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Purpose in the Pause Part 1

Divine Delays

Exodus 3:1–12

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

² And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

³ And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” ⁴ When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”

⁵ Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

⁶ And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters.

I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” ¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

God uses delays to reveal our calling, confront our excuses, and prepare us for His purpose.

A delay is not always a denial. Sometimes it is God’s way of preparing us for our next assignment.

Slow down, pay attention, and allow God to transform your waiting place into holy ground.

Introduction: Stuck at the Gate

Have you ever experienced an airline delay? You planned everything perfectly, arrived on time, found your seat, and then heard the announcement: “Your flight has been delayed.”

Suddenly, you are stuck waiting while everyone else seems to be moving.

Life brings delays we did not schedule:

- A job opportunity falls through.
- A relationship ends.
- A prayer remains unanswered.
- A door unexpectedly closes.
- A dream takes longer than expected.

During those seasons, we begin asking, “God, where are You?”

But what if the delay is not punishment? What if it is preparation? What if God is using the pause to ground us before He moves us forward?

Moses understood divine delays. He spent forty years in the wilderness before God called him from a burning bush. What appeared to be a wasted season was actually God’s training ground.

Transition: Moses discovered that when God is involved, a delay is never dead time.

1. Delays Often Reveal Our Calling

Exodus 3:1–4

Moses had gone from being a prince in Egypt to tending another man's sheep in the wilderness.

From Moses' perspective:

- His opportunity had passed.
- His influence was gone.
- His failure had defined him.
- His future looked ordinary.

But God did not see a forgotten shepherd. God saw a future deliverer.

A. God meets us in ordinary places

Moses was not attending a conference or standing in a palace. He was working in a pasture when God appeared.

Never assume God can only speak during dramatic spiritual moments. God can meet us:

- At work
- At home
- In disappointment
- During routine responsibilities
- In seasons that seem uneventful

The pasture became the place where Moses received his purpose.

B. God uses the wilderness

The wilderness was not wasted space. While Moses was caring for sheep, God was preparing him to shepherd a nation.

The wilderness taught Moses:

- Patience
- Humility
- Dependence

- Endurance
- Familiarity with the territory through which Israel would later travel

What looked like a detour was actually preparation for his destination.

C. Moses had to turn aside

“When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him”
(Exodus 3:4).

The burning bush got Moses’ attention, but Moses still had to stop and investigate.

Sometimes we miss what God is doing because we are:

- Moving too quickly
- Consumed by frustration
- Distracted by noise
- Focused only on reaching the next destination

Sometimes the voice of God is waiting for our attention.

Application

- Do not rush through your season of waiting.
- Look for God in your ordinary responsibilities.
- Ask, “Lord, what are You showing me here?”
- Give God your attention before asking Him for direction.

Your calling may become clearest in a season when it appears that nothing is happening.

2. Delays Expose Our Excuses

Exodus 3:10–11

God told Moses, “I am sending you to Pharaoh.” Moses responded, **“Who am I?”**

Forty years earlier, Moses appeared confident enough to act on his own. After forty years in the wilderness, he was painfully aware of his limitations.

A. Waiting exposes what we believe about ourselves

Long delays can cause us to question:

- Our ability
- Our value
- Our calling
- Our future
- Whether God can still use us

Moses had allowed his failure and isolation to shape his identity.

He saw a fugitive. God saw a deliverer.

He saw a shepherd. God saw a leader.

He saw his past. God saw his purpose.

B. Our excuses often reveal misplaced confidence

Moses asked, “Who am I?” But that was the wrong question.

The success of the assignment would not depend upon who Moses was. It would depend upon who was going with him.

God did not answer Moses by building his self-esteem. He answered by promising His presence:

“I will be with you.” — Exodus 3:12

Our confidence is not found in saying, “I can handle this.” Our confidence is found in knowing, “God will be with me.”

C. God wants availability more than ability

Moses focused on everything he lacked. God focused on what His presence could accomplish through a surrendered person.

God still calls people who have:

- Doubts
- Weaknesses
- Regrets
- Insecurities

- Imperfect histories

Your weakness does not disqualify you when God's presence goes with you.

Application

- Identify the excuse that has been keeping you from obedience.
- Stop measuring your calling by your natural ability.
- Refuse to let yesterday's failure define tomorrow's assignment.
- Give God your honest, available "yes."

The answer to "Who am I?" is found in God's promise: **"I will be with you."**

3. Delays Prepare Us for What Is Next

Psalm 27:14

"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

Waiting is not passive. Biblical waiting means trusting God while faithfully doing what He has placed before us.

A. God works while we wait

Moses may have felt forgotten, but God was working.

- God heard Israel's cries.
- God remembered His covenant.
- God was preparing Moses.
- God was arranging the moment of deliverance.

Just because we cannot see God working does not mean He is absent.

Heaven's silence is not evidence of heaven's inactivity.

B. God prepares the person before giving the position

Moses needed more than a calling. He needed character capable of carrying the calling.

Before Moses could lead people, he had to learn:

- How to follow God
- How to serve faithfully
- How to remain patient
- How to depend upon divine strength

God was not merely preparing an assignment for Moses. He was preparing Moses for the assignment.

C. **Waiting develops spiritual strength**

Psalm 27 connects waiting with courage: **“Be strong and take heart.”**

Waiting develops:

- Faith when answers are absent
- Patience when progress is slow
- Character when no one is watching
- Dependence when personal strength is insufficient
- Obedience when the complete plan is unknown

Application

- Do the next right thing while you wait.
- Remain faithful in your present assignment.
- Let patience complete its work in you.
- Trust God’s timing even when you do not understand it.

God’s delay may be protecting you from arriving before you are prepared.

Conclusion: Holy Ground in Disguise

Moses probably thought his story was over. He had spent forty years living far from Egypt and far from the future he once imagined.

But one ordinary day, everything changed.

God revealed that:

- The pasture was preparation.
- The wilderness was a classroom.
- The delay was an invitation.

- The shepherd still had a calling.
- His failure was not the end of his story.

God met Moses in the delay, not after it.

Some of us are waiting today:

- For a relationship to be restored
- For a financial breakthrough
- For physical healing
- For a ministry opportunity
- For direction concerning the future
- For God to answer a long-standing prayer

Do not assume that God has forgotten you. Your delay may be holy ground in disguise.

Close

This week, embrace the pause.

- Turn down the noise.
- Spend unhurried time in prayer.
- Ask God what He wants to develop in you.
- Pay attention to the ordinary places where He may be speaking.
- Surrender the excuse that has kept you from obedience.
- Remain faithful while you wait.

Do not only ask, “God, when will You change my circumstances?”

Begin asking, “God, how do You want to change me in these circumstances?”

Final Challenge: Let your delay become an altar. Let the stillness become sacred. When God speaks, trust His presence and take the next step.