CHAPTER EIGHT - OUR PURPOSE:

TO WAIT ON GOD WITH HOPE

“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.”

Isaiah 64:4 KJV

If our waiting begins by quieting the activities of daily life, and being still before God; if we bow and seek to see God in His universal and almighty operation; if we yield to Him in the assurance that He is working and will work in us; if we maintain the place of humility and stillness, and surrender until God’s Spirit has stirred up in us confidence that He will perfect His work, our waiting will indeed become the strength and the joy of the soul.

Andrew Murray, The Believer’s Secret of Waiting on God

In our fast-paced, fast-food, “microwave” society, waiting seems entirely out of date and a waste of time. The dictionary gives some interesting definitions for the word wait. It comes from the Old English word to watch, which according to Webster’s has these meanings: to stay in place in expectation of; to look forward expectantly; to be ready and available; to remain temporarily neglected or unrealized. Waiting on God and hoping in Him are strong biblical principles and very important in understanding how I am to live my life according to God’s ways. If I want His purpose accomplished in my life, then I will learn the discipline of waiting on God and experience the joy that only hope can bring.

Our Purpose: To Learn to Wait on God

1. The psalmists testify to the blessing of waiting on God. Read these passages and write down (1) the benefit of waiting and, where applicable, (2) what the psalmist was waiting for the Lord to do.

   Psalms 25:3-5

   Psalms 33:16-22

   Psalms 40:1-3

   Psalms 62:5-8
2. Paul exhorts the New Testament churches to wait. What do these verses encourage us to wait for?

Romans 8:18-25

Philippians 3:12-21

3. How would you explain “waiting on God” to a friend?

To wait on God is entirely and unreservedly to refer ourselves to his wise and holy directions and disposals, and cheerfully to acquiesce in them, and comply with them. The servant that waits on his master, chooseth not his own way, but follows his master step by step. Thus must we wait on God, as those that have no will of our own but what is wholly resolved into his, and must therefore study to accommodate ourselves to his. Matthew Henry

4. Abraham and Sarah waited many years for their promised heir. Their story exemplifies the blessings of waiting and the consequences of running ahead of God. Read the following Scriptures and record your observations.

a. What was God’s promise and Abram’s response? (Genesis 15:1-6)

b. What was Sarai’s plan? What were the short-term repercussions of their decision? (Genesis 16:1-6)

c. What was God’s renewed promise? (Genesis 17:1-8, 15-21)

5. Put yourself in Sarah’s place and describe what you think she might have learned about waiting on God.

“You’ll have descendants as countless as the stars in the sky,” God said. No promise could have made Abraham happier. At age seventy-five he still anticipated a tent filled with the sounds of children at play. At eighty-five he worked out a backup plan with a female servant. At ninety-nine the promise
seemed downright ludicrous, and when God showed up to confirm it, Abraham laughed in his face. A father at ninety-nine? Sarah in maternity clothes at ninety? They both cackled at the thought.

A laugh of ridicule and also of pain. God had dangled a bright dream of fertility before a barren couple and then sat on his hands and watched as they advanced toward tottery old age. What kind of game was he playing? Whatever did he want?

God wanted faith, the Bible says, and that is the lesson Abraham finally learned. He learned to believe when there was no reason left to believe.  

*Philip Yancey*

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**Our Purpose: To Hope in God**

6. To wait and to hope are closely related. In the Scriptures, “hope” and “wait” are often used interchangeably. Waiting seems to be a measure of our hope. Jeremiah beautifully describes his journey of hope and his understanding of what it is to wait. Read his thoughts in Lamentations 3:1-26 and record your observations.

a. Describe Jeremiah’s hopelessness (see especially verse 18).

b. What was his basis for hope?

c. Why do you think Jeremiah was willing to wait on God?

As believers suffer, they develop steadfastness; that quality deepens their character; and a deepened, tested character results in hope (i.e., confidence) that God will see them through.

7. Read Paul’s declaration in Romans 5:1-5 and describe the process that leads to hope.

8. Why do you think this process leads to hope?

And hoping is not dreaming. It is not spinning an illusion of fantasy to protect us from our boredom or our pain. It means a confident alert expectation that God will do what he said he will do. It is imagination put in the harness of faith. It is a willingness to let him do it his way and in his time. It is the opposite of making plans that we demand that God put into effect, telling him both how and when to do it. That is not hoping in God but bullying God. “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the
Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.” (Psalm 130:5-6)

Eugene H. Peterson

AUTHOR’S REFLECTION – Many years ago our family made a major move. Jack, my husband, sold his veterinary practice and we relocated to another city to receive training with The Navigators. For years I had been leading Bible studies and now that we had moved to learn to do the ministry full time, I thought that I would probably be leading several studies! As time progressed, I began to realize that God was impressing on me to do nothing concerning ministry. I couldn’t understand! Here we had left all that we had known for ten years and now that we were in a position to minister, I was to **wait**. No, Lord, You don’t understand – now I’m *supposed* to teach and meet with women!

Yet very clearly and firmly God began to teach me what it means to wait on Him. As Murray says, God wanted me to “maintain the place of humility and stillness, and surrender.” What other way could God encourage me and teach me to totally depend on His guidance, His way, His timing? How else could I really learn that my hope was in Him, and not in my abilities?

When the Israelites were in the wilderness, God led them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The Israelites did not move until the cloud moved, they **waited** for God to guide.

This waiting is so essential to comprehending God’s purpose for us. It is in waiting that we are able to sense God’s prompting to do something or just keep on waiting. I like what Oswald Chambers says: “The reality of God’s presence is not dependent on any place, but only dependent upon the determination to set the Lord always before us. . . . If our common-sense decisions are not His order, He will press through them and check; then we must be quiet and wait for the direction of His presence.”

It is only in being still before Him that we can sense His presence and direction; it is only in placing our hope in Him that we can wait expectantly.

My Purpose (For Contemplation and Prayer)

9. Over the next few days, think about how you wait before God and how steadfast your hope is in Him. To help your reflection and application, carefully consider the verse given below.

   “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31 (KJV)

   Use these questions to guide your meditation.

10. What changes can I make in my life that would encourage my waiting upon the Lord?

11. How can waiting for and hoping in the Lord give me new strength?

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE MEMORY: Isaiah 40:31
CHAPTER EIGHT - SCRIPTURE VERSES

Psalms 25:3-5

3. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. 4. Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. 5. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

Psalms 33:16-22

16. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. 17. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. 18. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; 19. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. 20. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield. 21. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. 22. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Psalms 40:1-3

1. I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. 2. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 3. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

Psalms 62:5-8

5. My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. 6. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. 7. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. 8. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Romans 8:18-25

18. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Philippians 3:12-21

12. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13. Brethren, I count not myself to have
apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. 14. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19. Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” 20. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21. Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Genesis 15:1-6
1. After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. 2. And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? 3. And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4. And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 16:1-6
1. Now Sarai Abram’s wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3. And Sarai Abram’s wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. 4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. 5. And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. 6. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

Genesis 17:1-8, 15-21
1. And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4. As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham: for a father of many nations have I made thee. 6. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. 8. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an
everlasting possession; and I will be their God. . . . 15. And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. 16. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. 17. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? 18. And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! 19. And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. 20. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Lamentations 3: 1-26

1. I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. 2. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. 3. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. 4. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. 5. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail. 6. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. 7. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy. 8. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer. 9. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked. 10. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. 11. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. 12. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. 13. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. 14. I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. 15. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. 16. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. 17. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgat prosperity. 18. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord: 19. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. 20. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. 21. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. 22. It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. 24. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. 25. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. 26. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

Romans 5:1-5

1. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4. And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Psalms 130:5-6

5. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. 6. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.