

Week 18: God Fulfills His Promises in His Timing

Hook



Main Point: Godly people wait for the Lord's timing on their mission and opportunities.

The USDA approximates that 30 to 40 percent of the food supply is wasted in the United States; that's about 133 billion pounds of food in a year.¹ You've heard it said, "Timing is everything" and that's never truer than when it comes to produce. Fresh produce has a relatively short shelf-life and varies from fruit to fruit. Break into groups and arrange the following fruits in order from shortest to longest shelf life if the ripe fruit is refrigerated at the date of purchase.

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|-----------------|------------------------|
| A. Pineapple | 2 days |
| B. Dates | 5 weeks |
| C. Bananas | 2 weeks |
| D. Blueberries | 3 days |
| E. Cherries | 1 week |
| F. Citrus fruit | 1.5 weeks |
| G. Apples | 5 days |
| H. Grapes | 12 months ² |

Answer: E. Cherries (2 days); C. Bananas (3 days); A. Pineapple (5 days); H. Grapes (1 week); D. Blueberries (1.5 weeks); F. Citrus fruit (2 weeks); G. Apples (5 weeks) B. Dates (12 months)

Sometimes it's challenging to identify when fruit is ripe. Take, for instance, the humble avocado. According to the Hass Avocado Board, a room temperature avocado is ripe for one day.³ Sometimes it feels like winning the lottery to find a ripe avocado in store. So instead, you might purchase a not-yet-ripe piece, bring it home, and wait. Peel too early; the fruit is inedible. Peel too late; the fruit is inedible.

Q: How are your avocado skills? Do you typically have success in identifying the right time to use an avocado?

Q: How important is God's timing in a believer's life?

Q: In what ways are God's perfect timing evident in David's life?

RECAP: We're finally entering a new period of David's life (section 4, weeks 18–22), when David was finally made king over all of Israel after 20 to 30 years of waiting. God had promised to make him king when David was a young shepherd boy 8 to 15 years old. Now he was 37. He had patiently fought as a general for King Saul, waiting for his turn for the throne. When Saul turned against him, David fled to the wilderness and lived in caves and foreign cities, on the run from Saul for eight years. After Saul's death, he still waited and inquired of the Lord before making any moves. God told him to go to Hebron in Judah, where they made him king, but only of the tribe of Judah, for seven-and-a-half years. Then he had to deal with Abner, Saul's general, raising up Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, as king of Israel, and all fighting that came with it. Now, finally, after Saul and Abner and Ish-bosheth were all gone, all the tribes of Israel came to David and asked him to be king over all of them.

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Book (Note: 1 Chronicles 11 & 14 are parallels to this passage)

Main Point: Godly people wait for the Lord's timing on their mission and opportunities.

2 Samuel 5:1–5 and Psalm 78:67–72 [Read]

Talking Point 1: God uses periods of waiting to prepare us for our callings.

Q: Why did the tribes of Israel come to David and ask him to be king?

Q: Why is it significant that they used the term “shepherd of my people”?

David had been waiting *decades* to receive the throne God had promised him when he was a “young lad.” He was now 37. He had spent more than seven years ruling over just Judah and fighting with the house of Saul. Before that, he had spent eight years running from Saul, hiding out in caves and Philistine cities, gathering his army of “mighty men.” Before that, it had been seven to 12 years since he had been anointed. For a total of at least 20 years, maybe closer to 30, David had waited for God's promises to be fulfilled:⁴

- Ages 8–15: a shepherd boy in his father's house; Samuel anointed him king
- *After his anointing:* was brought to the palace to play music for Saul to soothe him; became one of Saul's armor-bearers; traveled back and forth from the palace to his father's house to tend the sheep
- Ages 16–19: fought Goliath⁵
- *After he fought Goliath:* became best friends with Jonathan; was promoted to general; married Michal, lived in Saul's house
- Ages 20–22: grew in strength and power in Saul's house
- Ages 22–28: fled from Saul, lived on the run in the wilderness
- Ages 28–30: lived in Gath, then Ziklag as a vassal of Achish
- Age 30: became king of Judah
- Age 37: became king of all Israel

Now that Saul, Abner and Ish-bosheth were gone, there was no longer any opposition to David's claim to kingship. And yet, instead of standing up and declaring himself king, he waited for the elders of the tribes to come to him.⁶ The elders of all the tribes of Israel came to David with three reasons they wanted him to be king: 1) unity of the tribes, 2) his military strength and leadership skills, and 3) God's anointing.

First, they said, “We are your bone and flesh,” claiming brotherhood. They wanted to reunite the tribes. Second, they admitted that even when Saul was king, it was David who was really leading Israel (5:2). Finally, they recognized that God had promised David that he would rule over all of Israel (5:2).⁷

David had waited. He had been patient. He had been honorable and faithful, even to Saul, who had so badly mistreated him. He didn't do everything right at every step along the way, but in general, he showed great patience and trust in God as he waited for God's calling on his future to come to fruition. God used each of these periods in David's life to prepare him to fulfill that calling. The time in the wilderness taught him to trust in the Lord as his refuge and strength. The time in Saul's house helped him to grow in military strength and wisdom. The time as a vassal of the Philistines helped him to better understand his enemies. Most importantly, his early years as a shepherd taught him what it means to lead God's people the way He does, as our Shepherd (Psalm 23).

God used the imagery of good and bad shepherds to describe the leaders in Israel – bad shepherds used the flock for their own gain while good shepherds tenderly cared for their flocks (Ezekiel 34). He intentionally chose a literal shepherd to rule over His people. Like God our Shepherd, David guided the people in the right direction, provided for them, and protected them (Psalm 23). Just as God commanded His leaders to do, David saw his role as that of a servant-leader, thinking of what he could do for the people rather than what they could do for him (Deuteronomy 17:14–20). He led them with an “upright heart” and “skillful hands” (Psalm 78:72).

Q: How has God used earlier times in your life, especially hard times, to train you for what He called you to do later?

Q: How can knowing that God uses our time of waiting as a time of training help us to be patient?

2 Samuel 5:6–16 and Deuteronomy 17:14–20 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Godly people trust in the Lord to fight their battles.

Q: According to the text, why did David become greater and greater?

The story tells us David became “greater and greater” because “the God of hosts” was with him. This is specifically talking about David's military strength; “hosts” means army. The term “heavenly host” doesn't just mean a group of angels; it means an *army* of angels. This is the title of God our Warrior. In the ancient world, nations believed winning a battle proved their god was stronger than the god of the defeated army. Over and over in the Old Testament, God proved He was stronger than any other “god.”

When God parted the Red Sea and destroyed Pharaoh's army, Moses sang, “The Lord is a man of war” (Exodus 15:1–6). God said He would fight for them; they just had to be still and watch what He would do (Exodus 14:14). Throughout Israel's history, Scripture always gives credit to the Lord for Israel's victories. The book of Samuel makes it clear that David's success wasn't because of his own strength, power or wisdom but because the Lord was with him (5:10).

David's first move once he was declared king over united Israel was to establish a new capital city. Staying in Hebron would have made the other tribes feel as though they were just adding on to Judah. So David chose Jerusalem, a city that bordered Judah, but was technically in territory allotted to Benjamin. It had not been controlled by any Israelite tribe, so it was somewhat neutral territory.⁸ It was occupied by the Jebusites, one of the people groups God had commanded them to drive out of the land (Exodus 23:23–24). In conquering it, David could establish his own centrally located capital city and himself as a king devoted to the Lord's commands.⁹ Jerusalem means "city of peace" but would also be called "the city of David." It is also called Zion because that was the name of the stronghold there (5:6–7). Zion can refer to Mount Zion, the city of Jerusalem, the whole nation of Israel, the people of Israel, or, eschatologically, the future kingdom of God in the age to come.

But as David became more successful and more honored by other nations, he began to take more concubines and wives, which was typical for a king in the ancient Near East but banned by God's law for Israel's kings (Deuteronomy 17:17). Kings typically acquired many wives as a show of prowess but also to build alliances with foreign nations through marriage. But Israelites were forbidden to intermarry with foreigners so their hearts would not be led astray from the Lord.

While David trusted God and followed His commands in many ways, this was an area of weakness for him, one that would lead to his greatest sin, which would then multiply in his children's generation. No matter how committed we are to the Lord, we all have blind spots. We all have weaknesses and temptations. That's why we must keep coming back to the Lord and asking in prayer, as David did in Psalms, "Search me, O God and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23–24).

Q: How can you learn to find your blind spots? How can we help each other see them?

Q: Though we aren't fighting physical battles, how can we see the strength and power of God as He fights for us today?

2 Samuel 5:17–25 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Godly people wait on the Lord and inquire of Him at every step.

Q: What does it say about David that he inquired of the Lord multiple times before acting against the Philistines?

During the seven-year period when David was just king of Judah, the text tells us only about fighting between David and Saul's house, not about any warring with the Philistines. Perhaps they felt David wasn't much of a threat, being the king of but one small tribe. But now that he was king of all Israel, the Philistines decided to attack (5:17).¹⁰ The text doesn't tell us which of the Philistines were involved, but it couldn't

have been all of them because David continued to fight with them throughout his reign (8:1; 21:15; 23:10). It says that he struck down the Philistines “from Geba to Gezer,” which was a large portion of the land from Jerusalem to the west but not all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. This area was all north of Gath, so it's unlikely Achish was involved in any of this fighting.¹¹

In this passage, we see David inquiring of the Lord before making any moves. Instead of going to his human advisors and doing what made the most sense according to human wisdom, he went straight to God every time. The “Rephaim” were giants, and they were “spread out” in the valley – there were a lot of them. This valley was southwest of Jerusalem, and David could see them from “the stronghold” (Zion). But when David asked God, the Lord said He would “certainly” give them into his hand. So David went and defeated them. He named the place “Lord of breaking through” because the Lord broke through his enemies “like a breaking flood” (5:20). This imagery of a huge army spread out in formation that God just busted through and washed them all away reminds us of Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea when Moses called God our Warrior. David again gave credit to God the Warrior for all his victories in battle.

But then more Philistines came up again, in that same valley. This time when David asked, the Lord told him not to “go up” but gave him very specific instructions about going around behind the army because the Lord Himself would go before David to strike them down. These instructions were so detailed, they were likely given through a prophet or a vision rather than just the ephod, which just answered yes/no questions.¹² This strategy was much like what God asked Joshua to do in the battle of Jericho, letting the Lord be the One to do the fighting.

Most of us don’t fight literal physical battles against enemy armies, but we are all involved in daily spiritual battles. Ephesians describes our lives as a battle against the “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” and commands us to put on “the full armor of God” to stand against “the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10–18). We may not always feel as if we are fighting a battle, but there is a constant battle raging in the heavenly realms every single day, and we need God’s wisdom and power to fight. Paul said we have the power to demolish strongholds when we “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:1–6). The battles we fight are in our own minds, hearts and souls against evil and darkness in the world around us. And like David, we must inquire of God, at every single step, what He wants us to do. We need to put on the armor of God daily and pray “at all times” in the Spirit, without ceasing (Ephesians 6:18). That is how we stand firm.

Q: Describe times you have faced spiritual battles. How did you inquire of the Lord?

Q: What spiritual battles are you facing right now? What thoughts do you need to take captive to Christ? Why is it important to seek God at every step of our battles?

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Took

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Gardens take time to grow. You don't plant a seed and then pick the plant at the first hint of a green sprout. You wouldn't get any fruit that way. You have to wait for the plant to bud and grow, then for fruit to appear and ripen. When it is fully ripe, you can harvest. Some fruit can take years to develop from seed. An apple tree seed will take anywhere from six to 10 years to produce fruit and then only a small crop.¹³ Given the right care, it will produce more and bigger fruit each year. That's what it's like to wait on God's timing for things to happen. If David had tried to take the throne right away, as soon as he was anointed, he wouldn't have been "ready" for it. To be prepared for his mission/calling, he needed to go through all the things he experienced on his journey.

Q: Describe seasons of waiting in your life, times in which God was preparing you for something.

Q: What helps you to trust the Lord during times of waiting?

Q: Why is God's will the best for your life?

CHALLENGES

THINK: How can you know when it is God's timing to take steps toward your purpose and calling? How can we inquire of the Lord today? What should we do in the meantime while we wait for God's promises to come to fruition? Why is it important not just to "sit around and wait" but to actively seek God's will in *this* moment? How is He molding you and shaping you for your future calling?

PRAY for God to mold you as you wait for His promises to unfold. Whether you are in a season of waiting, growing or harvest, pray for Him to mold you into greater Christlikeness. Pray for His wisdom in knowing how to move forward in every step of your life.

ACT: Take every thought captive. David sought God's will at every turn in his physical battles. Paul commanded us to take captive every thought in our spiritual battles. This week, focus specifically on your thoughts throughout the day. Start your day with a prayer asking God to take your thoughts captive to His will and His purposes. Ask Him to

guard your mind and give you His thoughts. Then, throughout your day, each time you find your mind wandering, take note of what you think about and why. Instead of trying to empty your mind of those things, pray about them. Ask God to take control of those situations and concerns and guide you in how to handle your thoughts.

NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*: Next week, we'll see David's first order of business after conquering Jerusalem and subduing the land from the Philistines – bringing the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. We'll see how this reveals the heart of David as the heart of a worshipper.

¹ <https://www.usda.gov/foodwaste/faqs>

² <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>

³ <https://loveonetoday.com/how-to/pick-buy-fresh-avocados/>

⁴ All dates are approximate. The Bible is specific about certain time periods, not about others.

⁵ We know he was younger than twenty because he was not yet a soldier. In Israel, you couldn't serve in the army until you were twenty (Numbers 1:45)

⁶ Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).

⁷ Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).

⁸ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

Each of the twelve tribes was allotted a section of the Holy Land, but they had not conquered all the cities in those areas; this is why there were still Canaanites and Philistines controlling these cities and living among them even though it was the promised land.

⁹ Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).

¹⁰ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

¹¹ See the map in the *ESV Study Bible*.

¹² Robert D. Bergen, *1–2 Samuel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).

¹³ <https://www.gardeningdream.com/how-long-does-it-take-for-an-apple-tree-to-bear-fruit/>