

A FOUR WEEK BIBLE STUDY

BY BARB ROOSE



I'm
Waiting,
God

FINDING BLESSING
IN GOD'S DELAYS

Praise for *I'm Waiting, God*

Barb Roose tackles the topic of patience in a way that really hit home for me personally. I have a lot of “why, how, and when” questions for God. Combining in-depth Scripture study with practical tools and personal stories, this study is one of the best I’ve ever read!

—**Melissa Spoelstra**, Bible teacher, speaker, and author of *Romans: Good News That Changes Everything* and numerous other Bible studies and books

*When waiting is hard and long, the last thing you need is someone disregarding your pain, with platitudes like “just push through.” In *I’m Waiting, God*, Barb walks with us in our waiting. Warm, tender, and a help for moving forward, Barb’s study has left me stronger, knowing I can wait so His glory is seen.*

—**Lynn Cowell**, author of *Make Your Move* and member of the Proverbs 31 Ministries speaker and writer team

Barb Roose is a wonderful role model of walking out biblical truth while in life’s waiting room. This study is a must read for anyone wondering what to do while waiting and wanting to stay close to God in the meantime.

—**Pam Farrel**, best-selling author of over forty books, including *Discovering Hope in the Psalms: A Creative Bible Study Experience*

This study will help you trust God even when His timing doesn’t make sense. Barb tenderly guides you through God’s Word and her own personal examples of God’s faithfulness, assuring you that you aren’t alone as you wait for God to move. You’ll find peace about God’s provision and a deeper understanding of God’s desire to take care of you.

—**Heather M. Dixon**, speaker and author of *Determined: Living Like Jesus in Every Moment*

If anyone has the authority to write this book, Barb does. I have watched her exude joy and relentless gratitude for life and living through her own unexpected delay. The hope she offers comes from her resolve to find and celebrate God’s abundant blessing in spite of difficult delays.

—**Kia Stephens**, writer, creator of *The Father Swap* blog, and founder of *Entrusted Women*

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Abingdon Women/Nashville

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ISBN 978-1-5018-8862-5

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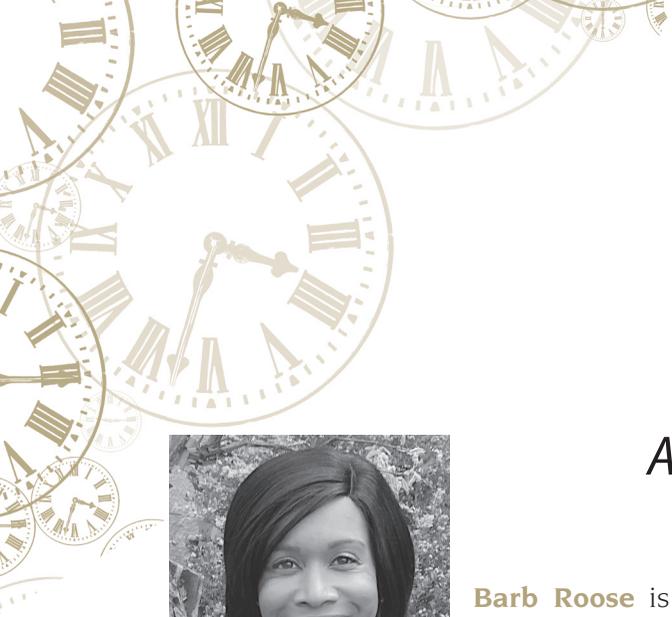
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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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About the Author



Barb Roose is a popular speaker and author who is passionate about connecting women to one another and to God, helping them apply the truths of God's Word to the practical realities and challenges they face as women in today's culture. Barb enjoys teaching and encouraging women at conferences and events across the country, as well as internationally. She is the author of the *Joshua:*

Winning the Worry Battle and *Beautiful Already: Reclaiming God's Perspective on Beauty* Bible studies and the books *Winning the Worry Battle: Life Lessons from the Book of Joshua* and *Enough Already: Winning Your Ugly Struggle with Beauty*. She also writes a regular blog at BarbRoose.com and hosts the "Better Together" podcast. Previously Barb was executive director of Ministry at CedarCreek Church in Perrysburg, Ohio, where she served on staff for fourteen years and co-led the annual Fabulous Women's Conference that reached more than ten thousand women over five years. Barb lives with her family in Toledo, Ohio.

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Introduction

Have you ever prayed, “God, please give me more patience!” Who hasn’t uttered that desperate prayer in a difficult situation? In our day, speed rules. We live in a world where webpages load in an instant, a frozen roast can cook in thirty minutes, and online orders deliver next day. Waiting seems ridiculous if there’s a way to get something fast. Of course, we expect God to move fast as well; and when He doesn’t, it frustrates us.

Have you ever found yourself in need of a breakthrough, a redo, or a rescue? When something in our lives is missing, broken, or changed, we hit our knees and cry out to God to grant us the good thing that we want. However, when that prayer goes unanswered, we might start asking some uncomfortable questions. Does God care? Does He love me? Can I keep living like this? What if God doesn’t give me what I’m asking? Even if you know that God can answer your prayer, you may wonder if He will before you run out of time.

Waiting on God challenges our faith, doesn’t it?

As a Christ-follower, I love Jesus with all my heart, but that doesn’t mean that patience comes easy to me. Even now, my heart bears the Jesus-healed scars of the impatient seasons when I tried to fix people, force solutions, or manipulate my personal feelings to avoid the fear that comes in the face of losing control. In those days, my problem was that I prayed for God to move, but I didn’t have the faith to wait. Sitting in the “waiting room” of life is never easy.

Many years ago, an addiction crisis emerged in our home. At first, I tried to fix it. I failed. Then I prayed for God to make it go away. That went unanswered. So I prayed harder. The situation grew worse. Was God angry with me? Why wasn’t He answering my prayer? I wrestled with God, begging Him to end our struggle and heal my suffering.

In the midst of that unanswered prayer, I discovered God’s better blessing for my life. When I stopped panicking and started focusing on being in His presence,

God filled the parts of my heart broken by pain and suffering with what I needed most, which was more of Him. Even though my waiting years began with worry and wrestling, a number of years ago I finally settled into the place God has intended for me all along: worship. Experiencing the presence of God is greater than the good things that I prayed for, and that has been the best blessing of my life.

What about you? How are you handling the unanswered prayers in your life? On a scale of 1-10, how much do you struggle to be patient? Don't beat yourself up if you lose patience quickly with others or God. There is no easy-button solution for learning how to wait for God's timing. This journey looks more like a winding path instead of a formulaic three-step plan. Here's the unique twist: your path to patience is paved right over the road of your unanswered prayers.

So, if you're tired of losing your temper or making rash decisions when you're fed up and can't take any more, you might be ready to discover the blessings that God has for you in a season of waiting.

During this study you'll meet four women in the Bible who grappled with unanswered prayers:

1. One woman wondered if God loved her or had forgotten about her. (Hannah)
2. One woman's life took a tragic and unexpected turn. (Ruth)
3. One woman suffered for over a decade with an embarrassing medical condition. (the unnamed bleeding woman)
4. One woman prayed, but God said "no" to her prayer. (Martha)

Perhaps you relate to one or more of their stories. These ancient women didn't have perfect faith, and at times they even offered angry, desperate prayers. So, if you're feeling anxious, angry, discouraged, or depressed because God hasn't answered your prayers, their stories will breathe fresh hope and practical next steps into your life. Together we'll discover that there are many blessings just waiting to be discovered during times of waiting, including a closer relationship with God than we've ever dared to dream.

Getting Started

Over the next four weeks we will dig into the lives of these four women—Hannah, Ruth, the unnamed bleeding woman, and Martha—who all endured a long season of sadness, pain, and unanswered prayer. Yet our focus won't be on the beginning or end of their stories; rather, we'll dive deep into the lessons and blessings they teach us about how we can develop the faith to wait on God when our prayers are not being answered according to our timeline or agenda.

Your Personal Study

The study has been designed with a flexible format to fit most any season of life. Each week offers three days of Bible study homework, plus two optional days for more personal reflection to be enjoyed as time or energy permits:

Days 1-3

- Dig into the Scripture and explore a specific Waiting Room Problem (Day 1), a Waiting Room Principle (Day 2), and a Waiting Room Application (Day 3).

Days 4 and 5 (*Optional*)

- Enjoy a Scripture Self-Study.
- Wrap up the week with a devotional reading and a prayer journaling exercise.

Each day includes a Daily Gratitude exercise, and Days 1-3 include a summary of the main idea called Today's Takeaway. You'll also find a Memory Verse Reflection on Day 1 and a Wrap-Up for the Bible Study lessons on Day 3. These features plus the many practical exercises sprinkled throughout will give you the tools you need to put the concepts we're studying into practice in your own life.

In addition to this workbook, all you need is a Bible or access to an online Bible app and a pen. The lessons for Days 1-3 will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. If you choose to do the Scripture Self-Study on Day 4, you can determine how much time to spend according to how in-depth you'd like to go. And if you choose to do the devotional reading and prayer journaling exercise on Day 5, you'll want to allow about 10-15 minutes (though you can choose to spend more time journaling if you desire).

Meeting with a Group

When studying with a group, you'll gather each week to watch a video, discuss what you're learning, and pray together. The session outlines, which provide options for both a 60-minute and a 90-minute session, include discussion questions, activities, prayer prompts, and notes for the video segment. You'll find the outline for each session at the end of the personal lessons for that week.

If you're the facilitator or leader of your group, you'll want to check out the additional leader helps at the back of this book. Ideally group members should complete the first week of lessons before your first group session. This is because each video message complements the content that you have studied during the week. However, feel free to adapt the study as you wish to meet the needs of your

particular group. Whether or not your group watches the video, the questions and activities will guide you in sharing your experiences and learnings together.

Bonus!

If you'd like additional encouragement, you can sign up for "The Patience Path," a 30-day email devotional that I've created to go along with the study. To sign up, go to barbroose.com/patiencepath.

Before You Begin

If you're wondering whether this four-week study will be as fruitful as a longer study, the answer is yes! It is my hope that you will find the flexible format both inviting and practical for your busy life, helping you to be more successful in completing the material. As a result, you should experience just as much spiritual growth—and possibly even more—in these four weeks as you would in a longer, more involved study.

I want you to know that I've been praying over this content and those who will encounter it—and that includes you. I'm believing that God knows exactly what you're facing and that He has a special blessing planned for you in the next four weeks and beyond. God desires to equip you with everything you need to trust His promises and wait for His divine timing in your life. Though our life stories are different, I know the frustration of unanswered prayer and the fear that time will run out. Yet God can be trusted as we hang out in the "waiting room" of life. And best of all, He blesses us even in the midst of the delay!

This verse remains fixed in my heart, and it is my prayer for you:

*"Be still, and know that I am God."
(Psalm 46:10)*

I don't know your unanswered prayer, but I do know God is faithful. I am trusting that He will be working in your heart, mind, and life over the next four weeks. You are not alone in this journey; and most of all, God will not let you down but will satisfy your deepest need.

Barb





Week 1

Hannah

From Waiting to Worshiping

(1 Samuel 1)

Memory Verse

*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
(Psalm 34:18)*



Have you ever sat in a hospital waiting room while a loved one had surgery, delivered a baby, or underwent a biopsy? There are many ways we try to keep ourselves busy while we're waiting. We sit. We stand. We pace. We drink old coffee and flip through even older magazines.

I've spent long hours, even some overnights, in hospital waiting rooms. I remember the long hours I waited during a friend's organ transplant and another time when I anxiously awaited the outcome of a family member's delicate heart surgery. While pacing or flipping through magazines, I would attempt to pray a few words every couple of hours. The rest of the time, I would stare off into space as I struggled with feeling helpless and worrying about how things might turn out. Waiting rooms tended to bring to the surface difficult questions and feelings about God that I'd rather have kept buried deep inside.

It has taken a long time for me to learn the following: In the space between what I'm waiting for and the actual outcome, God is working just as much in my heart as He is in my situation. This means that for me—and for you—that waiting room time doesn't have to be wasted time! If you're in a situation today where you've been praying and pacing but nothing has seemed to change, don't lose hope! If you are following God, He is at work in you as much as He is at work in your circumstances.

In this week's study, you'll learn from Hannah, a woman who prayed many years of unanswered prayers. In the space between what she was praying for and the eventual outcome, Hannah felt that God had forgotten her. What's more, the people around her either minimized her pain or bullied her into even greater sadness. This week Hannah will teach you to become a bold woman of faith, even if you must continue to hang out in your "waiting room" for the foreseeable future.

If you know Hannah's story, you know that God did eventually honor her prayer. However, the point of learning Hannah's story isn't that God gave her what she wanted; it's that Hannah found the blessing in bravely and boldly turning toward God. As she prayed, Hannah's faith revealed her desire to worship God rather than continue to suffer in her waiting.

Gratitude Moment

Today I am grateful to God for _____

Day 1: God Is Closer Than You Think

WAITING ROOM PROBLEM

When your prayers are unanswered, do you feel like God has forgotten you or doesn't love you?

Has it ever seemed that God is answering everyone else's prayers but yours? If you're waiting on God to send a significant other, your social media newsfeed is flooded with happy couples. If you're waiting on a baby, pregnancy announcements fill your mailbox. Waiting on your body to heal? You notice the easy, carefree bounce in everyone else's step. It's pretty frustrating when the view from your "waiting room" is filled with people getting the very things that you want. You sigh and, if you're still talking to God, whisper, "I'm waiting, God. What about me?"

As we look at Hannah's story this week, her waiting room of infertility is a powerful symbol and painful reality of waiting. A baby is a tangible symbol of a good thing in life. So, when you pray and God doesn't give you that good thing, whatever it might be, your unanswered prayer might spark unsettling questions about your self-worth and God's sovereignty or goodness.

Infertility isn't the only tender waiting room in life. No matter "where" you're waiting for God to answer your prayer, I trust that God will use Hannah's story to illuminate the path to the blessing that He has waiting for you today.

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-2, and answer the questions below.

Who is the man introduced in the story?

Who are the two women mentioned, and what relationship do they have with him?



What information are you given about each of the two women?

Extra Insights

Since Hannah is mentioned first before Peninnah, she is likely Elkanah's first wife. I've included an Extra Insight in the margin about polygamy in case you might be wondering if God ever condoned men having multiple wives. The quick answer is no. However, Elkanah likely married Peninnah once it was clear that Hannah was unable to have children. When Peninnah began having children, everyone knew that the problem was with Hannah, not her husband. Since the only information we're given about these women is their fertility scorecard, that is a clue to how their culture valued women. It's easy to imagine that Hannah prayed with fervor because her worth and value depended on it.

Now, let's enter into the story. Once a year Elkanah takes his family to Shiloh for a special time of offering sacrifices and worship. Israelites from all over Canaan would make this trip. Consider this experience from Hannah's perspective. Inevitably, Hannah would run into other women who had given birth since the previous year, and she would be

"The Bible presents monogamy as the divine ideal....Apparently, polygamy, like divorce, was tolerated because of the hardness of people's hearts (Matt. 19:8)."¹

Shiloh was the first permanent home of the tabernacle after Joshua and the Israelites conquered Canaan. The city was the main place of worship for the Israelites until well into Hannah's son, Samuel's years as a prophet.²

reminded that another year has passed and her prayers have remained unanswered.

After Elkanah had made the sacrifices for his family, they would sit down to a special meal. It is then that Elkanah gives out portions of meat to his wives and children.

Read 1 Samuel 1:4-5. How much does Elkanah give to Hannah versus Peninnah and her children?



Extra Insight

“The double portion was the amount of the inheritance the firstborn received (Dt. 21:17).”³

It’s here we see Elkanah’s love for Hannah. Though he cannot give her what she wants most, he makes this one grand gesture in front of everyone. His action proclaims that he loves and values Hannah even though she is unable to have children.

While Elkanah does his best to show love to his wife, not everyone in the family is supportive.

Read 1 Samuel 1:6-7. How does Peninnah treat Hannah on their annual trip?

Each year, Hannah is so upset by Peninnah’s behavior that she is unable to enjoy Elkanah’s annual gift. What is Hannah unable to do?

One translation says that Peninnah would “make fun of her mercilessly” (1 Samuel 1:6 CEB). Can you see yourself in Hannah’s position? Not only are you not getting what you want; the woman who has what you’re dreaming about is bullying you. Talk about rubbing salt into a bleeding wound! Sadly, this scenario happens year after year.

We don’t know why Peninnah resorts to such petty behavior every year. Perhaps Peninnah is waiting for any sign that Elkanah could love her as he loves Hannah. Regardless of why Peninnah behaves so meanly toward Hannah, the pain is so great that Hannah never enjoys her double portion. It is an expression of love that is crushed by another’s awful behavior.

It seems that Elkanah is aware of Hannah’s sadness as well as Peninnah’s pettiness. So, he attempts to reframe Hannah’s perspective. The only problem is that Elkanah is asking Hannah to look at her situation through his eyes, not hers.

In verse 8, we see that Elkanah asks Hannah why she is so upset. He thinks he is worth more to Hannah than what?

Bless Elkanah’s heart, right? While he tries to ease Hannah’s pain, his question is like fingernails screeching down the blackboard of her

hurting heart. Even though Hannah loves her husband, that doesn't mean she can forget the incredible ache in her heart because the dream of a baby in her arms is unfulfilled.

So many of us can relate to Hannah, right? Think about your life and the other women in your Bible study group or church who show up carrying the burden of unanswered prayers each week. Are you like Hannah, trying to pretend that everything is fine while you're dying inside? Maybe you're showing up at church each week with a pasted-on smile, painfully attempting to worship. But the beat of your broken heart doesn't thump with the rhythm of the music, only with the constant question "God, where are you?"

What have you been praying for that hasn't happened yet?

Circle the emotions that you are currently feeling as you're sitting in the waiting room of an unanswered prayer:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Unloved | Abandoned | Forgotten | Positive |
| Angry/Frustrated | Upset | Confused | Hopeful |
| Helpless | Anxious | Numb | Challenged |

Other: _____

In one particular waiting season long ago, I prayed for several years that God would provide a full-time position for me at my local church. I worked part-time for a number of years and hoped to transition to full-time work when my youngest daughter began kindergarten. However, the Great Recession then crippled our regional auto-industry economy. As jobs were lost, our church's weekly giving declined. That much-prayed-for full-time position was put on hold indefinitely. Every time I had to squeeze our family budget or say no to a fun opportunity, I'd bluster in prayer, "I'm waiting, God." Back then I would have circled words such as angry, confused, anxious, and helpless.

Why does God sometimes delay answering our prayers? The Bible reveals a number of reasons. Sometimes, God might not answer because of our unforgiveness, secret sin, pride, or wrong motives (see Psalm 66:18, Isaiah 59:1-2, James 1:5-8). But there are other times when God holds off on answering prayer for other reasons.



Word Bank

avoid harm

supernatural
opposition

God's works/
power on display

perseverance
in prayer

⁹Remember the
former things, those
of long ago;

*I am God, and
there is no other;
I am God, and
there is none
like me.*

¹⁰I make known
the end from the
beginning,
from ancient times,
what is still
to come.

*I say, 'My purpose will
stand,
and I will do all
that I please.'"*

(Isaiah 46:9-10)

³⁸I am convinced
that neither death
nor life, neither
angels nor demons,
neither the present
nor the future, nor
any powers, ³⁹neither
height nor depth, nor
anything else in all
creation, will be able
to separate us from
the love of God that
is in Christ Jesus our
Lord.

(Romans 8:38-39)

Read the following Scriptures, and summarize the reason for unanswered prayer by filling in the blank using the Word Bank in the margin.

John 9:3

Daniel 10:13

Luke 18:1

Isaiah 55:8-9

As you can see, there are various reasons that the answers to your prayers might be delayed, and some of those reasons have nothing to do with you. Holding on to a healthy perspective when experiencing God's delay is crucial to not missing a blessing that God wants you to experience.

Whenever I feel like God has forgotten me, the most important thing that I can do is to keep a healthy perspective. There are three healthy perspectives that I've learned to hold on to in the face of unanswered prayer.

1. A healthy perspective remembers God's character.

Read Isaiah 46:9-10 in the margin. What do these verses tell you about how God thinks in comparison to how we think?

2. A healthy perspective remembers God's attitude toward you.

Read Romans 8:38-39 in the margin. What can stop God from loving you?

How would you describe God's attitude toward you based on these verses?

3. A healthy perspective remembers God's promises.

Read Jeremiah 29:11 in the margin. What kind of plans does God have for your life? What is your participation in God's plans?

*"I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
(Jeremiah 29:11)*

From our human perspective, God's delay in answering our prayers isn't going to make sense because we can't see everything that God is doing. But we can be sure that God isn't wasting our time while we're in the "waiting room"!

Memory Verse Reflection

At the end of the first lesson each week, you will have an opportunity to reflect on your memory verse. I have selected verses that not only will encourage you during your waiting journey but also will connect you to God's heart and character. You can trust God while you wait!

This week Hannah's story paints a wonderful backdrop to our memory verse, which was penned by a man named David while he was on the run from King Saul. Saul made many attempts to kill David in order to prevent him from becoming king. In fact, David spent fifteen years on the run before he finally became king. At the point when he wrote Psalm 34, David encountered Philistine King Achish of Gath, who wasn't much friendlier than King Saul. So David pretended to be insane so that Achish would let him go (1 Samuel 21:10-15).

While David wrote these words praising God for deliverance, he was a man who understood the fears and frustrations of waiting on God, who often seemed to take His time answering prayer.

Read Psalm 34:18 below, and underline the words that are meaningful or speak to you:

*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

(Psalm 34:18)

How does this verse apply to what you might be facing today?

Many times in life I have clung to Psalm 34:18, even when I wasn't sure that I felt God's presence. I just kept telling myself that He was there whether I could feel Him or not. Let me give that same encouragement to you. Even if you feel that God is far away, I assure you that He is right there with you. And if you are wondering, If God is here with me, why isn't He doing more? the next verse offers some wisdom.

*The righteous person
faces many troubles,
but the LORD
comes to the
rescue each time.
(Psalm 34:19 NLT)*

Read Psalm 34:19 in the margin. Even if you don't understand what God is doing in your "waiting room" journey, what is the promise in this verse for those who trust in God?

Tomorrow you're going to sit with Hannah as she lays the broken pieces of her heart before God in prayer. This isn't a polite or reserved occasion. Hannah gets real and raw about how she feels and makes no apologies. If you've ever felt afraid to be honest before God or struggled to pray because you don't think God cares about you, tomorrow's study will be an eye-opening experience. For us, Hannah's prayer is a powerful demonstration of going boldly before God's throne of mercy (Hebrews 4:16)—and then asking for what we want.

Today's Takeaway

God will never stop loving you, nor will He ever forget about you.

Prayer

God, there are times when I feel that I am forgotten and alone like Hannah. Yet I choose to cling to the words in Psalm 34:18, believing that You are close to me in my "waiting room" times. God, I believe that You will never forget about me and that Your love will never leave me. Please keep whispering those reminders to me today. Amen.

Day 2: The Power of Prayer

WAITING ROOM PRINCIPLE

Prayer is a powerful form of worship that communicates, "I trust You, God."

During long waiting room seasons of my life, I have been challenged to reevaluate my relationship with God and my expectations in prayer.

As a child, prayer was simple because my needs in life were simple. My mom taught me to pray before meals and to thank God for my food. I prayed beside my bed at night and thanked God for my home and family. However, prayer changed for me once I began creating expectations about what I thought my life should look or feel like. Most of my expectations could be summed up in the pursuit of what I defined as the good life. My picture of the good life looked like graduating from college, getting married, having a family, buying a house, getting a well-paying job, and so forth. Since the Bible didn't define any of those things as sins, I figured that if I prayed for those good things, then God would happily give them to me. As those symbols of a good life dropped into my life, I expected that God would sign on to my maintenance plan. If something or someone got a little broken, I dropped to my knees and asked God to fix it.

However, in those waiting room experiences, there have been months and years when I prayed for God to fix something that He previously had blessed, but nothing happened. In those times of life, I often peeled back the layers of my expectations around prayer. Long seasons of painful waiting prompted hard questions such as, Am I doing it wrong? and Does praying even matter if God's going to do what He's going to do? If you've ever asked either of those questions, you aren't alone.

In today's study, Hannah gives us a big, bold example of how to use prayer as a powerful act of worship for connecting with God. Though she might make you nervous with her boldness, she also might inspire you to believe God for bigger and more. God is capable of the impossible, and perhaps He's waiting for you to trust Him for it.

Read 1 Samuel 1:9-10. How is Hannah described as praying?

One commentator observes that the phrase describing the state of Hannah's emotions could be translated as "bitter of soul,"⁴ which includes the same word used to describe the attitude of Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, toward God and life (Ruth 1:20). We'll explore Ruth's story next week. For now, take a moment and envision what it looked like for Hannah to enter the tabernacle, which would be like you walking into church.

Gratitude Moment

Today I am grateful to God for _____



Extra Insight

Lord of Heavenly Forces is one of many names of God. His name Jehovah Sabaoth or Lord of Hosts means sovereign over the earth. Jehovah Sabaoth appears 285 times in Scripture and is used for the first time in 1 Samuel 1:3.⁵ Later, Hannah invokes this particular name of God during her prayer.

Since Hannah is crying bitterly, I envision a woman whose facial features are twisted in emotional and physical pain because of her circumstance. Perhaps she clutches at a fully saturated piece of fabric, no longer able to wipe away more tears.

Despite her distraught condition, however, Hannah demonstrates great courage by boldly coming to God in prayer. Hannah isn't concerned that others might think she is unhinged and whisper behind her back. She has come to talk with God, and she doesn't care what others think. She prays out of every emotion and ounce of faith that is in her heart.

At first, we don't know what Hannah is saying during her prayer. We just read that she is crying bitterly before God. But then, there is a shift. Some of the words of Hannah's prayer are recorded for us. If you grew up thinking that prayer was a nice, quiet, polite conversation with God, Hannah's prayer is about to surprise you.

Read the following Scripture. Underline the phrase "Lord of heavenly forces," and circle the phrase "remember me."

Then she made this promise: "LORD of heavenly forces, just look at your servant's pain and remember me! Don't forget your servant! Give her a boy! Then I'll give him to the LORD for his entire life. No razor will ever touch his head."

(1 Samuel 1:11 CEB)

Even though we don't know every word that Hannah prayed, what we have here is so powerful. Hannah is calling on God, and she is showing up boldly. First, Hannah addresses God in a way that recognizes how she sees Him, as her protector.⁶ Then, Hannah cries out for God to remember her. No doubt she has stacked mountains of prayers up to heaven, yet those prayers have gone unanswered. So, she reminds God who she is. Then she makes her next request: Give me a boy! Talk about keeping it straightforward and simple! I admire her boldness.

What is so powerful to me about this portion of Hannah's prayer is that once she makes her bold request, she surrenders her son back to God in the very next sentence. There are two significant things to notice about Hannah's vow to give her son back to God.

Fill in the blanks by looking back at 1 Samuel 1:11:

1. Hannah vows to give the boy to God for his _____ life.



2. No _____ will touch his head.

As Hannah keeps praying, we read that someone is watching her, namely Eli, the priest. He noticed Hannah as she entered the tabernacle, and it seems that he is troubled by what he sees.

Read Samuel 1:12-14. What accusation does Eli make?

While Hannah pours out her heart before God in faith, Eli jumps to conclusions, accuses her of being drunk, and tells her to sober up. When I read this, my heart hurts for Hannah in this moment because sometimes we can be accused of all sorts of crazy things when we're acting in faith.

What is Hannah's response to Eli's criticism?

Hannah's name means "woman of grace,"⁸ and this is a wonderful example of how beautifully a name fits someone. She doesn't take her distressed feelings out on Eli. She responds versus reacts. Rather than getting defensive or angry, Hannah responds to Eli without returning angry words; she just offers the simple truth. There's a wonderful lesson in this for all of us. During our waiting room experiences, people may misunderstand our struggle or they may misinterpret our motives; and getting mad at them doesn't help our hurt!

Due to a family crisis awhile back, I had to follow through on a decision that I'd begged God to intervene in so that I wouldn't need to make it. In the days that followed, I could barely see through my tears. However, each morning I pulled on my tennis shoes and walked for miles while pouring my heart out to God and listening to worship music. I'm sure that I looked a lot like Hannah did when she entered the tabernacle. Anyone looking out their front window would have seen a tall, disheveled woman wearing sunglasses and holding limp tissues in her hands.

While my actions may have seemed confusing to some, I had complete clarity on what I needed to do: worship God. One of my favorite mental health slogans is "what other people think of me is none of my business." If you are walking by faith during a waiting room season and pouring your heart out to God but others don't get it, you don't have to

Extra Insights

Usually, Levite men served from the time they turned thirty years old to fifty years old (Numbers 4:3). However, Hannah promises God that her son will serve for his entire life, which means that she would turn him over to the high priest once the little boy was weaned.

Any Jewish person could make a nazirite vow, which means not participating in certain activities like haircuts or drinking alcohol. Normally, the nazirite vow is for a period of time, usually counted in days or months (Numbers 6). In the Bible only a few people had a lifetime vow: Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. Their nazirite vow was made by their parents before the men were born.⁷

Extra Insight

*A person's wisdom
yields patience;
it is to one's glory
to overlook an
offense.*

(Proverbs 19:11)

get angry or make apologies. Like Hannah, graciously inform them of your actions and then keep worshipping God whether others agree with how you're doing it or not.

Since Hannah's explanation was given with grace and gentleness, Eli's attitude toward her shifted.

How does Eli respond to Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:17?

Not only does this spiritual leader bless Hannah with words of peace, which is the Hebrew word *shalom*,⁹ meaning completeness (or wholeness), but he also prays that God will grant her request.

As Hannah leaves the tabernacle, she leaves with an experience she has had for the first time ever since making that annual trip to Shiloh. After pouring her heart out to God in prayer, she has received words of encouragement for her condition and a blessing.

Read 1 Samuel 1:18. What effect does this experience have on Hannah's physical body and emotional state?

Consider Hannah's interactions with Peninnah and her interaction with Eli. While Peninnah is a woman who should understand the pain and anguish of not being able to bear a child, she chooses to bully Hannah into misery. Eli is a man who isn't Hannah's husband, yet he offers her more compassion than Elkanah, who deeply loves his wife. This demonstrates that people don't have to walk in our shoes in order to walk beside us with empathy.

How comfortable or uncomfortable are you telling God what's really on your heart and mind, even if you're upset with Him?

Your view of God determines how you might approach or shy away from Him in prayer. If you think that God is just waiting for you to make a mistake or that He's disappointed in you, then you may feel afraid. If you grew up in a religious tradition where only certain people could come

to God, then you'll feel uncomfortable approaching God in an authentic way like Hannah did.

Read Hebrews 4:16 in the margin.

How are you instructed to come to God?

Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

(Hebrews 4:16 NLT)

What promise are you given?

Who sits on thrones? Rulers sit on thrones, and not everyone can come rushing in whenever he or she wants. However, as a child of God, you are not only invited to come before God; you're told in advance that you will receive grace and mercy as help when you need it most.

I want to give you permission to bare your soul before God, who isn't just Almighty but also is your Abba Father. He loves and cares for you right now.

Below is a template for you to fill in your bold prayer. Be like Hannah, and don't hold back!

Prayer

Dear God, as Hannah prayed, You are the Lord of Heavenly Armies, the God in charge of the universe. You know me by name, and I know that Your love for me is real and true. Thank You for Hannah's example of authentic prayer, abundant grace, and overflowing faith.

Today I want to pour my heart out to You about _____.

God, I feel so _____.

I am afraid that _____.

My heart hurts so much because _____.

Today, God, I am asking You to _____.

Yet, I have hope because I know that You haven't forgotten me and that You are listening to my prayers. While I must wait for Your timing to answer, I will trust in You. Amen.

Today's Takeaway

When I trust that God loves me, I can talk to Him about everything in my heart.

Gratitude Moment

Today I am grateful to God for _____

Day 3: Lessons for Living on God's Time Line

Have you ever seen the “The Marshmallow Test” video on YouTube?¹⁰ It’s an experiment where preschoolers and early elementary-aged kids are given a single marshmallow and put in a room by themselves. Before leaving the room, an adult tells each child that if he or she can wait, then they will get another marshmallow when time is up. Clip after clip shows the sweet and funny struggles of the kids as they practice waiting. Some of the kids sniff or squeeze the sticky treat. Other kids distract themselves by playing games with their fingers. A few kids can’t wait any longer and begin licking or nibbling their marshmallows around the edges. The kids who succeed in waiting stop looking at the marshmallow by putting their heads down on the table or turning their bodies away so they can’t see it.

This cute video might feature little kids, but it points to an important reason worship is so important to us waiting well. There are a lot of good “marshmallows” that we really want in life, such as good jobs, a family, fulfilling career, good health, and a chance to live our dreams. The more that we focus on our “marshmallow,” the less we focus on God. When you let your heart long for something that you don’t or can’t have, that longing can actually make your heart sick (Proverbs 13:12). This is why worshipping God while you wait is one of the ways that God can bless you during your waiting room journey.

God’s delay in answering our prayers is often the disruption we need. Like the kids who found success by taking their eyes off the marshmallow and focusing on something else, we need to take our eyes off of what won’t satisfy us forever and learn how to find satisfaction only in God (Matthew 6:19-21; Psalm 41:1-12).

Today you are going to finish Hannah’s story and then apply what you’ve learned this week to your waiting room journey.

As one who only likes to watch movies with happy endings, I want to believe that Hannah will go home from Shiloh and get pregnant within the next month. After all, she has an incredible encounter with God. Instead, this is what happens next:

¹⁹Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD

remembered her.²⁰ So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."

(1 Samuel 1:19-20)

While Hannah's radical encounter with God transforms her perspective, it does not change her circumstances. I love thinking that Hannah actually enjoys worshiping with God the next morning before they leave Shiloh. I hope that Peninnah's snarky words roll right off Hannah's back as she packs their bags. As their family leaves Shiloh, Hannah has no guarantee that God will give her what she wants. Prayer guides our hearts to God, but our prayers aren't guarantees that God will give us what we want. Even so, she leaves Shiloh deeply blessed because God does save her from hopelessness and despair.

Refer back to 1 Samuel 1:19-20, and circle the phrase "in the course of time."

The phrase "in the course of time" or "in due time" describes an undefined time line, more specifically God's time line. We don't know how long it takes Hannah to get pregnant. Even though Hannah may have still felt sad each passing month, her heart was changed and transformed back at Shiloh. So, even as she remains in her waiting room, she is blessed with more hope and faith than before.

There are times in the Bible when God reveals His time line and other instances when He doesn't. He uses it to accomplish whatever is according to His will. Anytime we experience undefined time lines we are reminded that we don't have control. And we're reminded that it would be wise for us not to try to take control. Since time is a tool for God, He can use it to accomplish the seemingly impossible in our lives.

In Genesis, Abraham and Sarah live with an unanswered prayer for a child, like Elkanah and Hannah. However, Abraham is given the promise that he and his wife will have a son, but he isn't given a time line. Complicating matters is that Abraham is very old and Sarah is beyond the age of childbearing.

Yet, God asks Abraham a question that we must all answer when we're sitting in the waiting room wondering or worrying about our situation.

Read Genesis 18:14 in the margin.

What is the question that God asks Abraham? Fill in the blank:

"Is anything too _____ for the LORD?"

Extra Insight

What does "the LORD remembered her" mean? One commentator explains it this way: "To use the term **remembered** is an *anthropomorphism*, a way of explaining God's actions in human terms that **we** can understand, even if it doesn't perfectly describe God's action. It isn't as if God ever *forgot* Hannah, but it is proper to say He **remembered** her."¹¹

"Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

(Genesis 18:14)

Consider your situation from God’s all-powerful position. Is your unanswered prayer too hard for God?

The Hebrew word “difficult” or “hard” is *pala*,¹² which means to be surpassing or extraordinary. Whenever we look at a situation from our view in the waiting room, our perspective is limited. We can only see the solution to our situation through our limited abilities. Yet, God is limitless because He can do the extraordinary.

Even if I know that God can do the impossible, the question that has caused me the most struggle is: Will God do what I am praying that He will do? It’s here that my faith in God is tested. Will I wait and trust God’s outcome for my life or try to force my own solution?

The difference between Hannah’s story and Sarah’s story is that Hannah takes her pain and her problem to God, but Sarah cooks up a scheme and takes matters into her own hands. Even though she knows what God has promised, Sarah is tired of waiting. She gives her slave Hagar to Abraham as a second wife because during this time, children born to a servant can be claimed by a barren wife. The result of Sarah trying to be the answer to her problem is disastrous.

Read Genesis 16:3-6, and describe the relationship between the following:

Sarah and Hagar:

Sarah and Abraham:

There are a lot of reasons why we shouldn’t try to force solutions. One of the most difficult consequences is the damage to our relationships with others. Hagar harasses Sarah. Then Sarah nags Abraham. Impatience does result in a baby—and a lot of bitter feelings, too.

Even as Sarah and Abraham are impatient, God still honors His promise. Eventually, Sarah gives birth to Abraham’s son, Isaac. While Abraham and Sarah finally receive their much-desired son, their inability

to wait on God's time line has created hurt and heartache that will flow through many generations to come.

When we push or force our own solutions, God may allow us to have our way. But we have to deal with the consequences, usually in the form of wrecked relationships that leave us asking the question: Was it really worth it? The answer is usually no. So, while God always keeps His promises to us, even when we mess up, it is wise for us to learn from Sarah's example and bypass the temptation to take matters into our own hands.

Sarah, Abraham, and Hagar's story lends itself to an important waiting room warning: When we try to push our way out of a waiting room, we will cause pain and problems in other people's lives.

Can you think of a time when you tried to push your way out of a waiting room and create your own answer to prayer?

How did that situation impact the relationships around you?

What do you think you should you have done instead?

If you've struggled with trying to force solutions or fix others, don't beat yourself up. Now's the time for you to confess your lack of faith or trust to God. Please don't let shame or condemnation define you. Here's more encouragement! Even though Sarah jumps ahead of God, she is still remembered in the New Testament for her faith: "It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise" (Hebrews 11:11 NLT). The takeaway here is that perhaps God is waiting for you to stop trying to fix the situation so that He can work it out.

Eventually, Hannah does get pregnant and gives birth to a son named Samuel. But the point of God answering Hannah's prayer isn't that she receives what she wants; it is that now it's time for God to accomplish a greater purpose through allowing her to get pregnant. Hannah's long waiting room journey is part of God's greater time line. One writer makes



this observation: "Samuel was God's 'bridge builder' at a critical time."¹³ Samuel is the last of the judges that God sent to deal with the unfaithful Israelites. Also, Samuel is the prophet who follows Moses (1 Samuel 3:20). Eventually, Samuel appoints the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David.

In my life, it has been helpful to remember that God's outcomes to our situations involve more than just giving us what we want in the here and now. I'm learning that there is an eternal aspect to my deepest unanswered prayer. The better I become at worshiping God in my waiting room, the more of God I reflect in my ministry and relationships with others.

Here are four lessons from Hannah's story. Put a checkmark beside the lesson or lessons that you need to remember today.

- 1. An unanswered prayer doesn't mean that God has forgotten you or doesn't love you. (Romans 8:38-39; Jeremiah 31:3)**
- 2. Bold prayer is a way of letting God know that you trust Him to lead your life. (2 Chronicles 7:14; Ephesians 6:18; 1 John 5:14-15)**
- 3. Worshiping God strengthens your heart and transforms your attitude while you are waiting. (Isaiah 26:3; Romans 12:1-12)**
- 4. God's delayed answer to your prayer often involves a larger time line than what is happening in your life. (John 5:17; Romans 8:28)**

WAITING ROOM APPLICATION

Waiting to Worshiping

Between the time that Hannah returns from Shiloh and the time that she finally becomes pregnant, how does she live? One day at a time. The path to patience while living with an unanswered prayer isn't found in the future or the past but in today.

Here's a simple tool you can use. Instead of saying, "God, I'm waiting for you to _____," proclaim, "God, I'm worshiping you today for _____." As you worship God by remembering who He is, what



He has already done in your life, or what He promises, you position yourself to be blessed by the presence of God in your life.

Ready to give it a try?

God, I'm not going to focus on waiting; today I choose to worship you for _____

_____.

Prayer

God Almighty, there is nothing too hard for You! Rather than focus on my “marshmallow,” God, I turn my heart, my life, and my attention to You. Even as You are powerful enough to do the impossible, I will wait for You in faith and not to try to force solutions. Like Hannah, I give You thanks for who You are and all the blessings You’ve given me. Instead of waiting and worrying, I will worship you. Amen.

Bible Story Wrap-up

Even though Hannah makes it to the end of that waiting room season in her life, there is more to her story. After her son’s birth, she keeps her promise to give him to Eli, the priest, to serve in ministry for the boy’s entire life. Hannah goes on to give birth to five more children (1 Samuel 2:20-21). Again, the point of learning about Hannah’s life isn’t that God gives her a son but that she is a woman of great faith who worships God and prays boldly. Hannah gave back to God before she ever received what she requested, and she continued to live by faith in a way that inspires us today.

Now that we have come to the end of Hannah’s story, take a moment to consider what you have learned and how God is calling you to respond.

What are one or two things that you’ve learned from Hannah’s life this week?

How is God prompting you to think or live differently as a result of what you’ve heard or learned?

Today’s Takeaway

Worship lifts the heavy weight of waiting from my heart and mind.

Gratitude Moment

Today I am grateful to God for _____

Day 4: Self-Study Day (*Optional*)

Today you have the opportunity to participate in an optional self-study with a Bible verse or passage of your choosing. The Verse Bank on page 143 features Scriptures that fit thematically with Hannah. Select one of the Scriptures listed and follow these prompts.

Read

Write below the verse or passage you selected:

Reflect

Now open your Bible and read a few verses that precede and follow your chosen Scripture in order to gather a bigger picture of what is going on. Use study helps as needed or desired to answer questions such as these: Who is speaking? Who is the audience? When or where were these words written? What is the overarching message? Are there any words that you need to look up for better understanding? (Check out Bible search websites such as BibleGateway.com and others for commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and other tools.) Write your responses below.



Respond

Ask yourself this question: How does God want me to think or live differently as a result of what I've read? Consider how you can apply this passage to your life.

Release

Write a prayer to God expressing that you are willing to apply what you've learned to your life.

Day 5: Devotional and Prayer Journaling *(Optional)*

*Those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.
(Isaiah 40:31)*

Unlike her older sister, Tonya dreamed of being a wife and mother from childhood. Even as she pursued her college and graduate education in music and opera performance, Tonya prayed for a husband and a chance to be a mom.

Gratitude Moment

Today I am grateful
to God for _____

Married in her early thirties, she and her husband devoted their time to raising his young daughter from a first marriage. Being a stepmom increased Tonya's desire to be a mom, even though she knew that they needed more time before they had their own children.

As Tonya approached her fortieth birthday, she tried not to panic. Month after month, nothing happened. While her friends announced pregnancies and births, she worked hard to stay encouraged and upbeat. However, she did admit the heartache to her sister and close friends.

One day Tonya wrote out the words from Isaiah 40:31 and posted them on her computer at work. Those words were a reminder that God would help her endure the long and painful road of infertility.

Just a few verses before Isaiah 40:31, the prophet Isaiah reminds us that God never gets tired or weary, even though we do. In fact, God promises to give power and strength to those who need it (Isaiah 40:29). So, Isaiah 40:31 is a summary of a blessing for those who choose to trust God when waiting rooms and weary roads have no end in sight.

Generally, everything in our world gets worn down when pressure is repeatedly applied. That's why Jesus taught us to build value in what's eternal instead of in material possessions (Matthew 6:19). But it's not just what we see around us that wears out; our hearts and bodies wear down in the face of pain and ongoing problems. Do financial problems, health issues, or relationship issues ever wear you out?

God knows this about us, and that's why Isaiah 40:31 is such a special promise for our lives!

When we trust God in the midst of whatever is pushing on our lives, God uses that pressure to make us stronger, not weaker. Consider the strength imagery Isaiah paints for us: soaring with eagles, running without weariness, and walking without fainting aren't possible in our human strength. Yet God gives us strength beyond our human strength.

This is why, to this day, Tonya leaves that Post-it note with Isaiah 40:31 attached to her computer. It's there to remind her to lean into God's strength when a coworker brings in her children on family days. It's Tonya's reminder when another friend announces a pregnancy on social media. That verse continues to give her strength and courage after test results revealed serious medical issues impacting her fertility.

With the strength that only God can provide, Tonya lives with purpose. She prays boldly for God to give her a child, but she also gives back to God in faith. Tonya participates in her women's Bible study at church and uses her gift of hospitality to serve others in big and small ways. She continues to nurture her musical gift by performing on opera stages in the U.S. and Europe, including Carnegie Hall.



As her older sister, I've witnessed my sister's steadfast faith grow stronger the past few years, even as she has battled crushing heartache. When I asked her permission to share her story and told her the verse I would be using, she sent me a snapshot of Isaiah 40:31 on the front of her computer.

No matter if you are facing a battle with infertility like my sister and Hannah or there is another unanswered prayer in your life, let God renew your heart, mind, and strength today.

Prayer

Dear God, I put my hope and trust in You. Thank You for providing me with the strength that is far beyond what I could have on my own. I am so grateful that You never grow tired and have promised to give me strength when I don't think I can hang in there another day. Amen.

Introducing Prayer Journaling

Journaling, or writing in general, can be intimidating for many. But I am a firm believer that writing out our prayers not only helps us focus our distracted minds on God but also provides us with tangible, written milestones that testify to God's work in our lives. Right now there are stacks of journals in my home that testify to how God has changed and transformed my heart. Those prayers encourage me as I make my way through circumstances of unanswered prayer.

My prayer is that if you pull out this study six months or a year from now and look at what you've written, you'll celebrate how God used it to strengthen your faith, create new courage, and help you experience the kind of joy and peace that you've deeply desired.

Each week I'll include some prompts with the Day 5 Devotional that you can use to get started. Just give it a try!

Prayer Journaling Prompts

As you reflect on this week's study of Hannah and the lessons that you've learned, what do you need to talk with God about today? Where have you been patient in waiting? What makes you impatient? Where do you struggle with prayer?

Consider the lessons that you've learned from Hannah. How do you resonate with her story? What have you sensed God speaking to you?

As you write out your prayer today, talk with God about any specific action steps He is calling you to take in order to claim greater faith in your waiting room situation.

Group Session Guide: Week 1

Hannah

From Waiting to Worshiping

We're blessed when we turn our waiting into worship.

Welcome/Prayer/Icebreaker (5-10 minutes)

Welcome to Session 1 of *I'm Waiting, God*. Over the next four weeks we're going to take a look at four women in the Bible who endured a long season of sadness, pain, and waiting and who show us how we can develop the faith to wait on God when our prayers are not being answered according to our time line or agenda. This week we've considered what it's like when our prayers are unanswered and we feel like God has forgotten us. Today we're exploring what Hannah has to teach us about turning our waiting into worship so that we might experience God's blessing. Take a moment to open with prayer, and then go around the circle and share what you generally do to help pass the time when you're waiting.

Video (about 20 minutes)

Play the Group Centering video for Week 1 (optional), taking a couple of minutes to focus your hearts and minds on God and God's Word. Then play the video segment for Week 1, filling in the blanks as you watch and making notes about anything that resonates with you or that you want to be sure to remember.



—Video Notes—

Scriptures: Psalm 84:11, Psalm 37:4, Matthew 7:7, 1 Samuel 1:7-8,
1 Samuel 1:10, James 5:16, 1 Samuel 1:11, Hebrews 4:16,
1 Samuel 1:18, 1 Samuel 1:20

You are blessed when you discover that you have the freedom to be _____ with how you _____ before God.

You are blessed when you boldly ask God for what you really _____ and fully _____ Him to give you what you need.

You are blessed each time you proclaim, “I’m _____ You, God, for...” instead of saying, “I’m waiting on You, God, to...”

Other Insights:



**Group Discussion (20-25 minutes for a 60-minute session;
30-35 minutes for a 90-minute session)**

Video Discussion

- When you are in the midst of difficult circumstances, do you ever find it difficult to believe that God is with you and for you—that God loves you, even when you’re angry with Him and He isn’t punishing you? Explain your response.
- How easy is it for you to be real with God about how you feel? How easy is it for you to be real with others about how you feel?
- What does it look like to pray boldly and then give back before we receive?
- How can the two-sided prayer help us to test our motives when we pray?
- How might you move from waiting on God to worshipping God?

Workbook Discussion

- How does Hannah’s story resonate with you?
- What have you been praying for that hasn’t happened yet, and what emotions are you feeling as you wait? (page 40)
- *“Holding on to a healthy perspective when experiencing God’s delay is crucial to not missing a blessing that God wants you to experience”* (page 18). What three things does a healthy perspective remember? (pages 18–19) How would remembering these things help you keep a healthy perspective when you’re waiting on God?
- Read 1 Samuel 1:9-10. How is Hannah described as praying? (page 21) What do you imagine that scene to be like? What was Hannah feeling? What did it look like? What did it sound like?
- When was the last time you told God what was really on your heart and mind when you were upset with Him? How would you describe that experience?
- *“Your view of God determines how you might approach or shy away from Him in prayer”* (page 24). How did you view God and prayer as a child? How have those views expanded?

- 
- Read 1 Samuel 1:20. When have you experienced an “in the course of time” season as you waited on God? Reflect on that season and share a moment when you saw God working, even in the waiting.
 - What did you discover this week about the similarities between Sarah’s (Genesis 16:3-6) and Hannah’s experiences of waiting on God for answers to their prayers?
 - Can you think of a time when you tried to push your way out of a waiting room and create your own answer to prayer? (page 29) How has that worked for you?
 - Hannah received her answer to prayer and gave birth to her son Samuel. What did Hannah promise God she would do with her son? What did you learn about Samuel’s leadership in the greater story of God?
 - Look at the four lessons from Hannah’s story on page 30. Which of the lessons speak to your current season in prayer right now? Why?
 - *“When we trust God in the midst of whatever is pushing on our lives, God uses that pressure to make us stronger, not weaker”* (page 34). How do you respond to this statement? Looking back on your life with God, when can you see that pressure made you stronger to face your challenges?

Learning to Wait (10-15 minutes – 90-minute session only)

Divide into groups of two or three and discuss the following (see page 31):

- What are one or two things you’ve learned from Hannah’s life this week?
- How is God prompting you to think or live differently as a result of what you’ve heard or learned?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Close the session by sharing personal prayer requests and praying together. If you like, invite the women to surround those who have shared requests and pray for them aloud. In addition to praying aloud for one another, close by asking God to help you pray boldly, worship bravely, and believe confidently that He is with you and for you even in the midst of a season of waiting.