

Hurry Up and Wait

Be Still #2 | January 14 | 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 AM | Preached by Steve Howell



Opening Video

Barcelona's La Sagrada Familia

[La Sagrada Família - 4K Drone Footage \(youtube.com\)](#)

Isn't that an amazing building? What you're looking at is *La Sagrada Familia*, a Catholic Basilica under construction in Barcelona, Spain. The building was conceived by architect Antoni Gaudi and began construction in '82...and it's still not finished. By the way, I don't mean **1982**; I mean **1882**! One hundred forty-two years ago!!! Only ten years after the founding of this church in Tonganoxie (*just think what our church building could've looked like if we just kept building, right?*)

The *Sagrada Familia* is on track to be fully constructed in 2026, but it could take years longer to finish every little detail inside the structure.¹

Can you imagine waiting for this to be finished? I know some of you have been involved in building projects that took a long time, but this is extreme! Imagine that you were the builder – Mr. Gaudi – and I told you that nearly a century and a half after starting that the work would still not be complete. On the count of three, can you make the face you imagine he had? Ready? 1...2...3.

Keep that face in mind as we get into our sermon today.

Be Still

Last week we began a new sermon series called "Be Still." It's inspired by the well-known passage in Psalm 46:10.

"Be still, and know that I am God..." (Psalm 46:10, ESV)

We said that trying to have spiritual success without waiting on God is a mistake. We need to **be still** (to "let go," to "release," to "be slack") and allow God to work. The

¹ Fun fact: in October 2018, the trustees of the basilica agreed to pay €36 million for a building permit, after 136 years of unlicensed construction!

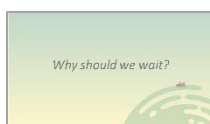


battle is not ours, so we need to take a step back and watch Him do His thing! In the first sermon, we talked about cultivating the spiritual disciplines of **silence and solitude** to leave more room for God to be in charge of our lives – to help us *be still* while He acts.

But if God is in charge, that means often we are in a position of *waiting* for Him to do what He will do. And, as the great theologian Tom Petty once said, “Wai-ai-ting is the hardest part.”

Are you good at waiting? If so, then you’ll have no trouble sitting here while the rest of us try to catch up...because I think most of us could use a little encouragement and instruction on *waiting well*.

We’ll start with the easy part and then work our way up to the more advanced concepts of waiting.



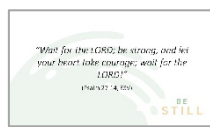
Why should we wait? (Easy)

His Commands

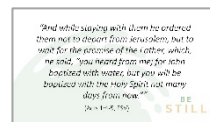
Why should we wait? God says to. Done.

“Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!” (Psalm 27:14, ESV)

Easy enough, right? There are many times when God instructs his people to wait. For example, just before His ascension, Jesus tells the disciples to wait.

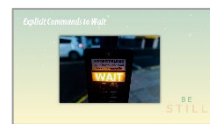


*“And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to **wait** for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.””* (Acts 1:4–5, ESV)



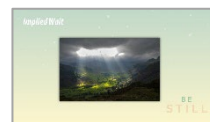
God says “wait” a lot in Scripture! Sometimes it comes an **explicit command** from God:

- **Wait for an event.** During the time of the Exodus, the Israelites would not move camp until God moved (Exodus 40:34-38).
- **Wait for a time.** Some actions are restrained for a specific length of time, such as when the prophet Ezekiel was told to lie on his side for 390 days as a sign-act to prophesy to the Israelite community (Ezekiel 4:4).
- **Wait for a word.** Sometimes an action waits on a word. The prophet Jeremiah was to speak God’s word whenever it was commanded (Jeremiah 1:7).



Sometimes the waiting isn’t commanded, but it is implied:

- The Scriptures often talk about a “day of the Lord” when He would act or do something important (ex: Joel 2:1). The “day” wasn’t specified...it was just somewhere out in the future (like “D-Day” for the Allied invasion of Europe). But the fact that it is future means we must wait.



Waiting is a matter of priority. In other words...whose timeline matters most? Yours or God's? (I told you this was the easy part!)

We wait for Him.

Our Character: Patience

Because waiting on God indicates His priority in our life, waiting isn't just a matter of a command. It's also a matter of Christian character. We develop a **quality** that continually prioritizes God's timing above our own.

That quality is called "**patience.**"

*"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and **patience,**" (Colossians 3:12, ESV)*

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience,** kindness, goodness, faithfulness," (Galatians 5:22, ESV)*

This quality is not something we generate on our own; it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Last week we talked about a spiritual *discipline* – an action we do regularly to help us grow. But patience isn't a discipline; it is a *fruit*. It is a quality the Spirit grows in our lives. The more attentive and obedient we are to the Holy Spirit, the more patient He will make us...and the more visible His presence will be in our life.

So, we wait because it is commanded, and we wait because the Spirit is at work in our lives. That answers the why.

But the "how" is a bit harder...

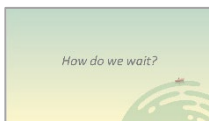
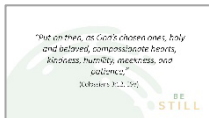
How do we wait? (Harder)

We've all been in a situation where you're seated at a restaurant, ready for a delicious meal. You've been given menus, maybe a glass of water...and you're ready to dig into the chips and salsa or the bread, to place your order and enjoy the food. But despite your stomach's rumblings, the waitress over there isn't moving your direction. She flits back and forth from table to table, to the kitchen and back, but never glances your way.

What attitude do you take? How do you wait in that situation?

- **The attention grabber:** Do something to subtly catch her eye.
- **The vocal rebuke:** Yell "Hey! Can I get some service over here?"
- **The passive aggressive timer:** "If she doesn't come over here in five minutes, we're leaving."
- **The long game:** "Let's see how long it takes. They'll get here...eventually!"

We know we're going to have to wait, but *how* we wait matters, too.



What does patience look like in practice?

An Example from Farming (James 5:7-11)

Scripture gives us an analogy:



“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.” (James 5:7, ESV)

I’m not a farmer, but I was raised by one...and I’ve been friends with some. And as I was thinking about this analogy, I thought about the personality of those who farm. I don’t think I’ve ever met a farmer who was prone to panic.



My dad (as I remember him) was a stoic guy. He didn’t have huge mood swings. He didn’t worry that much. He just did the work and took everything in stride. And it’s not because everything was under control. There was always too much rain or not enough rain, too much heat or too much freezing, broken equipment that needed repair, fences that needed to be fixed, etc. We didn’t irrigate, so the crops were always dependent on God bringing the rains at the right time.

And all Dad could do was wait.

I didn’t see him run around in anxiety, just like I don’t see Tom Norman freaking out or Brian Lee curled up in a fetal position during difficult seasons. Farming has a way of helping you realize that it is beyond your control. You simply *cannot* be impatient, or else you’ll go crazy!

James, our author in the New Testament, uses that personality to help us understand the way in which we wait. Here’s the full quote:

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” (James 5:7–11, ESV)

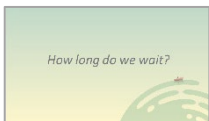
Did you catch some of the attitudes we should have as we wait?

- **Establish your heart.** We strengthen our hearts, gaining confidence in the reality of what God has promised. We aren’t nervous that He’ll fail – He won’t!
- **Don’t grumble.** We avoid complaining about the situation and about those around us. We trust God to handle it.

- **Look to those who do it well.** James points out the historical examples of the prophets. We can look to those same stories in the Bible and learn, but we can also look at people in the church who are steadfast and learn from their example.
 - *Note: This means being in church with other Christians is important! If you're watching online, I'm going to challenge you. It's fine to watch while your sick, or as a supplement to your in-person experience...but you need to be around other Christians who are trying to follow Jesus, too. You need to see them in person, and they need to see you. Make it a priority to be here!!! But I digress...*

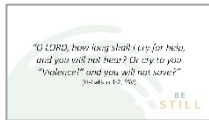
Patience, James says, is something we should have...and it should look a certain way. We aren't patient if we are complaining, getting nervous, and freaking out. Patient waiting on God looks more composed than that. It has a calm, confident trust that God will act.

But that brings us to the third question. We saw *why* we should wait, and now we've discussed *how* we should wait. The biggest and most challenging question is this: *How long?!?!*



How long do we wait? (Agonizing!)

The prophet Habakkuk's question is the one we agonize over!



"O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save?" (Habakkuk 1:2, ESV)

How long?

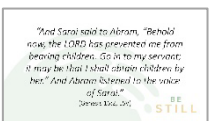
Too often, the answer is "not long enough."

Limited Patience



We're like Abraham, who had a promise from God back in the book of Genesis. In a nutshell, God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation! His descendants would be more numerous than the stars in the sky or sand on the shore. Yet Abraham was old, and he had no children.

Abraham's wife, Sarah, had enough of waiting.



"And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai." (Genesis 16:2, ESV)

That last line feels foreign and out of place in Scripture. Abram "listened to the voice of... [not God]." That's not how that sentence is supposed to end! Yet too often that's how our own stories play out.

Maybe you've waited a long time for something: a child, a grandchild, a wife, a husband, financial security, happiness, sobriety, purity.

But as the second hand of the clock ticks louder and louder you grow impatient.

How long can you hold on?

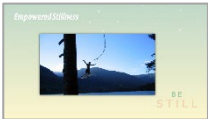


Occasionally I will watch the TV show American Ninja Warrior – basically an obstacle course challenge for people who are in really good shape! They climb, they jump, they hang their entire body weight on their fingers, trying to get through the course. Some of the obstacles are tricky, and as the contestants try to get through you can see the strain on their grip strength become more and more apparent. They start to slip, they claw for a better handhold, but eventually their arms give out and they plummet to their death (or the pool of water beneath them).

How long can they hold on? Not long enough.

None of us can hold on long enough.

Empowered Stillness



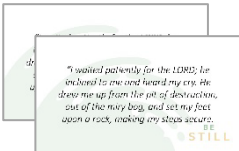
But God doesn't equip us to hold on...he equips us to "let go."

"Be still, and know that I am God..." (Psalm 46:10, ESV)

What if, instead of holding on to a future you wanted, you *let go* and lived the life you have? What if, instead of clinging to a desire you wish would be fulfilled, you *let go* and enjoyed the blessings of what you have already been given? What if, instead of chasing a feeling, you *let go* and pursued God alone?

Going back to Abraham for a moment, after the failed attempt to force God's hand, Abraham *waited*. He *trusted*...for another 14 years. And when God's timing was right, he allowed Abraham and Sarah to have a baby at a ridiculously old age!

When people let go of their own path – when they are *still* – that's often when God moves.



"I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD."

(Psalm 40:1–3, ESV)

He might move to rescue you. He might move to strengthen you. He might move to uplift you. He might move to use you.

But it will always be *Him* moving as we are still. So, we must focus less on the timing and more on the promising. We must worry less about holding on and instead commit to being still.

When we ask, “how long?,” the wait might not be shorter, but if we adjust our approach, it can be far less agonizing!

Waiting for Jesus to Return



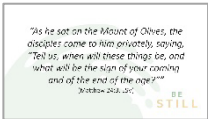
Perhaps this applies most prominently to one the big spiritual questions we have as Christians: when will Jesus return?

The older I get, the more prominently this question looms in my mind. I’m ready! And I’m more ready every day.

This week, I went to pull something out of the oven, and as I bent over a sharp pain hit my lower back, to the point where I almost couldn’t get back up. I hate that I’m at the point with this body that it fails me. (It’s not even like it was a cool story. Just opening the oven. I was telling this to Matthew Wilke, the minister at the Methodist church, and he asked what I was getting out of the oven. It was a frozen pizza... “and I think that makes it even sadder,” he said).

I’m ready for Jesus to return and set things right. I’m ready for the resurrection, for the glorified bodies we’re promised (1 Corinthians 15). I’m ready for heaven and the perfection that comes with it (Revelation 21).

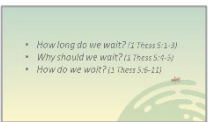
How long will it be? That’s the question his followers have asked since he was around.



“As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”” (Matthew 24:3, ESV)

The question was on the mind of the church at Thessalonica, as Paul wrote to give them encouragement and answers. I want you to know that the answers that Paul gives are not related to a timeline. They weren’t attempts to speculate about a date, to figure out whether the events in the Middle East were triggered by some prophecy related to Ezekiel 38 or Psalm 83.

Instead, Paul’s response matches what we discussed today.



How long do we wait? (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)

“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.” (1 Thessalonians 5:1–3, ESV)

There is no timeframe given, and He's not back yet. Therefore, we must wait just **a little bit longer**.

Why should we wait? (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5)

"But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness." (1 Thessalonians 5:4–5, ESV)

We wait because we are God's children, and **God says** we need to wait.

How do we wait? (1 Thessalonians 5:6-11)

"So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:6–11, ESV)

Paul talks about the kind of **character** we need to have as we wait.

These aspects of patient waiting may not excite us, but they can help us to wait well, whether we are waiting for Jesus or waiting for something else.

Closing



At the beginning of this sermon, I had you show the face you imagined architect Antoni Gaudi would have as he learned of the 142-year wait involved in constructing his Basilica.

I want you to make that face again...and consider if it fits the context of what we've discussed. Is this the face you, as a believer in Christ, should have as you wait on anything?

- Does it reflect the peace and confidence that comes from *being still* with God?
- Does it show the character and spiritual fruit of a person walking in step with the Holy Spirit?
- Does it match the patience we hold as we await the blessed hope of Jesus' return?

Be patient while you are still, because God's timing is not our own!

Prayer

Invitation

Waiting well is important. But we shouldn't wait forever for some things.

- Don't wait to ask others for prayer.
- Don't wait to follow Jesus.

We always have a time of invitation after our sermon to allow you to respond to the things you've heard. If you need prayer for patience (or anything else), I invite you to walk up and share with me during the song. If you want to talk about accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior, come tell me and we can start the conversation, too!

Either way, we invite you to share as we stand and as we sing.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Notes

Why should we wait? (Easy)

His Commands (Psalm 27:14, Acts 1:4–5)

Our Character: Patience (Colossians 3:12, Galatians 5:22)

How do we wait? (Harder)

An Example from Farming (James 5:7-11)

How long do we wait? (Agonizing!) (Habakkuk 1:2)

Limited Patience (Genesis 16:2)

Empowered Stillness (Psalm 40:1-3)

Waiting for Jesus to Return (Matthew 24:3)

How long do we wait? (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)

Why should we wait? (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5)

How do we wait? (1 Thessalonians 5:6-11)

Discussion Questions

Use the following questions based on today's sermon as a starting point for spiritual discussions with your family or a small group of Christian friends this week.

Fellowship—Relationship with a Purpose

- How long would you wait in line for an experience (e.g. a concert or a dinner)? What attitude would you have before, during and after your wait? Why?

Growth—Thinking About Spiritual Matters

- When God tells you to wait for something (through His Word, or through the Spirit), do you? What happens when you don't wait for God?
- How do you define "patience?"
- Galatians 5:22 lists patience as part of the fruit of the Spirit. What is the difference between Spirit-led patience and simply waiting?
- Read James 5:7-11. What are some of the attitudes we should have as we patiently wait? Which is most challenging for you?
- Share a time when you had to wait a long amount of time for something. How did it impact your relationship with God?
- Why are we tempted to rely more on our strength when waiting than on God's?
- Are you patient about the Lord's return? (Note: Patience is expectant waiting; patience is not mindlessly ignoring it)
- How long do you think it will take for Jesus to return? How are you preparing for it?

Prayer – Taking Your Thoughts to God

- Pray for God to empower you to *be still* as you wait. Ask God to help you recognize situations in which you need more patience.