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PERFECTLY DESPERATE

Have there been times when you waited on God and it seemed He did not answer? Looking back, what was it He was waiting for in you?

In what ways has God surprised you by going against your expectations of Him?

What can you do to use time with God to maintain an open mind about who He is?

Galatians 4:4-5 – ⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

1) **When We're Ready...**

We are stubborn creatures. Once we know something, it takes a lot of evidence to convince us we are wrong. Some have not learned how to change their minds. It takes humility, emotional toughness, and above all a desire to know the truth. If we are honest, many of us don't want to know the truth—we want to know what's pleasant and convenient. Truth is like water...give it enough time and it will reshape the hardest stone. The first way in which time with God impacts us is His patience. He waits until truth has worn down deception in our hearts to the point we would replace it with anything to stand on solid ground again. Once we are perfectly desperate for a new truth is the moment when we're ready to follow Him wherever He will lead.

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♦**Open up**: God's patience drives us mad. We transition from believing we are independent to needing help, thinking other people will help to needing God, then pleading with God to do what we need. Still He waits. We have not invited God to be God. We are begging Him to obey our will and fit our idea of Him. He is beyond our imagining. When we finally open up to any version of God, now "the fullness of time had come (Galatians 4:4)." He uses time rather than divine force to open our minds. They are delicate and need to move slowly through such radical rethinking. Surprisingly, this is God's gentleness.

♦**House call**: God demonstrates what it means to be actively patient. He is not waiting for us to make the first move. He waits until we will not be destroyed by His action. When the moment arrives, He comes to us. He is eager to spend time with us, letting us see Him and blessing us with the assurance of His presence. When others were ready, "God sent His Son (v4)." Jesus will make a house call on us, too, when we are ready to receive Him as Himself.

II) He Will Tell Us...

We get to a point we think we cannot bear the circumstances of life any longer. We are about to break. This is the moment for which God's been waiting. We didn't know it, but we have been broken for a long time. Until we realized it, we would not listen to Him. So He waited. Now that we have exhausted everything we can think to do, we will listen. He will tell us how to be who we are.

♦**Unexpected arrival**: Consider if Jesus came into your life before you were ready. You still have a fixed idea of who God is and how He will behave. Perhaps you expect the invisible hand to provide you the resources you are sure you need to survive your situation. Maybe you expect Him to use nature to destroy your enemies with flood or famine. Maybe, like many, you expect a warrior to rise seemingly out of nowhere to enact violence on evil. Instead, you get the unexpected arrival of Jesus, "born of a woman (v4)," just like every other mortal. If He came before you were ready, you would have missed or ignored Him because of His seeming normalness.

♦**In the same boat**: We also expect God to be profoundly different than us. Otherwise, we would handle our issues on our own. That hasn't worked, so we need our idea of a superhuman. He is...just not in the ways we think necessary. He is in the same boat with us, inhabiting a vulnerable body and expected to expose Himself to the rough and tumble crowd of society. He was "born under the law (v4)," obligated to subordinate His needs below those of everyone else. Now that we are open, we can understand He means to liberate us, not bind us to a better master. God's patience opens us to our potential.

III) All We Need to Know...

God has told us all we need to know about ourselves, Him, and our mutual existence. The wise and patient teacher tells us the same story in many forms until it lives in our hearts and minds. Then, if we permit, His Spirit replaces the story and He lives immediately within the space the story carved out. We only perceive the possibility when we see Jesus living like us, born and bound like us in the same world we find nearly uninhabitable. We see Him thriving and learn that we, too, can thrive if we receive the spiritual nourishment He offers.

♦**Precise instructions**: We live in a fantastic age in which anything we want to know we can learn instantly through the magic of online videos. Many of us discover we can do most anything once we see it, even when reading a manual is mystifying. All the stories and guidance offered in ancient times failed to show us what God meant. It took Jesus living like us to provide the precise instructions we can follow. He lived under the law "in order to redeem those who were under the law (v5)." His patience opened us to see how one like us could live like God.

♦**Always there**: Jesus didn't change our circumstances like we fantasized. He showed us what was always there but we refused to see. We can live well in any circumstances. It is our perfect desperation to be like God in our hearts that allows us to see our capacity to be unchanging like Him, "so that we might receive adoption as children (v5)." Time spent with God while we are in the condition of humble desperation strengthens us in ways otherwise impossible. Don't make Him wait long.

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