



Jack
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**YOUR NAME IS ON
HIS REFRIGERATOR**

CHAPTER 1

I HAVE HAD TO LEARN THAT MY DAD IS TRUSTWORTHY

LIFE IS LIVED IN THE UNRESOLVED

I grew up a Dodger fan. I had a poster of the 1973 Dodgers in my room. I remember watching them on Saturday's game of the week on NBC with Curt Gowdy doing the play by play and Joe Garagiola as the color analyst. I sat there and kept a scoresheet as I watched. Bill Russell was my favorite player so when I was in little league I wore his number 18. Once a year the Dodgers had helmet night at Dodger Stadium. Every kid in attendance got a plastic Dodgers helmet. The plastic was so thin that if you got hit in the head with a baseball while you were wearing it, there would probably be more damage done than if you weren't wearing the helmet. But I had to have one so I asked my dad if we could go and he surprisingly said yes. We drove the 2 hours from my house to Dodger Stadium and as we pulled into the parking lot my Dad asked if there were any tickets left for the game. The attendant said, "Nope, we are all sold out." My dad was more annoyed that the parking

attendant was going to charge us for parking when there were no tickets than the fact that his son was heartbroken. My dad made a U-turn and we headed back home. On the way home we passed a miniature golf course and I asked my dad if we could at least stop there and play. He said "no." He did, however, stop at a liquor store.

That disappointment has stuck with me. In that moment my dad proved to be unreliable. He did not have my best interests at heart. The heartbreak did nothing but distance an already broken relationship.

That heartbreak has had some lasting implications for my relationship with my Heavenly Father. Can I trust him? Will he disappoint me? I hate to admit it but the answer has too often been yes. My relationship with God and life is too often unresolved. It's filled with hurt and pain and waiting and in those moments God reminds me of my dad on Helmet Night.

There is an awkward space that we all find ourselves living in. It's annoying and frustrating and can be exhausting. Unfortunately for us we spend the majority of our lives living in this space. Let me see if I can explain it in terms of goal setting. There are three elements of goal setting. Two of these moments are good moments, maybe even great moments.

Setting the goal is a great moment. When you set a goal you are full of hope. You are setting a new course for your life. It's exciting. This is what setting a goal looks like.

Brainstorming a new plan of attack.
Writing out goals in a new iPad.
Sharing the dream with a friend.
Buying a new calendar to hang on your wall.
Buying a new set of workout clothes.
Setting a goal smells like dry erase markers and a new pair of sneakers.

The end of that relationship goal or work goal or fitness goal might be failure, but at least you'll have some comfortable clothes to watch television in.

Let's say you succeed. You lose that weight, you get that promotion, that new direction you sent the company thrives and everyone applauds you. That is another great moment. Here are the earmarks of reaching a goal.

It's dinner out with co-workers to celebrate the achievement.

You receive a year end bonus.

It's retiring your fat pants.

For guys it's finding a reason to walk around with your shirt off.

It's a celebration lap around Nordstrom.

The victory celebration smells like Ruth's Chris Steakhouse, or depending on your budget, the steak sandwich at Subway.

Those are both great moments in the goal setting process. Years ago my wife and I decided to embark on an adoption journey. We met this beautiful girl on a trip to Haiti and

decided to give her a forever home. There are two Facebook posts that book end our adoption journey. They show the high sides of goal setting. When we started my wife posted this.

"Jack announced to our church that we are "expecting" and that we are seeking to adopt. He also asked them to pray as we have LOTS of obstacles. He called it a "high risk pregnancy":) Thinking maybe I need to go on bed rest! Care team get the meal calendar going!"

I have great memories that season. We excitedly told family of our intentions. We have pictures of us signing papers. Adoption is all about signing papers. Think of refinancing your mortgage times one hundred. We had to have papers from the Sheriff's department saying we weren't criminals. We had to have fingerprints taken to prove we weren't criminals. We had to undergo a psychological evaluation. Jilane passed no problem. There were papers to sign, checks to write, people to share with. It was expensive but exciting.

It all culminated in this Facebook post written from Haiti when we went to pick up our daughter.

"Hey gang. We are in Haiti to pick up our daughter. Can you believe it? Amazing. She is out of the orphanage and living with us. We feel so blessed. Today is the first day that we have Daphlie and don't have to give her back."

In the process of the adoption we had made many trips to Haiti and they all ended in goodbye. Goodbye was always the hardest part with Daphlie. On getaway day she would shut down. Often times she would run and hide in her room so she didn't have to say goodbye. On the day that Facebook post was written those goodbyes were over. From then on it was a celebration. We celebrated with a meal in a great restaurant in Haiti with our friends. We celebrated when we took Daphlie home. We celebrated when she got to see her room and all the clothes friends had bought for her. (Side note. After one year of living in the U.S. she had collected 30 pairs of shoes. It didn't take her long to become fully American!)

There are two great moments with goal setting. Setting the goal and reaching the goal. Unfortunately, most of life is spent in a third place.

Living in the unresolved.

It's the space between the goal setting and the goal celebrating. This third area is not nearly as fun. This is what it feels like in the unresolved.

Long hours of hard work.

The temptation as you drive past Krispy Kreme.

Mistakes and failures and set backs.

Injuries that put you on the couch so instead of running a marathon you're watching a Star Trek marathon.

Waiting and waiting and more waiting.

Self doubt and second guessing.

Worries that wake you up and won't let you go back to sleep.

Here were some of the hurdles we faced in the middle space of our adoption.

We waited months to get our paperwork signed by the Children's Judge in Haiti only to realize he misspelled Daphlie and we had to do it again.

We waited 6 months for an exit letter that the government adoption agency in Haiti said would take 10 days. Then a week after we got it, they took it back and asked us for a form to explain our prior contact with our daughter. After we turned that in we had to wait another 6 months.

There was the phone call we received when our adoption agent told us that I was red flagged for being too old. That was rough. She could have at least told me I didn't look that old.

The waiting lasted four years. Four years of agony and frustration, bureaucracy and pointless delays. In my relationship with my wife, I am the crier. I cry at everything from Disney movies to Diehard. I have never seen my wife cry as much as she cried in those 4 years.

Living in the unresolved can be agony. This waiting space is a place we are all familiar with. There are all kinds of waiting.

There is the waiting we face after we applied to get into a school. Will we get in? Will they want us?

We dream of falling in love and getting married. Then there is the waiting for Mr. or Mrs. Right. That waiting includes sifting through losers, answering your mom's questions about your love life, being rejected, creating a dating profile online. Sometimes that search for Mr. Right is so hard it's easy to settle for Mr. Right Now.

After marriage there is the waiting for children. For some that is a long and difficult wait, but even if you have children when you want, the waiting has just begun. There is the waiting for your child to walk and waiting for your child to talk then waiting for them to stop talking and then waiting to put them in school so you can get your life back. With kids the waiting never ends. It starts with a dream that your child will grow up and be successful and then the rest of your life is waiting to see if it will happen.

There is the waiting to get a job. After securing that job, there is waiting to get the promotion that will take your career to the next level. Then waiting for that job to bring the personal security you've hoped for.

There is the waiting of starting a new business. Will it get off the ground? Will it pay off? Will you meet your financial goals?

Lewis Smedes put it like this. *“We wait in fear for a happy ending we cannot write. We wait for a not yet that feels like a not ever.”*

Some of you have never heard of Lewis Smedes. Let me give you another theologian that you have probably heard of, rock star Tom Petty. *“You take in on faith. You take it to the heart but the waiting is the hardest part.”*

The hardest part of life is not the goal setting or the goal achieving. The hardest part is the ability to persevere in the middle. To set the goal and not shrink back.

To hang in there in the marriage.

Not giving up on your kid who’s pushing his limits.

To not quit on the friendship even when you get hurt.

Pursuing the goal in your job even though no one seems to notice.

Unfortunately, too often, in the waiting my mind questions the motives of my Heavenly Father. Are you punishing me for some mistake I made? Will you prove to be reliable and come through for me? Will all this work and pain and struggle result in making a U-turn and heading back home from Dodger Stadium? Over the years I had to learn the hard lesson that even in the waiting my Heavenly Dad has my best interest at heart.

My go to verses when it comes to waiting are found in Hebrews 11. This chapter details some of the people in the Bible who have become renown for their faith. This is how their faith is defined.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1

This really is the key to living in the unresolved. It's the belief in what you do not see. You haven't reached it yet, but you are hoping for it. The apostle Paul defined faith like this

Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? Romans 8:24

Did any of you have a mom that made the following statement to you? You were frantically looking for your wallet or your keys and your mom said "It's always the last place you look." Think about that for a moment. It's always the last place you look. Why would you keep looking for what you've lost once you've already found it? That is the stupidest thing you can say to someone who's looking for something. (Please don't tell your mom she's stupid). We've all heard this phrase but there is no sense to it regardless of who says it to you.

The same is true of faith. If you already have something you don't hope for it. You have it. Based on these two verses we know this about faith.

Faith only exists in the absence of what you hope for.

Faith is only alive when you are living in the unresolved. That's the proving ground for faith. It's when you're faith

matures. If you already have something, there is no need for hope. You don't need to leverage your faith. You have it.

The rest of Hebrews 11 gives us examples of people who showed this kind of faith. Put a bookmark in your bible and read this chapter this week. In the face of dashed hopes and broken dreams, these people did not shrink back. They didn't give up. They made it through the unresolved times. It would take forever to go through this list so lets just look at a couple of these characters in Hebrews 11.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. Hebrews 11:8-12

God told Abraham that He was going to make him into a great nation. The nation of Israel would come out of his family. When God told him this, the great nation of Israel consisted of he and his wife Sarah. 25 years later it was he and his wife and one son. That's a lot of waiting for a very small nation.

Jump down to verse 22. We find another familiar name.

By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones. Hebrews 11:22

Joseph's story of his technicolor dream coat was told on Broadway in just short of three hours but the resolution of his story would take a bit longer. Joseph's brothers were jealous that his dad gave him that beautiful coat and sold him into slavery, but he rose to become second in command of Israel. Do you know how long from the time he was sold to the time he would take his role as second in command? 13 years. For 13 years he was either in slavery or in prison. Joseph spent 13 years living in the unresolved, enslaved and in prison.

The list continues in verse 32.

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets. Hebrews 11:32

When David was 15 years old the prophet Samuel looked at all his older brothers and he chose the youngest child, David to be the next king of Israel. It would be another 15 years before David actually took that role. After David was anointed future king, the current king, Saul became jealous of David. Because of Saul's insecurity he made it his mission to hunt David down and kill him. David would spend the

next 15 years running for his life. Saul used his army to hunt him down so David had to hide in the wilderness, hide in caves, and fake insanity. It was 15 years living in the unresolved.

Just about every person on the list in Hebrews 11 spent most of their life waiting for the promise. Life is spent living in the unresolved. Don't you hate that?

Honestly, I wish my life was more like an episode of Full House. If I lived on Full House, Danny Tanner would be my dad, Uncle Joey would tell me jokes, and all of my issues would be resolved in 30 minutes including three commercial breaks and a song by uncle Jesse. Life isn't like that. There is always something unresolved.

Why is it that our Heavenly Father puts us there these extended times of waiting? Why do we have to wander through these long periods of unresolved issues? C.S. Lewis put it like this, *"I am sure that God keeps no one waiting unless He sees that it is good for him to wait."* God puts us through these extended periods of waiting and hoping and running and hiding in caves for one reason.

The period of waiting and hoping is where growth happens.

Abraham needed those 25 years so his faith could develop. Joseph needed those 13 years to prepare him to lead a nation through crisis. David needed those 15 years so that he could learn to rely on God. Look with me at Psalm 17.

I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer. Show me the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes. Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings Psalm 17:6-8

David didn't write that from his palace when he was king. David wrote those beautiful words in his late teens when he was running from Saul who was trying to kill him.

Life happens in the unresolved. Growth happens in the unresolved. Faith happens in the unresolved. Faith doesn't even exist unless it's unresolved.

Let me show you two more verses in Hebrews 11. They say almost exactly the same thing. The idea is so important the author says it twice.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. Hebrews 11:13

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Hebrews 11:39,40

All the goals and hopes and dreams that these people were called to and spent years trying to achieve weren't resolved

in their lifetime. They were part of a bigger story. It's the story of God on earth. That story won't be resolved until Jesus comes back to earth and makes everything right. In the meantime it's up to you and me to do our jobs and grow in the unresolved.

Here's the challenge, and you're not going to like it. Learning to live in the unresolved means that you and I have to get good at something we hate. Waiting. Culturally, this is not our strong suit.

Anne Fisher in Fortune Magazine spoke about our reluctance to wait. The symptoms of our pace sound like this. *"Eating lunch at your desk while also checking emails and talking on the phone is one symptom. So is doing something else while on conference calls, or even while brushing your teeth. We all find ourselves multitasking now and then, but what about habitually interrupting someone who is talking, or always getting frustrated in a checkout line or in traffic, even when it's moving along smoothly? When microwaving something for 30 seconds, do you feel the urge to find something else to do while you wait? If one or more of these sounds all too familiar, you probably have a bad case of a malady that psychologists have dubbed 'hurry sickness.' A sure sign is repeatedly pushing the door-close button on an elevator."*

God has a different plan for us than this frantic hurry we find ourselves in so often. He says over and over and over that we need to be willing to wait.

Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD. Psalm 27:14

The eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. Psalm 33:18

Wait for the LORD and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land. Psalm 37:34

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. Psalm 40:1

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. Psalm 130:5,6

Those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. Isaiah 40:31

I have a feeling that there are some people reading this that your issue goes beyond slow drivers and bad waitresses. You're tired of waiting and there is one person you hold specifically responsible. It's your Heavenly Father.

You want answers.

You want to know what to do in your marriage.

You are frustrated with how difficult parenting is and you want to know if it's worth it.

You want to know if you should stay in your current job or step out.

You want to know if you'll be able to retire.

You want instant results in areas of your life that may take decades.

I have three children in their 20's and one who's 19. I'm still waiting to see progress in areas I've prayed for them for my whole life.

We want to see growth in our spouse. The things they struggle with are ingrained. It can be years to see movement.

We want to know that our job has purpose. We won't really know if we've made the impact we want in our business and the people we work with for literally decades. Our lives are spent waiting. That's why God tells us over and over to wait patiently.

I found the following quote from F.B. Meyer that spoke to me.

"God has his set times. It is not for us to know them. Indeed, we cannot know them. We must wait for them. If God had told Abraham that he must wait all those years until he pressed the promised child to his bosom, his heart would have failed him. So in gracious love, the length of the weary years was hidden. And only as they were nearly spent and there were only a few more months to wait, God told him, according to the time of life, "Sarah shall have a

son." If God told you on the front end how long you would wait to find the fulfillment of your desire or pleasure or dream, you'd lose heart. You'd grow weary in well doing. So would I. But he doesn't. He just says, "Wait. I keep my word. I'm in no hurry. In the process of time I'm developing you to be ready for the promise."

When we adopted our daughter we had to wait four long years to get her. People gave us a lot of advice when we were in our four year battle to adopt our daughter but here was the wisest piece of advice. A close friend Allie Denny said this to my wife. *"I know you have to do a lot of waiting, and it's hard, but think about this. Who do you want to be when your daughter gets here? Do you want to be anxious, worried, and stressed, or do you want to be calm, and relaxed and full of faith?"*

Let me ask you a question. Who do you want to be when the hoping is over? Who do you want to be when you get that job or find the love of your life?

I want to have a deeper trust that God is going to come through.

I want to not jump to disastrous conclusions.

I want to bring the calm to my unresolved situation.

I want to learn to be grateful in this day.

I want to develop a half full attitude.

My guess is that in this moment you are living in the unresolved. Right now there's is an issue that is bothering you as you drive home and pursues you when you have a

quiet moment and wakes you up in the middle of the night. Where do you want to be when your situation is resolved? God challenges us to wait on Him. He wants us to trust that he has our best interests at heart. He knows that if we pray to him and run to him with our problems and stay the course that we will grow and mature. To those people he promises peace and purpose. He knows that life is lived in the unresolved.

It has taken me a lifetime to learn that waiting in the unresolved is not my dad's way of punishing me. I've learned that the journey isn't a dead end leading to a U-turn because he's unreliable and that even if I never make it to helmet night, the lessons along the way have been invaluable.

Think about it

What is a goal that you have set for yourself recently?

What is an accomplishment that you are proud of?

In what areas of your life are you living in the unresolved?

What do you want to be when the waiting is over?

What lessons do you think God is trying to teach you in the space between goal setting and goal achieving?