

TERRA NOVA

Waiting for Our Destiny: Staying on Course When Your Call Seems Far Away

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We all go through transitional seasons. Usually there is an awkward period where the old role or old way of thinking no longer fits, but the new thing has yet to come about. This can be a purely internal shift in our mode of ministry that happens while we keep the same job in the same community. But most often it is accompanied by external factors that reflect the internal: we switch jobs or careers and have a period of unemployment between, we go on sabbatical, we relocate. In these transitions, the act of waiting in our external circumstances reflects what God is doing in our hearts. In both cases, we have to wait on God to move us forward in his time. We can no more make the seasons of our hearts change than we can make the winter go by faster.

One special kind of waiting season relates to fulfilling our life purpose. These times when we long for the not-yet-seen fulfillment of our destiny are often much longer. Years of life may pass with a sense of waiting: the promise God has given us about what we are to do in life is not happening. No matter how much we struggle or what we try, we can't make it happen: all we can do is wait. Moses waited forty years to see his destiny fulfilled; Abraham waited 25, Jesus 18, David waited 15 or so, Joseph nearly 20. The biblical pattern is that a person's call is given, and then a long period passes before that calling is fulfilled.

Sometimes these biblical leaders waited patiently, believing God would come through (Abraham was the best at this), while at other times they wrestled with God (Jacob wrestled all night once) got discouraged and wondered if God had passed them by (think of Joseph languishing in prison), or felt like giving up on ever seeing their call come to pass (like when David went over to serve the Philistine king to escape Saul). Most of these leaders tried to make their destiny happen on their own steam at some point along the way, and failed miserably, like Moses killing the Egyptian or Abraham fathering Ishamel. Clearly, waiting for your destiny is not easy: all of these heroes of the faith struggled greatly with it. Why does God do things that way? If hope deferred makes the heart sick, why does God make us wait?

The Human Perspective

There are two perspectives on these transitional seasons. From a human perspective, the objective lies in the future, and we are waiting for it to come to us. We may be simply idling, or wrestling with whether a God who delays our destiny even exists, or feeling like we are slowly dying inside in a dead end job. However we are handling the wait, our fundamental perspective is that nothing is happening in the waiting. The crux of the issue is that something about our external circumstances must change for our destiny to come about. If only our talent were noticed, if only we were sponsored by some well-known leader, if only the pieces would magically fall into place! We are ready for our destiny NOW, if somehow life would allow us to

live the passion and the abilities that we have.

We hold onto the hope that someday our time of fulfillment will come, and then we will experience expansion and start to fully live out who we are and what we were born to be. Our sense of destiny lies in the doing, and the chance to do lies in the opportunity that has come although we are ready to begin. I've often prayed the "How long, Oh Lord?" prayer—haven't you? When will this useless waiting come to an end?

The Destiny Perspective

There is another way to look at waiting: step back and see it through God's eyes. In God's economy, the power of your ministry is a function of the depth of your processing. In other words, the more deeply Jesus' character gets worked into you, the more you have to give. The more years God has to sift you and refine you and prune you for greater growth, the more potential you have for world-changing impact. Your destiny is not an external circumstance you wait for God to give you: *it is an internal depth God waits for in you*. When Christ is fully formed in you, the power of the river of living water that will flow out of you to change the world will be unstoppable.

Waiting seasons are not empty, idling times devoid of growth. They are times where the lack of outward movement or productivity turns our focus inward: just where it needs to be to move us most rapidly to our destiny. It is so easy to end up resisting the very thing that will take us where we want to go! We are protesting and squirming and trying to get out from under the knife, while God in his mercy is saying, "If I let you go now, you will never become what you are capable of becoming." If we truly demand release, God will honor our request and let us go forward into a shallow shadow of our call, but he is in no hurry to release us from the wilderness. True ministry flows out of who you are: the incarnation of Jesus in your character through the deep work of God in your heart.

When Abraham was called to father a nation, he waited many years for the fulfillment of the promise in the birth of his son Issac. Along the way, God processed him through many circumstances: going down to Egypt, rescuing Lot from the kings, allowing Lot to take the best part of the land, refusing to take anything from the King of Sodom. In God's first promise of an inheritance to Abraham, he was to inherit the land of a single tribe. Each time Abraham responded well to God's processing, God increased the size of his inheritance (which is seen by the lengthening list of tribes in God's subsequent promises to him). The impact of your call is not a function of how much you get done: it is a function of how deeply you let God deal with you in secret in your times of waiting.

What is Expansion?

What is hardest to grasp about God's perspective on waiting is that our time of expansion **is** the waiting season. The size of our inheritance is a function of the depth of our processing. You win your ministry through the character that's built during your transitions. The expansion of your call, like Abraham's, happens during the season of waiting. The birth of Issac was simply the fruit of the faith God had already built in Abraham's heart over a lifetime of processing. Abraham's destiny as a father of faith was fulfilled when he believed God in his heart; Issac's birth was just the external fruit of a victory that had already been won in Abraham's time of waiting.

The wilderness is the place of expansion from God's point of view. Everything after that is just working out the implications of what has already taken place in the spirit realm in your heart. When you reach the point of releasing (from a human perspective), the true releasing is already over (until the next season of pruning for greater growth)! If you are waiting in the wilderness, take heart, and engage what God is doing in your heart. Your destiny is being shaped right now.