

I Can Think. I Can Wait. I Can Fast.

by William Frank Diedrich

This phrase comes from one of my favorite books, *Siddhartha*, by Hermann Hesse. At one point in the novel, *Siddhartha* enters the business world after years as a monk. He has three skills: he can think; he can wait; and he can fast. These skills serve him well as he quickly becomes successful as a businessman.

Thinking: Most of what goes on in the human mind is not thinking at all. It is repetitive chatter and recurring memories. We tend to react to people and situations, either to protect ourselves or to gain some advantage. We get caught up in groupthink, simply parroting what others have told us to think. Thinking means that you allow new thoughts into your mind.

Thinking allows you to look at your own behavior and ask: "Is this the person I am meant to be?" Thinking has you looking at your thoughts and asking yourself: "Is this working. Is the way I am thinking and behaving making things better? Is it helping?" You may not have an answer right away, but it is important to ask the question. Answers will come in time. Thinking is letting go of your opinions long enough for inspiration to come through.

Major problems in life become defining moments when you allow yourself to think, rather than react based on old memories. You may find yourself praying for help, but you do not have the childish expectation that the Divine is going to do it for you. The Divine will act through you. As St. Francis asked in his prayer, "Lord, make me an instrument for your peace." The inspiration that comes through you is true thinking. Your brain and your mind are not originators of thought, but instruments through which the Divine thinks in you.

Waiting: "Infinite patience produces immediate results." (ACIM) Even though we live in a fast food world where we seek and receive instant responses, success takes patience. This is the most difficult one for me. I admit that I always want it now. Yet, I am not willing to compromise who I am to get what I want. If you subject your well being to the decisions of other people, you will suffer from impatience. If you know who you are and focus your energy on building the life you want, it is easier to be patient. Patience means letting go of your need for specific outcomes, while maintaining your focus.

Fasting: Fasting usually means to go without food for a period of time. Personally, I know how to fast. I can go without food for a day or two with no adverse affects. However, I do enjoy eating, so I don't fast very often. The essence of fasting is impulse control. We all have impulses, compulsions, and addictions in varying degrees. Food, sugar, alcohol, sex, drugs, anger, resentment, power, and self pity affect us in varying degrees. In the least, many of these distract us from what we truly want. At their worst, these are addictions that control us and have the power to destroy our lives.

In the season of Lent it is my tradition to give up sweets for six weeks. I experience impulses to eat sweets, but I refrain. I have made a decision, and I will not violate this commitment to myself. Lent is an opportunity for me to take inventory of how I am

doing at impulse control. When it comes to negative emotion, I don't have to wait for Lent. Each day I listen to my thoughts and release resentments and anger, choosing instead to use my creative thinking faculty to address situations.

Thinking, waiting, and fasting are valuable skills to develop. Reactiveness, impatience, and poor impulse control are detractors to joy and success. They cause us conflict and stress. You are equipped with a mind that can think and tap into inspiration. Knowing that answers are available to you, even if you don't know what they are at this point, helps you to be patient. You have the power of intention that will help you to stay focused on living the way you truly want. Acknowledge and develop these strengths and you will avoid the traps of greed, unhappiness, disappointment and bitterness. You will know that the power you need is not out there, but it is within you. It is not within the superficial ego, but within the deeper spirit and purpose that lies within you.

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