

The Six Phases of Faith to Reach Your Dream

Phase 3 - INTENTIONAL DELAYS

We are looking at the six stages of faith to achieve your dream. The first stage is when God gives you a “dream”. Your dream determines your destiny, explains why you're here, your purpose in life and you should seek God's dream for your life.

But a dream is worthless unless you wake up and get to work on it. You must decide to set God's dream for your life in motion and last week we talked about how to make wise decisions. Today we'll look at the third phase, the delay. Dreams are never fulfilled immediately, there's always a waiting period.

Abraham had the dream of being the father of a great nation and he waited 90 years before he was even told he was going to have a son. Noah had the dream of building an arc but it took him 120 years, a long wait! Joseph was going to be the ruler in Egypt, yet he spent years in prison, waiting and waiting. David was anointed king, but he didn't become a king immediately. He was chased all around the country by Saul. There's always a delay period.

When the children of Israel left Egypt, they wandered around in the desert for forty years before they went into the Promised Land. It's only about two weeks walk between Egypt and Israel. It took them 40 years. Why the delay? Exodus 13:17 explains "When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them (directly), though that way was shorter. For God said, 'if they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt'." The wait was intentional because God knew that they weren't ready to receive their dream, the promise land and they would have to wait.

God does the same thing in our lives. There's always a waiting period in the fulfillment of our dreams. He makes us wait for two main reasons:

a. God uses delays to prepare us. The Israelites weren't prepared for war, and God was afraid if they went to war they wouldn't be able to handle it. Every dream has difficulties. God uses delays to get us ready for those difficulties. The delay here was designed by God. God uses delays in your life to prepare us for difficulties that are ahead.

b. God uses delays to test us. Deut. 8:2 " the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to ...test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. God was testing them while they were waiting for their dream. Sadly, the children of Israel flunked this test. They never got through Phase Three. A whole generation had to die in the desert because they didn't trust in God.

Your test of maturity is how well you handle the waiting rooms of life when things don't come immediately. How do you respond? The delays are a test of your faith and you ought to trust in God while you wait in the desert.

When you're going through the delays in life, waiting for an answer to prayer there's four things God says don't do. He says don't do these things because they prolong the delay.

1. When you experience a delay: Don't Fear

There are many reasons for delays but the ones you create because of your own fear, those are your fault. And God says that you shouldn't be afraid in a delay.

This is the first mistake the Israelites made. In numbers 13 God showed them the Promised Land and told them not to be afraid and enter the land. But they were afraid of the people that live there because they saw them as stronger and taller than they were. They had enough faith to move out of Egypt but they didn't have enough faith to move into the Promised Land. They were afraid and many of us feel this way. Because of their fear they had to wait 40 years more in the desert.

The problem with fear is that it keeps you in the wilderness, in the desert of life, the barren stage. It prolongs the delay. Many of your dreams have never been fulfilled, not because of God, but because of you. Because you aren't stepping out in faith. "One of these days..." The bottom line is fear. God says Don't fear. Fear causes the delays in your life and keeps you from moving ahead.

The antidote to fear is to focus on God's presence. Realize that God is with you. When you're afraid to go after the dream God has given you, you need to focus on God's presence. He says in Heb. 13:5 "**I will always be with you.**" This means that there will never be a time in your life when God is not with you. He's with you now, He always has been and He always will be. He's with you on your good days and your bad days. He's with you when you feel it and He's with you when you don't feel it. God says "**I will always be with you.**" Don't be afraid but focus on the presence of God.

Some of you are in the delay phase right now. You've been praying about something and it hasn't happened yet. You start to think that God has forgotten you. God has not forgotten you. He knows what you're going through. It is an intentional delay. God wants to build your character and He wants you to learn to trust in Him before He answers your prayers. You can count on Him for His help. Don't fear.

2. When you experience a delay: Don't Get Upset

Don't get worried. Don't get uptight. Don't complain. We do that when we get into Delays. This was the second response of the Israelites. Numbers 21:4-5 "**On the way the people lost their patience and spoke against God and Moses. They complained...**" This is typical of people, but this was the sin that kept them out of the Promised Land. They just griped all the time, no matter what God had done for them -- the Ten Plagues, the opening of the Red Sea. They complained about the journey, the delay, the leadership, no water -- then God provided them water. Then they complained about no food -- and God provided them food. Then they complained about the food they got. It's so easy to gripe when we're forced to wait. We don't mind waiting if we can complain about it.

God says don't get upset, don't worry, don't get uptight about it. When we really grumble is when we're waiting for God to act. We get in a hurry. Prov. 19:2 "**Impatience will get you into trouble.**" When we try to take matters into our own hands we get in trouble. We try to help God out. It's frustrating to be in a hurry and God isn't. God is never in a hurry. The Bible says with Him, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day. He's larger than time. One of the most useless things to try to do is to speed up God.

When you get impatient you start trying to work it out yourself. You get a dream from God, make the decision to go for it, and then when the delay comes and it's not fast enough for you, you start trying to figure out ways of doing God's dream on your own. You start trying to force the issue.

Don't get upset but trust God's timing. Psalm 37:7-8 "**Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act...Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper it only leads to harm.**" Resting can be an act of faith. It means you're waiting on God. God says, "Don't fear, don't get upset. Remember I'm always with you and trust My timing."

3. When you experience a delay: Don't give up

When you go through the delays in life don't faint -- don't get discouraged. Don't lose heart. Don't give up. This is the third thing the Israelites did and it kept them out of the Promised Land. Numbers 14:2-4 **All the Israelites grumbled against Moses... `If only we had died in Egypt! ... We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.** They gave up on their dream. They caved in. They had been in slavery 400 years but now because they are having a little bit of delay they want to go back to Egypt. "If only" and "go back" are phrases that are tell-tale signs you're discouraged -- that you're fainting, losing heart.

If only -- means we start to second guess ourselves. When we get a dream from God, make the decision to go for it and if it doesn't come immediately we start second guessing ourselves -- "Maybe I didn't really hear from God. Maybe I just made this up. Maybe God is not listening and He doesn't care. If only I'd done something different. If only I'd done this or that..." We second guess ourselves.

And then we say "Let's go back to Egypt." When we go through the delay phase of life we tend to idealize the past. We talk about the good old days -- which really weren't that good. The only thing good about them is they're over. The grass isn't greener on this or that side of the fence -- its greener where you water it. The good old days always look better in hind sight than they really were. We get into a project, start having a delay, and then want to give up. The Israelites had been in slavery in Egypt.

Some people would rather live in slavery than face the fear of freedom. They are not willing to push through and work on the problem until they get it right. They want to go back, give up. They settle for mediocrity in life. Don't settle for less than God's best for your life. If that means going through a tunnel of conflict, take the tunnel. In the middle of the tunnel it's dark and you want to run back to the light. But you've got to keep going and you'll come out in the light on the other side. Instead of fainting -- be persistent and pray.

Remember God told Joshua to march around the walls of Jericho and they'll all fall down. It didn't happen the first time they did it. They had to do it seven times. Seven days in a row. And on the seventh day they had to do it seven times. Why the delay? If God was going to make the walls fall why didn't He make them fall the first time? He was teaching them to be persistent and pray.

Galatians 6:9 **"Let us never grow tired of doing what's right, for if we do not faint, we'll reap a harvest at the right time."** In the Law of the Harvest there is always a delay between sowing and reaping. There's always a season. You plant in one season and you reap in another. There is a delay in between. God wants to see if you're going to keep cultivating, planting, sowing -- see if you really mean business. If God sees consistency in your life then the harvest comes. It will not come immediately because it proves nothing if He does it immediately. No delay, no character development, no stretching your faith.

Lk 18:1 **You need to pray continually and not lose heart.** Pray continually and lose heart are the two options you have in life. You will always be doing one or the other. If you pray continually you will not lose heart, you won't be discouraged. If you don't pray continually, you will lose heart. You will faint. You will get discouraged by the problems you're facing in your life -- family, school, wherever. You've got to keep on praying.

What do I pray during the delay phases of life? Pray "Help me hold on and not give up." The Bible says, **"They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings, as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."** They won't give up. They'll keep on keeping on. When you experience a delay:

4. When you experience a delay: Don't forget

During the delay, time causes us to forget many things. When there is a delay, we tend to forget our dream. We tend to forget what God had done in our life. We tend to forget God's goodness to us in the past. We tend to forget that God is with us. We tend to forget God's power. We tend to forget how important it is that we stay in God's strength and we start focusing on all our problems than on what He has done for us. The Bible says, don't forget.

This was the fourth mistake that the Israelites made out in the wilderness. Ps. 106 tell us "They forgot the many times God showed them his love, and they rebelled at the Red Sea. But He saved them as He promised. But they quickly forgot again! They wouldn't wait for God to act." This says many times. It's unbelievable how short their memory was. In Egypt, God does ten plagues and the children of Israel forget it because a couple days later they're at the Red Sea and saying "We're all going to die!" They've forgotten just what God's done. God does a miracle and opens the Red Sea. They walk through to the other side and immediately forget that miracle. "We're going to die of thirst!" God provides water miraculously. They forget that and complain, "We're going to die -- no food!" They were always forgetting.

But we should not be too quick to judge them because we do the exact same thing. When a delay occurs in our lives we start acting like God has never done anything for us. Has God done things for you in the past? Sure He has. You can count on Him to do it tomorrow, or the next day... When you act like, "God's not going to bail me out of this one!" you're forgetting all the other times He's bailed you out. Some of the times you didn't even know about it but He did. What have you been forgetting about God, how He's helped you so many times?

The consequences of forgetting the Bible says is "...they would not wait." Instead of forgetting you remember God's promises. The Lord is not being slow to carry out His promise." 2 Pet. 3:9. You ask, why isn't God fulfilling the promise in my life? He's waiting on you. You think you're waiting on God? He's waiting on you to learn to not fear, not fret, not faint, not forget. He wants you to learn that before He brings the solution. He has some things He wants you to develop first, some growth patterns He wants you to put into your life. God's never in a hurry. He can do things immediately, but He's working on a larger agenda. The delays that come in your life do not destroy God's purpose. They fulfill God's purpose in your life. They make you a better purpose.

What is it you've been waiting on God to do? For Him to turn a problem around? To answer a prayer? To make a way in a place where it seems impossible for there to be a way, financially or physically or any other way? Maybe you've been waiting on God to bring that right person along? Maybe you've been waiting on God to turn a crisis into a solution? God hasn't forgotten. And a delay is not a denial. Not yet is not the same thing as No.

Hab. 2:3 "These things won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, do not despair, for these things will surely come to pass. Just be patient! They will not be overdue a single day!" The things you've waited for in your life, God will bring to fulfillment if you do not give up, don't get upset, don't despair and don't forget.

DELAYED BY DESIGN
The 6 Phases of Faith -- Part 4
Pastor Rick Warren

Exodus 13:17 "When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them (directly) though that way was shorter. For God said, `If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt'."

"...God led you through the wilderness for forty years...testing you to find out how you would respond and if you would obey Him." Deut. 8:2 (LB)

What To Do While Waiting

1. DON'T _____

"...They would not enter the land. They said... `We are afraid ... The people there are stronger and taller than we are..." Deut 1:26 + 28 (GN)

Instead:

"Fear not, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed. I am your God, I will strengthen you and I will help you... and uphold you..." Isa 41:10 (LB)

2. DON'T _____

"...On the way the people lost their patience and spoke against God and Moses. They complained..." Num 21:4-5 (GN)

"Impatience will get you into trouble." Pr. 19:2 (GN)

Instead:

"Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him to act ... Don't fret and worry -- it only leads to harm." Ps. 37:7-8 (LB)

"God has set the right time for everything." Eccl. 3:11 (GN)

3. DON'T _____

"All the Israelites grumbled against Moses... `If only we had died in Egypt! ... We go back to Egypt.'" Num. 14:2-4

Instead:

"Let us never grow tired of doing what's right, for if we do not faint, we'll reap a harvest at the right time." Gal. 6-9 (Mof)

You need to pray continually and not lose heart." Lk. 18:1 (JB)

4. DON'T _____

"They forgot the many times God showed them his love, and they rebelled ... at the Red Sea. But He saved them as He promised... But they quickly forgot again! They wouldn't wait for God to act..." Ps. 106:7-8 (GN), 13 (LB)

Instead:

"I will bless the Lord and not forget the great things He does for me." Ps. 103:2 (LB)

"The Lord is not being slow to carry out his promises ...but He is being patient with you..." 2 Pet. 3:3-8 (JB)

"These things won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, do not despair, for these things will surely come to pass. Just be patient! They will not be overdue a single day!" Hab 2:3 (LB)