



## WOW: Word Of the Week

### Avoidance

October 4, 2023

In a recent email, Frank Viola addressed an interesting question. “How can I tell the difference between waiting and avoiding?” A biblical illustration of waiting is found in Acts 1-2. But sometimes in our lives, what we call waiting is in reality avoidance. What is the difference?

Etymology does not define a word, but it is often helpful to understand the background and development of a word. The etymology of “wait” connects to “being awake.” The word carries the idea of observing carefully or remaining watchful. The etymology of “avoid” includes the idea of clearing and getting rid of. One easily sees the word “void,” meaning empty. What is the difference? In waiting, one is alert, watching, eager, anticipating. In avoiding, one seeks to make something go away. We could say that waiting is positive; avoiding is negative.

Waiting on the Lord includes trust and confidence. Viola observes that avoiding includes lack of trust and confidence, resulting in fear. When someone is avoiding something, fear is nearby.

Spiritually, waiting means one is eager for God to act, recognizing that God often acts through us. Avoiding means hesitancy to act, as though everything depends on us. Put another way: Are we depending on God or are we depending on us?

An example from my own life relates to evangelism and sharing the Good News. On some days, I find myself “waiting and watching” with God. (In fact, that is my Thursday prayer theme!) But there are also days when God aligns the circumstances of my life to help me do his will, and I avoid acting. And the most frequent cause of inaction when it comes to evangelism is fear.

The question ultimately comes down to fear and faith. The antidote to avoidance is faith. Believe God. Believe his promises. Believe the power of his word, his will, his way in this world. Buy into his commitment to fulfilling his eternal purpose—salvation in Christ! **Inaction is not always bad. But sometimes, we need to ask ourselves, “Am I waiting or am I avoiding?”**