

Psalm 37:1–7

MPS: **The wise learn to wait while God works.**

INTRO:

- Psalm 37 is a chiastic acrostic. In general, every other verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- This Psalm reads more like a Proverb – which is wisdom literature.
- This is a much more difficult Psalm to find the theme – to exegete, but I do think we have a clear enough path to discuss a huge biblical principle – waiting.
- David seems to be saying, “Wait on the LORD”

Psalm 37:7 *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;*

Psalm 37:34 *Wait for the LORD and keep his way,*

The wise learn to wait while God works.

"Wisdom is knowledge of God's Word put into action through the fear of the Lord, enabling decisions that honor Him in life's situations. It's not a skill but a God-given ability, cultivated through seeking Him, to make choices that keep life from becoming an absolute mess."

OPEN:

- Do you feel like you're waiting on God. You prayed for something, and you're wondering, "God, what's taking so long? God, are you even listening? Have you forgotten me? Do you even care?"
 - That relationship to be restored
 - Marriage to be healthy
 - Depression to subside
 - Child to come to Christ
 - Healing in your body
 - Finances to be stable
 - Your husband; your wife to change
 - To be happy again
- You're believing that God can, but he hasn't, and you've waited so long that you're starting to wonder if God hears your prayers, if he cares, or if he's even there at all.. tempted to give up asking or perhaps you've already done so.

Henri Nouwen [ON-ree KNOW-when] “Waiting is a period of learning. The longer we wait, the more we hear about Him for whom we are waiting.”

The wise learn to wait while God works.

Here are 8 components of learning to wait while God works – (I suggest you choose one; the one that stands out to you most.)

1. Stop Comparing

Vs 1-2 *Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! 2 For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.*

- There are two types of people in this Psalm – kingdom people, worldly people (righteous and unrighteous).
- In contrast to kingdom people waiting on the Lord, these are worldly people enjoying the best they will ever have.
- To have your eyes on others success, possessions, clout, is to actually have your eyes still focused on you – the wise learn to take their eyes off themselves, but them on God and how to help others (not be envious of others).
- God will take care of those who seem to have it all in this life but have nothing because they don't have God.
- It's the closest to heaven they will ever be; but for kingdom people, this is the closest to hell we will ever be.
- Later on in the chapter he seems to reassure his audience that God will take care of you...

Psalm 37:25–26 (ESV) *25 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. 26 He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing.*

- Sometimes we are envious, not of the wicked, but of our friends (bros, sis', neighbors, family, etc.)

2. Trust in the Lord

Vs 3 *Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.*

Galatians 4:4–5 (ESV) *4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

- Intertestamental period of 400 years
- People were waiting on the Savior. When did God fulfill his promise and send the Messiah? The answer is when the time was just right. At the perfect moment, God sent his Son.
- Where are you, God? What are you doing? What were you doing in that season of silence? Well, suddenly, in those 400 years when people wondered where God was and what he was doing, it was these 5 things:
 - ❖ Alexander the Great's Conquests (336–323 BC): In 12 years, Alexander unified much of the known world under Greek rule, establishing Greek as a common language. This enabled widespread communication.
 - ❖ Old Testament Translated into Greek (c. 3rd–2nd Century BC): The Hebrew Scriptures, including Messianic prophecies, were translated into Greek (the Septuagint).
 - ❖ Socratic Method of Learning (c. 4th Century BC): A new question-and-answer teaching approach emerged, encouraging critical thinking and dialogue, fostering a culture open to exploring truth
 - ❖ Roman Conquest and Pax Romana (63 BC onward): Rome's conquest of the Greek world ushered in the Pax Romana, a period of relative peace. This enabled the Romans to build extensive roads and transportation systems,
 - ❖ Jewish Diaspora (post-587 BC, intensified in 1st Century BC): Jews were dispersed throughout the Roman world, often due to exile or restrictions from Jerusalem, spreading synagogues and knowledge of the one true God,

God's why behind the 5 whats?

- ❖ Universal Scripture Access: For the first time, the Bible (Septuagint) was in Greek, a language nearly everyone understood, revealing God's promises to all.
- ❖ Questioning Culture: A new way of learning encouraged people to ask questions, preparing them to seek the ultimate Answer, Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Global Gospel Spread: Through a common language, Roman roads, and dispersed Jews, the good news of the Savior could rapidly reach Jews, Gentiles, and the entire world.
- In other words, while God's people were waiting, God was still working. In the same way, while you're praying, and you're wondering, and you're hoping, and you're asking, in your waiting, God is still working.

- And that is the best news... your greatest need, GOD, is now assessable through that Messiah, Jesus Christ... In all those things God worked in silence to provide the biggest blessing there is... HIM. (gospel).
- Maybe the reason you're still waiting on it is because it's not ready
- God is still working on it.

3. Do good

Vs 3 *Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.*

- Maybe what God is working the most on, IS YOU.
- Serve others, obey the Lord, look for opportunities to be a blessing to others, in every room you step into, think about how you can be a blessing to someone else.
- You are not the victim of silence from the Lord – you are a victor with salvation from the Lord.
- His goodness has loved and saved you, now let that overflow into the lives of others.

4. Be faithful

Vs 3 *Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.*

- “Befriend faithfulness;” NKJV, “feed on his faithfulness”
- There is a temptation to pull away from being faithful to love God and love others during the waiting game... waiting can be painful.
- But don’t throw what you know to be faithfulness to the Lord overboard while you wait... that will only prolong things.
- In the meantime, Get into the Word, ramp up your prayer life, engage in your church, find a place to serve, keep giving of your finances and time for what is good and godly, keep loving the unlovable, keep a victory mindset, keep hoping, trusting, and expecting.
- The ONE who is faithful will see you through...EVEN IF you don’t get what you feel you need in this life, everything you need and more is awaiting you on the other side.

5. Delight in the Lord

Vs 4 *Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

Psalm 37:23–24 (ESV) 23 *The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; 24 though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand.*

- **A.W. Tozer:** “The man who has God for his treasure has all things in One. While you wait for His promises, you already possess Him.”
- This simple instruction to enjoy God is a call to satisfy oneself on God the way a nursing child is satisfied by a mother’s milk
- To delight oneself in God is to find pleasure in him the way that the worldly find pleasure in the satisfaction of their desires. If God becomes our delight, the desires of our hearts become desires for God. Psalm 37:4 says that when we delight ourselves in God, he will give us new desires for himself, desires that he will satisfy. This is the key to life and contentment.
- We delight in things we find joy in... the satisfaction a sinner finds in sin is temporary and bites back... when God changes the desires of our hearts, the satisfaction a saint finds in Him is eternal and perpetually gives. Our heart gets what it wants... God, not a substitute. There is so much of Him that He never runs out, won’t ever lose it, no one can steal it from you.
- Those who don’t want God, in the end, get what they want... eternity without God. That is actually what hell is. And its sad that much of preaching over the last couple centuries have centered on hell as a tactic to motivate people toward Christ. Its actually fear that becomes the motivator and if fear motivates you to Christ then it will take fear to keep you in him
- But... when you see His love for you and what it took to save you that is a whole other motive. Its his love that delights us so much.

6. Commit to God (and expect Him to act on your behalf)

Vs 5-6 *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. 6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “To wait for God is to live in expectation of His action, to believe that His silence is not absence but preparation.”

- What is God doing when you're waiting?
- What's God doing when you're praying for healing, or a blessing, or for reconciliation, or for provision? Is God jacking with you, because he can come through – He can do it in an instant...but he doesn't. Is he cruel? Is he careless? Is he messing with you?

- While you are waiting, God is working
- Abraham and Isaac – God was sending the answer (the ram) up the mountain on a dimension Abraham couldn't see. (Gen 22)
- Just because you don't see it happening doesn't mean he's not doing anything.

7. Be still before the Lord

***Vs 7** Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!*

- We often try to numb the pain of waiting, though we are designed to be soothed, comforted, blessed by simply being still in the presence of the Lord.
- We can numb ourselves with drugs, drinking, SM, sleep, food, materialism, etc.
- What are you numbing yourself with that keeps you from being still before the Lord?
- Ever told your kid, “be still” when trying to dress them? God is saying “be still” so He can dress you in a cloak of peace, joy, and hope – Let his wisdom drape over you while you wait on him.

8. Wait patiently on the Lord

***Vs 7** Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!*

Psalms 37:34 (ESV) 34 *Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.*

- Don't be too quick to judge if a person is a kingdom person or a worldly person... take Judas for instance... everyone thought he was righteous, but... he was not.
- You might be wondering, is this stage of waiting my fault... what did I do wrong? Have I failed? Is it a lack of my faith? Is there sin in my life? Have I let God down? Does he not care about me?
- God's delays are not necessarily God's denials.
- Maybe it's not ready. Maybe you're not ready.

CONCLUSION

Isaiah 64:4 (ESV) 4 *From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.*

He has already acted; He has done it. it is finished. God orchestrated it all, even in the years of silence He was working.

His greatest work was done on Calvary, nailing our sins to the cross and giving us the greatest thing we could ever desire... access to Him and to be with Him forever.

Your job? Wisely trust the Lord for forgiveness and eternal life.

Psalms 37:39–40 (ESV) 39 *The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. 40 The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.*

The result? The kingdom and peace

Psalms 37:11 (ESV) 11 *But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.*

In the meantime?

The wise learn to wait while God works.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

1. Are you in a pattern of waiting right now? Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who had to wait on the Lord?
2. Of the 8 components of learning to wait while God works, which ones stand out to you now?
3. Take time to pray for one another according to the answers to the above question.