



The Slowness of God

A Bible Study by Grace L. Fabian

Can we do a Bible Study together?

I'd love for you to dig into God's Word with me. Open your Bible as you study.

What does the Bible say about speed and specifically about slowness? I think about Isaiah's comment in 64:10.

"Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down."

Have you ever prayed that way? I have. In the dark moments of our lives, oh, we don't use those same words but something similar like, "I could use a little help down here. I know it's perfect up there, but everything has gone awry down here." We want God to hurry up and come to the rescue.

Teaching at the Christian Leadership Training College in Papua New Guinea kept me busy, busy, busy. I loved my students and my teaching but found myself not eating healthy meals until I bought a slow cooker. I put chicken and potatoes in the slow cooker in the morning and when I arrived home late the spices had been simmering in my food all day making my food hot, tasty and ready to eat. I know several recipes, like lasagna, that taste better the next day. The slow cooker beats the grill any day. God's patience beats my rushing every day.

Joseph

Read about Joseph in Genesis 37-50. There are some very discouraging chapters there, aren't there? Write down some of the troubles (that's putting it mildly) that this 17-year-old faced:

What about into his adult years?

What might have been some of the thoughts that came to Joseph causing him to keep trusting God, to walk with Him a little further, and rest in Him a little longer?

Does it feel like your life is going faster or slower than Joseph's? What can you learn from him?

Wilderness

Another Biblical example of slowness is when God made the children of Israel wander in the wilderness for 40 years. See Exodus 16:35, Numbers 14:33-34; 32:13, Deut.2:7; 8:2-4;29:5. Can you think of any possible reason/s why God would stretch this out for forty years instead of wiping those disbelieving people out immediately?

How did God show his faithfulness to them during these forty years?

What conclusions can we come to about God's sense of time? Read Psalm 86:15

Jericho

Another curious passage about slowness is found in Joshua 6. My first thought when reading this Jericho story is that (1) this is not a real good battle strategy and (2) why 7 days? Could God have cut to the chase and knocked those walls down on the first day?

Is God ever in a rush?

What does this mean for your rushing around?

Do you think this has any application for Bible translation (e.g. as Wycliffe Associates rushing to complete half the New Testament in 2 weeks)?

Jesus

Remember that the baby Jesus was in Mary's womb for nine months, then he grew up in Joseph and Mary's home learning to be a carpenter. Finally, he waited until he was 30 to present himself as the Lamb of God. Talk about "slowness!"

Romans 2:4 gives us a clue of God's kind and patient character. Write a prayer thanking Jesus for taking the time to bring you to repentance.

Read Romans 15:5, then paraphrase this Scripture in your own words. It would be helpful to read it in several different versions.

Can you think of a time when you tried to rush God's plan? How did that go for you?

Does thinking about the history of the church by reading about Joseph, Israelite, Jericho and Jesus help you understand that God is not in a rush?

Seed

"I am an active member of the Slow Communication Movement, relying to the extent possible on words thought out, to be sent by the postal service, slow and late but fast enough. For most things humans have said, slow has been plenty fast."ⁱ

"Most people expect God's Word to work like a stick of dynamite — but God's Word is like a seed."ⁱⁱ

How is a seed like God's Word? See Mark 4:1-20 for ideas. Consider also I Corinthians 3:6.



Where is an area of your life that one of these apply? “I’m rushing this.” “This is good enough.” “I’m moving ahead and that’s all God asks of me for now.” “I don’t need perfect; I need to trust God’s timing.”

Pray with me:

Slow me down Lord

Ease the pounding of my heart
By the quieting of my mind
Steady my hurried pace
With a vision of the eternal reach of
time.

Give me amidst the confusion of my day
The calmness of the everlasting hills
Break the tensions of my nerves and
muscles
With the soothing music of the singing
streams
That live in my memory.

Help me to know
The magical restoring power of sleep
Teach me the art
Of taking minute vacations
Of slowing down to look at a flower
To chat with a friend
To pat a dog

To read a few lines from a good book.

Remind me each day of the fable
Of the hare and the tortoise
That I may know that the race
Is not always to be swift
That there is more to life
Than measuring speed.

Let me look upward
Into the branches of the towering oak
And know that it grew great and strong
Because it grew slowly and well.

Slow me down Lord
And inspire me to send my roots
Deep into the soil
Of life's enduring values
That I may grow towards the stars
Of my enduring destiny.ⁱⁱⁱ

To read more on this topic read D.A Carson’s book, *How Long, O Lord?*

ⁱ Wendell Berry, found in his poem *The SCM*.

ⁱⁱ *The Word of God is a Seed*, His Word, My Mouth

ⁱⁱⁱ From *Butterworth Church service 6th March 2011: Minister, Sandra Wylie*