

## **Learning to Turn Off the Meter and Wait**

1 Samuel 13:2-15

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One profession I think would breed impatience would be a cab driver in New York City.

Here is an occupation where a person isn't making money unless the meter is running. Taxi drivers don't get paid to wait for people unless of course, the meter is running.

But on the other hand, if the meter is running, waiting in traffic might not be such a big deal.

We've all heard how impersonal the big city can be, so when I read this story written by a New York City taxi driver, it brought tears to my eyes.

Listen as I share the heartwarming story. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

I arrived at the address and honked the horn. After waiting a few minutes, I honked again. Since this was going to be the last ride of my shift, I thought about just driving away, but instead, I put the car in park and walked up to the door and knocked.

(<https://www.elitedaily.com/life/culture/story-one-taxi-driver-will-change-entire-day>)

"Just a minute," answered a frail, elderly voice. I could hear something being dragged across the floor. (Ibid)

After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 90's stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940's movie. (Ibid)

By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. (Ibid)

There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware. (Ibid)

"Would you carry my bag out to the car?" she said. (Ibid)

I took the suitcase to the cab, then returned to assist the woman. (Ibid)

She took my arm, and we walked slowly toward the curb. (Ibid)

She kept thanking me for my kindness. (Ibid)

"It's nothing," I told her. "I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother to be treated." (Ibid)

“Oh, you're such a good boy,” she said. (Ibid)

When we got in the cab, she gave me an address and then asked, “Could you drive through downtown?” (Ibid)

“It's not the shortest way,” I answered quickly. (Ibid)

“Oh, I don't mind,” she said. “I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice.” (Ibid)

I looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening. (Ibid)

“I don't have any family left,” she continued in a soft voice. “The doctor says I don't have very long.” I quietly reached over and shut off the meter. (Ibid)

“What route would you like me to take?” I asked. (Ibid)

For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. (Ibid)

We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl. (Ibid)

Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing. (Ibid)

As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, “I'm tired. Let's go now”. (Ibid)

We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico. (Ibid)

Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her. (Ibid)

I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair. (Ibid)

“How much do I owe you?” She asked, reaching into her purse. (Ibid)

“Nothing,” I said. (Ibid)

“You have to make a living,” she answered. (Ibid)

“There are other passengers,” I responded. (Ibid)

Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly. (Ibid)

“You gave an old woman a little moment of joy,” she said. (Ibid)

“Thank you.” (Ibid)

I squeezed her hand and then walked into the dim morning light. Behind me, a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life. (Ibid)

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver or one who was impatient to end his shift? (Ibid)

What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away? On a quick review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life. (Ibid)

We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware-beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one. (Ibid)

End of story.

When I read this, it reminded me why I need to breathe in more of God's timing for all things, be more present in the moment, and less anxious about how things are going to turn out.

In short, I need more patience. How about you?

Let me tell you where God has been teaching me patience. It's been in the search for church staff.

I knew that Justin was leaving to accept the job at First Baptist Dalton a month before he announced it to the church. While I couldn't post anything publicly, I began searching for his replacement as soon as I could.

One night my wife said to me, “You need to find Kyle Tolbert.”

Kyle is the 25-year-old son of Rev. Carl Tolbert, the youth pastor at FBC Laurens, South Carolina. I worked with Carl for eight years at Trinity Baptist Church in Moultrie.

His son Kyle is a University of Georgia graduate and is currently a seminary student. He's already worked two years as a youth pastor in a large church not far from here and has a year of seminary behind him.

I didn't waste any time finding him and set up an interview with him. Our committee interviewed him, and then he met with parents of our youth committee. But in the end, he chose a church in Raleigh because he said that was where he felt God was leading him to go. The pastor there is his former supervisor at the church where he previously worked in Greyson.

God was in that process, just not in the way that I had hoped or imagined. I thought we were going to strike gold with the first candidate we interviewed and not have any waiting time for a new Youth Pastor.

Over the last two months, I have spent significant time with several other people, listening to their stories, telling them about our church, sitting down with some of them face-to-face, and talking with others on the phone.

All total I have spent about 40 hours in this search process. As of yet, while we haven't called someone into this role, God has used me in these conversations to help some of these people make some major steps in their discernment process as each one of them has made some important decisions about the next steps in their careers.

In the end, I have felt a lot like that taxi driver. I am no closer to my own destination, but in the process of doing my work, I have helped someone else get to where they needed to go.

However, I have discovered that it is difficult for me to reach up and turn off the meter. How about you?

A similar thing could be said about our Office Manager position. We have made a hire there and will announce that to you next week.

We need to realize that what we are doing has great value. It might not have been on our agenda for the day, but it was on God's agenda for us.

If we exercise the patience for God to use us at that moment, we will get a tremendous blessing from going with God. Without a measure of patience, the moment and the experience will pass us by.

Grandparents have learned this because we have more patience with our grandchildren than we had with their own children. We have learned to turn off the meter. We are not counting time. We are counting the experience.

We must be careful when all we are concerned about is the meter and not the experience.

We must be careful when our anxieties overrun our abilities to wait upon the Lord.

That's what cost Saul his credibility with the prophet Samuel and set into motion the loss of his kingdom. Saul lost his patience.

Here's what happened.

Saul's son Jonathan attacked a Philistine outpost at Geba with a thousand of his men.

This was a declaration of war on the Philistines, and the announcement was made throughout Israel that Saul had attacked the Philistines and people were summoned to join Saul and prepare to fight.

In doing so, Saul had awakened a giant. He had stirred a hornet's nest of trouble for himself and his nation.

While Jonathan had a thousand men and Saul had two thousand men, 1 Samuel 13:5 says that the "Philistines had three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore."

Saul found himself outnumbered and overpowered. Instead of fighting, they retreated. They hid in caves, thickets, among the rocks, in pits, and cisterns. Some of them even crossed the Jordan River into the land of Gad and Gilead.

Their philosophy was live to fight another day.

The only soldiers that stayed grouped were those that were with Saul. They were waiting for the Prophet Samuel to arrive and give them God's blessing. With the blessing of God, they believed they would be victorious.

Samuel had sent word that he would arrive in seven days.

It wasn't unusual in those days for people to arrive late. Travel was always unpredictable. There were no traffic jams, but it was not easy to predict how long it would take to walk a hundred miles.

When Samuel didn't arrive at the appointed time, some of Saul's men began to abandon him. Saul's anxiety began to rise. His patience wore thin. When he could wait no more, Saul stepped into the role of a priest. He offered the burnt offering and the fellowship offering to God himself, a job reserved only for the prophet of God.

Just as he was finishing making the offering, Samuel arrived.

Perhaps Samuel could see the smoke from the sacrificial offering from a distance as he approached. Maybe the smell from the sacrifice filled his nostrils as he got closer, a scent he was accustomed to as the priest who offered the sacrifices on behalf of the people.

But this time, someone had stepped in and taken his place.

When Saul went out to greet Samuel, there was no hug, no kiss, and no cordial greeting from Samuel. He was upset.

Samuel asked, "What have you done?"

Saul explained that his men were abandoning him. He told Samuel that he was late. He didn't arrive when he said he would. The meter was running. He had to do something because the Philistines were going to come against him. He needed the Lord's favor.

Most of us are empathetic with Saul. We can feel his anxiety. When we are anxious, who of us can sit still? Most of us have to do something. Who of us wants to wait on God?

We want to strike gold with the first person we interview. We want to get the first job we interview for.

We want to know what is going on with our body the first time we go to the doctor and be healed yesterday.

We want our family problems to go away the first time we sit down with a counselor.

We want instant gratification.

We seem to want no part of a slow process even if it promises deep spiritual lessons and maturity that can help us navigate deep waters of faith and place us in a position to minister to others in a way that would otherwise not be possible.

Who of us has been guilty of allowing our anxiety to get to the best of us and instead of being patient, of waiting on God? Instead, like Saul, we rush in to do what only God can do, and we mess things up.

What Saul did was step into a godly role, a role that was not his to take.

It is true, he said he wanted God's favor, but he was more interested in doing it his way than God's way. He was more interested in the ritual than he was in having the right kind of heart.

Hmmm. More interested in the ritual than in have the right kind of heart. Has that ever been you when you've gone to church? Has that ever been you when you've shared the Lord's Supper?

Are we more interested in the ritual than having the right kind of heart?

We have to be so careful that we do not mistake religion and the doing of church for waiting on God and doing things God's way.

Just because you do something religious doesn't mean you did something God's way. Saul is our example.

He pushed ahead with his own agenda. He wasn't patient. He didn't wait on God.

You cannot rush God.

You cannot rush a nice home cooked meal.

You cannot rush reading a good book.

You cannot rush intimacy.

You cannot rush important talks.

You cannot rush trust.

You cannot rush something that you want to last forever.

You cannot rush a great career.

You cannot rush healing.

You cannot rush a sunset or a sunrise.

You cannot rush God.

You cannot rush potty training a child.

There are some things that you cannot rush.

If we want God's favor, we must learn to wait on God.

This morning take inventory of your life. Where have you been like Saul? Where have you stepped in and dictated the direction of your life because you were tired of waiting on God?

Where have you rationalized all your decisions because your anxiety was running high?

We all want God's favor. But sometimes we just bathe our decisions with religious platitudes instead of being patient enough for God to work through us and reveal to us the next steps for our lives.

When we lose patience, we make missteps.

In verse 10 of Psalm 46, God's voice comes to the Psalmist: "Be still and know that I am God."

We are in constant motion. For most of us, being still isn't what we do best.

That is what God wants from us today.

So turn off the meter. Be still. In that stillness, God's presence will be revealed to you. God will reveal himself to you and through you, as he did through that cab driver. As this happens, you will be amazed at the ministry that will happen because you chose to wait and go with God.

Then will come true those words from Isaiah: "But 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; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:31 KJV)."

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