



Wait and See

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

A Six-Session Study on Waiting Well

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transforming lives together

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Session 1

Joseph

WAITING WELL STATEMENT

Waiting well teaches us to trust God's ways rather than doubt His delays.

KEY VERSE

Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

Genesis 39:20

VIDEO LISTENING GUIDE

We can trust God's ways because His ways include His

_____. The Lord was with Joseph (Genesis 39:20–21).

_____. Joseph found favor with the guard (Genesis 39:21–22).

_____. Joseph was given charge over all that went on in prison, and everything he did was a success (Genesis 39:23).

_____. The prisoners came to Joseph to interpret their dreams. This prepared him for a later assignment (Genesis 40:8).

Remember: God won't waste our wait, and neither should we.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

INTRODUCTION

We meet Joseph at the time of his birth in Genesis 30:23–24, “She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, ‘God has taken away my disgrace.’ She named him Joseph, and said, ‘May the LORD add to me another son.’” The Bible is then silent about Joseph until his life story begins to unfold in Genesis 37.

Let’s rewind to before Joseph’s birth for a greater understanding of the animosity the older boys had for their younger brother. Long before any children entered the picture, the person who would become their father, Jacob, fell in love with Joseph’s mother-to-be, Rachel. Jacob asked her father, Laban, for permission to marry her. Laban agreed, but on one condition: Jacob had to serve him for seven years. Jacob willingly got to work, and the seven years passed.

Sadly, Laban tricked Jacob by giving him Leah—Rachel’s sister and the woman who would become mother to Joseph’s older brothers. (I know ... it sounds like a soap opera.) Jacob loved Rachel so much, he was willing to work for Laban another seven years to be married to her. Leah’s sons surely could have sensed their father’s great love for Rachel and his indifference toward their mother. All the details about Jacob’s relationships with his wives and the births of his children (including Joseph) can be found in Genesis 29–30. We then meet Joseph again when he is seventeen.

WHEN GOD’S WAYS ARE HARD TO TRUST

Read Genesis 37:2–11. What specific reasons does Scripture give for the older brothers’ hatred of Joseph?

Historical experts suggest that each of Jacob's sons would have owned a working man's coat. Solid in color. Shorter sleeves and shorter in length. Nothing more than a piece of cloth with a hole in the middle to slip over the person's head. We can imagine that Joseph's coat, however, was elaborate. The sewn-in sleeves would have hung down to his hands and the hem down to his ankles. Jacob's colorful and extravagant gift to Joseph sounded a clear message to his older sons: Joseph is my favorite, and I want everyone to know it.

Joseph set himself up for brotherly hostility by the way he behaved, but the brothers took their hostility to an incomprehensible level. God had a special plan for Joseph's life that He revealed through dreams. The exact interpretations of his dreams (that Joseph would be second-in-command of Egypt and save his family from famine) weren't communicated, but Joseph knew God. He knew God had given him the dreams. In his pride, he may have thought God would make these dreams come to pass sooner than later. And his brothers' actions must have taken the wind out of Joseph's sail.

Read Genesis 37:19–20 and Genesis 37:26–28. How could what happened to Joseph have caused him to not trust God's ways?

It's unlikely that any of us have been thrown in a cistern and then sold to Midianite merchants. However, it is very likely that we have been mistreated in some way. How do you respond when you are wronged?

When I've been done wrong, I've gotten angry at God for not sticking up for me and for not sticking it to the one who hurt me. The anger has turned to bitterness and poisoned my relationships with people and with the Lord.

If Joseph had any bitterness, he got rid of it. Long before the New Testament was written, Joseph demonstrated the truth of Ephesians 4:31–32, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Can I share a hard truth in love? God will not bless bitterness. The cost of holding on to pain is too high.

How does Genesis 39:2–3 demonstrate that Joseph had not allowed bitterness, rage, and anger to separate him from God?

Details of Joseph's relationship with God are not recorded in Scripture. However, the depth of his walk with God is implied. Unlike David, whose conversations with God are in his psalms, we don't have any documented dialogues between Joseph and God. Yet their intimate relationship is clear: "The LORD was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did" (Genesis 39:2 NLT). This kind of intimacy develops through a personal relationship with and obedience to God. Joseph trusted God's ways, even though he had every reason to doubt His delays.

WHEN GOD'S WAYS ARE EASY TO DOUBT

One delay in God's plan can be difficult for us to navigate, yet it is doable if we maintain our closeness with Him. But what happens when we are sidetracked by yet another holdup? When a setback pops up, it becomes all too easy to doubt God and lose confidence in His plan.

Joseph, delayed once by jealous brothers, found himself waiting again on God's plan to come to fruition. While Joseph served Potiphar as his right-hand man, "Mrs. Potiphar" took a liking to the young, strong, handsome man. Joseph resisted the seductive woman over and over. But even though Joseph did the honorable thing, he was falsely accused and thrown into prison (Genesis 39:19–20). How could this be? How could God allow another interruption?

What if we paused in the pause to consider this: a delay might be a time to mature our faith and deepen our relationship with God. What if the delay is for our good?

That might be hard to hear. When I felt despair in my waits, that was not the encouragement I wanted. But there's hope. I wish to share with you a verse that will make all the difference in your wait. Write it. Highlight it. Underline it. Memorize it. Read Psalm 84:11.

Friend, God will not withhold anything good from you when you are walking with Him. But—yes, there is a *but*—we don't get to define *good*. We have to trust God to define good, even if good is a delay or a hardship. Perhaps Joseph had more lessons to learn. Maybe his pride needed to be humbled, leadership skills sharpened, or submission refined.

What are you waiting for in your life right now? How is God working during your current delay?

Some delays are longer than others and provide greater opportunities to learn to trust God. God provided Joseph with two years of trust training as he waited in the jail. Can you imagine spending two years being punished for something you didn't do? You may be able to relate to Joseph. Maybe you haven't been locked in a prison with bars, but maybe you have felt trapped in a prison of isolation, accusation, or contention. What do we do when serving an undeserved sentence?

Joseph spent his days in prison doing what he knew to do. He used the gift of his calling to help others. Instead of being mad at God, the dreamer interpreted dreams for other prisoners. This act did not go unnoticed. At just the right time, Pharaoh called on Joseph to interpret his dream. Joseph's waiting well and trusting God paid off.

Read Genesis 41:39–43. How did God reward Joseph for staying faithful to Him?

List your gifts and how you can use them as you wait and trust in God's timing.

Pharaoh greatly expanded Joseph's territory and authority. This happened only because Joseph waited well. As far as Scripture reveals, he never questioned or rebelled against God. As Joseph served in Egypt, he had no idea that he was making a way to save his own family.

When a severe famine hit the land, his brothers left Canaan to purchase grain from Egypt's storehouses (Genesis 42). All of Joseph's training and trusting was put to the test when he came face to face with those who had betrayed him.

Read Genesis 45:4–15. How did Joseph respond to his disloyal brothers?

Think about a time when you were right even though others doubted you. When I'm right, my pride likes for others to know it—especially those who didn't believe me. Joseph's humble response challenges me. He demonstrated a great concern for God's righteousness and a total lack of concern for his own rightness.

Read Genesis 50:19–21. Joseph pointed to God's sovereign plan, and then he promised to provide for his brothers and their families. There

wasn't any retaliation on his part for their sin against him. Joseph didn't gloat, "I told you so. You hurt me; now I will hurt you."

Think about it. When given the opportunity to point to God's righteousness or your rightness, which are you more likely to do, and why?

Even though we don't like them, delays are sometimes necessary. God never wastes one minute of our wait. He uses the pause to show us that His timing and ways are completely trustworthy. If we wait well, God will use the pause to prepare us for the moment our wait ends. Joseph stayed close to God through his twenty-year wait. When his wait ended, I have to think that God said, "Well done."

ON YOUR OWN ... IF YOU WANT TO

Read Galatians 5:22–23. As is stated in one of Chuck Swindoll's outlines on Joseph, "As a result of his circumstances, Joseph had only one freedom left—the freedom to choose his attitude."¹ When you are in the middle of a wait, what attitude do you choose?

Which fruit of the Spirit do you need to ask God to give you more of and to help you receive as you wait?

Read Psalm 31:24. In an article on Joseph's faithfulness, Jon Bloom wrote, "Sometimes faithfulness to God and his word sets us on a course where circumstances get worse, not better. It is then that

knowing God's promises and his ways are crucial. Faith in God's future grace for us is what sustains us in those desperate moments."²

Take a moment to consider past promises to you that God has been faithful to keep. Record them below.

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