

WAITING FOR THE CLOSED DOORS TO OPEN

A melting pot of all walks of life, both the wealthy and the destitute alike present themselves at the emergency room on approximately equal footing. Many arrive under on their own power, others are carried, some pushed. Certain problems declare themselves openly, others not so.

Social status aside, all share the single goal of having an unseen doctor behind closed doors evaluate and treat a condition they perceive can't wait until the morrow. A watchful receptionist dutifully logs arrivals and ushers each in turn to the triage nurse for an initial assessment of the severity of emergency.

Though all comers greet the same receptionist, explain to the same nurse, and wait in the same room, their ultimate hope lies in what and whom they cannot see beyond the closed doors.

Despite individual feelings of priority, those with the greatest needs--as determined by the nurse--are seen first. Each must wait his turn.

In itself, the process of waiting evokes varied responses. The father carrying his daughter in his arms speaks little, but her limpness and silence scream "Help!"

A tearful, baseball-clad nine-year-old with swollen forehead needs no words. A woman moans, painfully shifting from side to side in her wheelchair, even as the mentally retarded youth beside her sits quietly.

The father with the limp daughter soon approaches the receptionist, who in turn whispers to the nurse, who strides with urgency through the closed doors. Momentarily, the doors open, a hand beckons, and father and daughter hustle through them. The doors close again.

As I waited, I couldn't help but simplistically evaluate the drama unfolding around me.

Each person had his own need, his unique sense of emergency, his peculiar and particular crisis. Each made his own appeals to those who might terminate the waiting and facilitate his passage through the closed doors. For only then would his situation be effectively analyzed and proper remedy dispensed.

How much like life, I think. We hope in and pray to a God we cannot see, making appeals of varying emergency, clamoring to have our own needs somehow expedited to the time of action and remedy. And we wonder when and where and how priorities might be assigned and aligned and ordered. When will the waiting end and the doors open?

And we wait, often questioning whether we have even been heard. Then as we see how others have found relief, we eagerly assent that our time surely won't be far off. But why not now?

Some observers of this process openly question the sanity of anyone who would hang his hopes on an unseen power and personage who seems to be in no hurry at all.

But our faith in the invisible God to whom we pray is bolstered as we observe his visible servants listening, watching, and occasionally making their own intercessions on our behalf.

I settle on a not-so-profound thought: what I can't see doesn't diminish its reality, and what I don't understand doesn't negate its power.