

Why Is This Taking So Long

By

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I knew I should be happy for my roommate, but when she shared her exciting news—“I have an agent”—tears came almost immediately. I’d been attending writing conferences for seventeen years and still didn’t have an agent, despite writing three work-for-hire books with Focus on the Family. Eight years had passed since the last one hit the shelves. I’d followed through on invitations to submit book proposals and a request for a complete novel manuscript, only to have every one of them turned down. Now I was going through a divorce and trying to survive as a single mom on a freelance writer/editor’s income. If ever I needed doors to open it was now. Instead, they were opening for my friends.

Two and a half years later, my dream of finding an agent—my dream agent, in fact—had finally come true. But the book proposal that she loved so much—a devotional for single moms—still hadn’t found a home.

For the first time since attending my first writers’ conference in 1995, I considered setting writing aside.

I was tired of arriving at conferences with nothing to show for my efforts while my friends arrived with new releases.

Tired of writing proposals for books that nobody wanted.

Tired of wanting what I couldn’t have.

Two thoughts kept me from quitting:

- 1) The reality that I would be miserable if I did.
- 2) If this was a test of my commitment to writing (*How badly do you really want this?*) I didn’t want to fail.

I’m so glad I didn’t quit! A few months later, my agent found a publisher for my devotional, and in March 2016, it released—on the last day of the Mount Hermon Christian Writers Conference, where I’d gotten my start.

This might sound shocking, but I am now grateful for the frustrating timing.

- If the first agent I connected with had signed me, or the second, I wouldn’t have the wonderful agent who represents me now.
- When I think back on my early book proposals and that completed novel, I still had so much to learn about the craft, marketing, and which genre suited me best. Most of my ideas flowed from personal struggles that were still unresolved. Now that I was in a more professionally and emotionally mature place, I saw what a disaster those other projects might have been if accepted.

- By the time I signed the book contract, I had twenty-year's-worth of relationships to draw on for endorsements, reviews, guest blog posts, and influencers.
- The book flowed from my experience as a newly-single mom—so while exciting things happened for my friends, God had been at work in me as I lived my future material and developed a heart for hurting women.
- I had six months to complete my first draft. By the time I sat down to write it, my post-divorce life had settled down, and I'd done enough healing to revisit some painful memories.
- God timed my release date so it fell during the conference where I first sensed His call to write, and where I would be surrounded by friends who'd been part of my very long journey, including my healing journey. It was like a five-day launch party!

Perhaps you are feeling like I did a few years ago—like no matter how hard you work, and no matter how long you study the craft, exciting things always seem to happen for your friends instead of you. Maybe you enjoyed some success only to have your writing life get stalled.

Maybe, like me, you have considered quitting. Instead of doing that, I encourage you to draw on the valuable lessons that I learned from this long period of waiting.

- 1) **Waiting often tests how badly we want something.** How happy would you be if you stopped writing? If you know you would be miserable, ask God for renewed patience, trust, and wisdom as you seek His direction.
- 2) **You probably get sick of hearing this, but we really *can* trust His timing.** He not only knows when we are ready craft-wise, but also which agent we need, when we are emotionally ready to take on a daunting task like a book, and when we will have time to write it well. He knows who our audience really is, and what we need to experience in order to minister to them through our stories.
- 3) **This is not wasted time.** Consider what you are learning while you wait for that long-awaited yes. Take advantage of this opportunity to hone your craft, find your voice and niche, build relationships within the publishing community, and grow your platform. If you are going through something difficult, pay attention to what God is teaching you, and what you will have to offer others later.

In those moments when you find yourself crying, *Why is this taking so long?* take time to record the benefits that you discover in waiting for your dream to become reality.

I look forward to the stories that God will tell through you!