

## Learning Not to Wait

When I think about waiting, and lessons related to it, my thoughts usually go the direction of learning to be content in waiting. You know, waiting for things like getting a driver's license, graduating from high school, or getting married. My life has certainly had those times when that lesson seemed to be the priority. More recently I've been thinking more about how much I need to learn *not* to wait. Some things are for today and can't wait (at least not very well) until tomorrow.

An example is sending cards and gifts for a couple of graduates from our church. Because Lynette and I were out of town over Memorial Day weekend, we missed a number of graduations. I had wanted to get those cards out before leav-



Conrad Showalter

ing home, but for many reasons, that didn't happen. After returning home, the urgency of getting those cards sent seems to diminish with each passing day.

Of course, I, along with each of you, have to deal with the reality of limited time. I simply can't get everything accomplished in life that I would like to, and that means lots of choices. Maybe it's the decision-making process that initiates the problem of waiting. I don't like to face the reality that I can't do it all, so I put off making the decision that this option or the other is too much. Then all the unfinished things snowball, and I become overwhelmed with all that is yet to be done.

Technology hasn't helped me with this problem. Time was when limitations

of communication placed a natural "cap" on options for staying connected. Email increases enormously the number of possibilities of keeping in touch with people at a distance. An ever-increasing supply of news, articles, and blog entries are there at my fingertips, waiting to be digested and inviting response. No wonder I like to garden!

I think of those lines from scripture like "Today is the day of salvation," and "encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today," and "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." Yes, today is the time of opportunity, and I will try to fill today with the most important things. The cards are written, and today, or tomorrow, I'll slip them in the proper mailbox at church.

## CONFERRING

## The Christian and Politics

Since I am a bit of a political junkie, I have been highly entertained by the 2008 presidential campaign. Each morning I read the editorial section of the *Columbus Dispatch* with interest as political commentators speculate and analyze the strategies used by the candidates, now reduced to John McCain and Barack Obama. How should a Christian engage the world of politics?

It is difficult to navigate through the rhetoric of bloggers, newspapers, and radio talk shows ranging from James Dobson to National Public Radio. One steady source of guidance has been the principles found in several CMC documents, including the *Conservative Mennonite Statement of Theology* (1991) and *The Church and Civil Government* (1970). Here are some reminders that I have appreciated during this tumultuous political season:

- I deeply appreciate the blessings and liberties of my country.
- While the church and civil government have both been established by God, the church is more important.
- The purpose of the church is to be a voluntary group of believers who are yielded to the Lordship of Christ, walk as strangers and pilgrims on earth, and serve as ambassadors for Him—calling people to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 11:13; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).
- The purpose of civil government is to maintain law and order by protecting the good and punishing the evil (Romans 13:3).
- The government is distinct from the church in purpose and cannot be expected to function by

the ethics of Christ and the New Testament. Its purpose is different from the church's purpose under God's plan. Therefore, while I vote, I do not rely on the ballot box or legislation to accomplish the church's task.

- My highest Christian duties to government are to pray for, respect, and obey the government in matters not violating obedience to Christ and His Word.
- History, under God's sovereignty, is not ultimately shaped by human might or power but by the Spirit of God. I find that reassuring.



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