his book, *Waiting: Finding Hope When God Seems Silent*, Ben Patterson says, "***The work that God does within us while we wait is just as important as whatever it is we are waiting for.***" Pause and take in the full weight of that statement.

- **What kind of work do you think God can do in individuals during periods of waiting?**

Romans 8:28 is a verse that is often shared when hard times arise: "***And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.***" There is a lot of hope in this verse, but don't be misled; *God's good* and *your good* may look quite different! Let God define "good." God's good will *always* be better than your good. How do I know? Because the Lord tells us in Jeremiah 29:11—"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

God's good and your good may look quite different. Let God define good.

God will never withhold his goodness from you, and God never punishes his children. Why? Because Jesus has already been charged and convicted for the sins of the whole world. According to Isaiah 53:5, "the punishment that brought us peace was on him." Sometimes, what may look like punishment, is God preparing you for His purpose. Waiting is not punishment, it's a process. Maybe God is making you wait, not because he wants to keep something *from* you, but because he is working something *in* you!



3 WAITING *IN* VS. WAITING *ON*

One of the ways we can demonstrate our trust in God is by waiting *in hope* while waiting on Him; waiting *in faith* as opposed to waiting *on* your circumstances to change. When we fix our gaze towards God, rather than dwelling over our situation, we begin to practice what it means to wait *in* the Spirit.

Psalm 33:20

**We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice, for
we trust in his holy name.**

- **How would you define "hope" in your own words? What about "faith"?**

Let's do a quick word study to fully understand what it means to wait *in hope* and wait *in faith*. Let's start by defining "in," "hope," and "faith."

- **"In"** simply means to be enclosed or surrounded by something.
- Biblical **"hope"** not only desires something good for the future—it expects it to happen. It's a confident expectation of what God has promised.
- According to Hebrews 11:1, **"faith"** is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see.

In essence, what David is telling us in Psalm 33:20 (pictured above) is to *surround* or wrap ourselves in the blanket of expectation, confidence, and assurance *in* God; to walk faithful *in* the place He has you. Since God is sovereign, then we *know* that whatever situation he has us waiting in, it must have an intended purpose.

Here is some hard truth: God doesn't always deliver us *from* hard things, but he will deliver us *through* them. A good example of this is found in Isaiah 43:2.

- **Look up Isaiah 43:2 in your own Bible. Circle the places God says you *pass through* and *walk through*. (waters, rivers, fire).**
- **What are the promises God attaches to those deep and hard places? Underline them. (I will be with you, they will not sweep over you, you will not be burned or set ablaze).**

FINAL COMMENTS:

The focal verse for chapter seventeen, Galatians 6:9, is not just a scripture to be memorized, it's a scripture to be utilized! "*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*" Stay strong in the Spirit!

So what are you waiting on? Playing time? Healing from an injury? Test results? A college offer or acceptance letter? I know, waiting can be grueling, but when you wait *in hope* and wait *in faith*, then you're waiting well! **Wait well, my friend!**

POST-GAME PRAYER

End today's session by reading the post-game prayer at the bottom of page 118.