

The Refiner's Fire
Waiting in the Crucible

Lesson #11 for December 15, 2007

Scriptures: 1 Samuel 26; Psalms 37:1-11; Romans 5:3-5; 15:4,5.

1. This lesson is about patience, waiting, endurance, and faith. Is it harder for some people to have patience than for others? Why? Does God plan to teach us things by delaying His gifts?
2. Read Romans 15:4,5. How does the reading of Scripture give us patience and encouragement? Does looking at the life of Jesus encourage you to be patient?
3. What can we, as parents, do to help our children have patience?
4. Read Romans 5:3-5. Is it obvious to you why patience leads to endurance which leads to hope which leads to the giving of God's Spirit? Do you find that waiting naturally does that for you, or does it make you more irritable and impatient?
5. Is it easy for Christians to wait patiently? How do we focus our attention on God as the "Giver" instead of focusing on the "Gift" for which we are waiting?
6. Do we really believe that God's timing is better than ours?
7. How many things do you pray for—and wait for—that you really believe are good, but yet they never seem to come? Do you ever pray for patience? Do you pray for the second coming? Do you pray for the time of trouble which comes before the second coming? Do you pray for the faith, courage, endurance, and strength it will take to stand through the time of trouble?
8. How are waiting and patience related to faith and trust?
9. Should we be looking for ways to solve our own problems while we are waiting? Or should we just wait for God to solve problems for us?
10. Think of a small child waiting to open a gift. Is he/she delighted about the wait? Or is he/she only looking forward to receiving and playing with the gift? Making him/her wait seems only to produce impatience in most cases!
11. From a human standpoint, what is to be gained by waiting?
12. What do we mean when we say, "Good things come to those who wait"? Is that true only when we are dealing with the Lord?
13. Read Romans 5:6 and Galatians 4:4. These verses clearly imply that there are specific times when "things" are "right." What is it that makes the time "right" in God's eyes? What is God waiting for now?
14. What was God waiting for before the first coming? Was He waiting for a particular time on the calendar? Was He waiting for people to become more evil? What other reasons can you think of why God chose to come at the time when He did for the first coming? Was it because things were just right in the Roman Empire? By and large, there was peace, transportation was improving, education was improving, and there was a standard language, Greek, which made evangelism easier.
15. Were there certain conditions within Israel that were "just right" for the first coming? Think of the environment in which Jesus lived and ministered. There were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. There was constant foment, barely hidden under the surface,

among the Jews who wanted to rebel against the Roman government. Superficially, it looked like God finally had a group of people who were determined to do what He told them to do no matter what! What do we learn from the fact that those “super-religious” people were the ones who killed Jesus?

16. Think of the long “time prophecies” given in the book of Daniel. If someone tells you that you must wait a long time for something, does that tend to encourage patience? Why is God waiting for us now? Or is He? As you see things developing in the world and in the church, what are the major reasons why God has not come yet? Ellen White told us that God could have come long ago. “We” should have been in the kingdom in the 19th century! What has God gained by waiting?
17. Are there certain spiritual lessons that we can learn only by waiting? Does waiting help us to focus our attention on the Giver more than the Gift? If the Gift is God’s Spirit, why should we wait for that? Wouldn’t it always be beneficial to have God’s Spirit as soon as possible? Does waiting help to clarify our own motives and desires? In your own experience, do you find that waiting for something develops patience and endurance or impatience?
18. Can God “force” us to develop greater faith by making us wait? Are there some things which just take time and that even God must wait for? Are there issues to be resolved or questions to be answered in the great controversy? Will we ever know all the reasons for “the delay” this side of the kingdom?
19. Think of some people who waited an incredibly long time for something which God had promised them. Abraham and Sarah waited a long time for an heir! What did God gain by making them wait so long? Did God want them to realize that this child was a “miracle child”? Were they not ready to be good parents? Are there things that we are doing that are delaying God’s promises to us? Were there things that Abraham and Sarah did that delayed God’s promise to them?
20. Habakkuk asked God what was going on. God said, “Wait! My friends are willing to trust Me.” Then He informed Habakkuk that worse times were coming before good times would come again. Are we prepared to have God tell us that things are going to be worse before they get better? Do we want to know that? Can we “bear” that?
21. One of the best examples of “patient waiting” in the Bible is the story of David. David was anointed to be the next king when he was still a youth. He went to war and unexpectedly ended up killing Goliath. Should he have tried to exert his kingly rights at that time? He was called to the palace to soothe Saul’s troubled mind by playing his harp. Should he have worked things out with Jonathan to eliminate Saul at that point? He spent years running from Saul as Saul was trying to kill him. What was God’s purpose in all of that? Or was Satan working through Saul and thus, delaying God’s plans? David obviously had at least two opportunities to take Saul’s life, but he did not “take” those opportunities. He refused to fight against Saul, God’s anointed—a “messiah.” Do you think it would be easy for you to wait as David did?
22. Elijah followed God’s directions by going to the palace and announcing the drought. He followed God’s directions to the brook and later to the widow of Zarephath. After 3 ½ years, he finally entered public life again and had that incredible encounter on the top of Mount Carmel. After wiping out all of Jezebel’s prophets, that night he received word that Jezebel was going to kill him. What should Elijah have done at that point? Should he have just waited to see what God would instruct him to do? Would God have allowed Jezebel to kill him? As

the spiritual leader of Israel at that point, shouldn't Elijah have stood up and faced Jezebel just as he had faced Ahab? Didn't God need him to stand up and follow through on the victory gained on Mount Carmel? Should Elijah have organized a coup? If you—like Elijah—had prayed and fire literally descended from the sky and consumed the offering and the altar and produced a black hole in the ground, wouldn't you expect action when you prayed? What was the result of Elijah's running away?

23. There are many examples of impatience in Scripture. So often, we, like God's "heros" in the Bible, convince ourselves that we have found a way through a particular problem, almost as if God has not figured out what to do! Look at Abraham and Hagar, Moses at the rock, Sampson and his Philistine women! Even think of Saul/Paul—after his experience at the stoning of Stephen—trying to wipe out the Christian church. Those impatient moves turned out to be disasters. What are we supposed to learn from them?
24. Read Psalms 37:4. What is the psalmist trying to tell us? Is it possible that if we have patience and wait for God to do things in His own time, we will receive "gifts" that are beyond our imagination? Will God's answers always be better than the ones we could work out ourselves? If we really believe that, should it stop all worry and anxiety?
25. What would happen if we allowed God to take charge of our lives? How would God choose to lead us in the 21st century? Are we supposed to have any initiative on our own? If we carefully think through a problem and we suddenly get an idea which seems to be a novel and good solution to the problem, can we confidently say that God has led us? Or do we need to be completely passive in order to experience "God's leading"? Certainly, God does not want us to spend our time in laziness and sleeping! How do we draw the line between human effort and God's providence? Is it possible that we miss God's cues because we are so busy with our own plans?
26. God promised not to let us be tried more than we are capable of bearing. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
27. "The Lord is not pleased to have us fret and worry ourselves out of the arms of Jesus." Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, page 242.
28. Surely, the Seventh-day Adventist Church—and each Adventist individually—needs more practice in patience and being in tune with God's guidance for their lives. What are we doing to improve ourselves in that area of life?

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