

How do you reconcile the truth that God knows the outcome of our struggles but chooses not to change them with the belief that He loves us deeply?

In what ways have you experienced feeling alone in a room full of people, and how might recognizing God's presence change that experience?

When have you seen a time of waiting or struggle in your past that later revealed God's purpose, and how does that shape your trust in current difficulties?

What is the difference between turning away from God in anger versus bringing your angry prayers directly to Him, and why does that distinction matter?

How does the image of Jesus weeping at Lazarus's tomb challenge or deepen your understanding of God's response to your pain?

What prevents you from letting others into your times of waiting and struggle, and how might vulnerability with the church community strengthen your faith?

Like Martha and Mary, how can you hold the tension between acknowledging your pain and still trusting in God's power and goodness?

In what ways do our struggles serve to build our faith rather than destroy it, and can you identify a specific example from your own life?

How does understanding that God hurts when we hurt change the way you approach Him during seasons of suffering or uncertainty?

What would it look like for you to take a next step today in either seeking support from others or offering support to someone who is in their own waiting room?

# Small Group Guide: "God, Where Are You?" - The Waiting Room

## Opening Prayer & Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Begin with prayer, asking God to guide your discussion and help group members be vulnerable and honest about their times of waiting.

**Icebreaker:** Share about a time you had to wait in an actual waiting room. What was that experience like? What emotions did you feel?

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## Key Scripture

**John 11:1-44** (Focus verses: 1-6, 11-15, 20-23, 32-36)

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## Sermon Summary

This sermon explores the story of Lazarus's death through the lens of waiting—those difficult seasons when we're asking "God, where are you?" Three main truths emerge:

1. God knows the outcome and sometimes chooses not to change it
  2. Our struggles are there to help us believe
  3. When we hurt, God hurts with us
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## Discussion Questions

### Opening Up (10-15 minutes)

1. Chris described faith as being like a waiting room—surrounded by people but feeling alone. Have you ever felt this way in your spiritual life? What was that season like?
2. What resonated most with you from this sermon? Was there a particular point that hit close to home?

### Going Deeper (20-25 minutes)

**Truth #1: God Knows the Outcome**

3. Jesus stayed two more days even though He knew Lazarus was dying. How does it make you feel knowing that God sometimes has the power to change our circumstances but chooses not to?
4. Chris mentioned the tension between knowing God can heal and saying "even if you don't, I will still trust you." What makes this posture so difficult? Have you ever had to adopt this attitude?
5. Read John 11:4 again. Jesus said Lazarus's sickness was "for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it." How do we balance this truth with the real pain we experience in our waiting?

### **Truth #2: Our Struggles Help Us Believe**

6. Jesus told His disciples, "I'm glad I was not there so that you may believe" (v. 15). How have past struggles actually strengthened your faith? Can you share an example?
7. Chris shared that during times of struggle, we either turn toward God or away from Him. What factors influence which direction we go? What has helped you turn toward God during difficult times?
8. The sermon mentioned: "God calls an angry prayer a prayer." How does this change your perspective on being honest with God about your frustrations?

### **Truth #3: When We Hurt, God Hurts**

9. Why do you think it's significant that John 11:35 tells us "Jesus wept"? What does this reveal about God's character?
10. How does knowing that God hurts when we hurt change the way you approach Him in your pain?

### **Personal Application (15-20 minutes)**

11. Are you currently in a "waiting room" season? If you're comfortable, would you share what you're waiting for or struggling with?
12. Chris asked two challenging questions:
  - Are we willing to walk alongside others even when we're in our own time of waiting?
  - If we're in a time of waiting, are we willing to let somebody in?

Which of these is harder for you, and why?

13. Martha said to Jesus, "I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask" (v. 22). She lived in the tension of grief and faith. What would it look like for you to live in that same tension this week?

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## **Key Takeaways**

✓ **God knows our struggles and could change them, but sometimes chooses not to because He knows the end of the story**

✓ **Our times of waiting are opportunities for our faith to grow deeper, not signs that God has abandoned us**

✓ **God is not distant during our pain—He is our Heavenly Father who hurts when we hurt and wants to walk with us**

✓ **We are not meant to wait alone—the church is designed to walk alongside each other in times of struggle**

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## **Practical Applications**

### **This Week's Challenge:**

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

#### **Option 1: Honest Prayer**

Set aside 15 minutes to journal or pray honestly to God about what you're waiting for. Don't hold back your frustrations, questions, or doubts. Remember: God calls an angry prayer a prayer.

#### **Option 2: Reach Out**

Identify someone in your life who might be in a "waiting room" season. Send them a text, make a call, or meet for coffee to let them know they're not alone.

#### **Option 3: Share Your Story**

Think of a past "waiting room" experience where you eventually saw God's faithfulness. Share that story with someone this week who might need encouragement.

#### **Option 4: Scripture Meditation**

Read John 11 in its entirety each day this week. Each day, write down one new thing you notice about God's character or timing.

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## **Prayer Focus**

### **Group Prayer Time (10-15 minutes)**

1. **Share prayer requests:** Invite group members to share their current "waiting room" situations. Remember, vulnerability builds community.

2. **Pray in pairs or as a group:** Pray specifically for:
  - Those waiting for answers or healing
  - Strength to trust God even when He doesn't change our circumstances
  - Eyes to see God's presence in the waiting
  - Courage to be honest with God about our struggles
  - Willingness to walk alongside others in their pain
3. **Close with this prayer or similar:**

*"Heavenly Father, we thank You that You are with us in our waiting rooms. Help us to trust that You know the outcome even when we cannot see it. Grow our faith through our struggles. Remind us that when we hurt, You hurt with us. Give us courage to be honest with You and vulnerable with each other. Help us to believe that You are working even when we cannot see it. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

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## Looking Ahead

This is week one of a series on waiting. Encourage group members to:

- Attend next week's service to continue this journey
- Keep a "waiting journal" to track prayers, thoughts, and observations
- Check in with each other throughout the week via text or call

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## Leader Notes

- **Be prepared for emotion:** This topic touches deep places. Have tissues available and be ready to hold space for tears.
- **Don't rush to fix:** Resist the urge to provide quick answers or tie everything up neatly. Sometimes the ministry is simply sitting with people in their questions.
- **Model vulnerability:** As a leader, consider sharing your own "waiting room" experience to set the tone for openness.
- **Follow up:** If someone shares a significant struggle, follow up with them during the week.
- **Respect privacy:** Remind the group that what's shared in the group stays in the group.

# 5-Day Devotional: Finding God in the Waiting Room

## Day 1: God Knows the Outcome

**Reading:** John 11:1-6

**Devotional:** When Jesus heard about Lazarus's illness, He stayed where He was for two more days. This seems counterintuitive—why would a loving friend delay? Yet Jesus knew the entire story. In our waiting rooms of life, we often forget that God sees the ending while we're stuck in the middle chapters. He has the power to change our circumstances instantly, yet sometimes He chooses not to intervene immediately. This isn't neglect; it's divine wisdom. God's timeline doesn't match ours, but His purposes are always perfect. Today, consider what situation you're waiting on. Can you trust that God knows the outcome even when you cannot see it? Your frustration is valid, but so is His faithfulness.

## Day 2: Struggles Build Belief

**Reading:** John 11:11-15; James 1:2-4

**Devotional:** Jesus told His disciples that Lazarus's death would help them believe. Struggles aren't random; they're purposeful. James encourages us to consider trials as opportunities for growth, producing perseverance and maturity. When we face difficulties, we stand at a crossroads: turn toward God or away from Him. The pain is real, the questions legitimate, but these very moments forge deeper faith. Think of past struggles where God proved faithful. He didn't waste those experiences, and He won't waste your current one either. Your waiting room isn't empty—it's a classroom. What is God teaching you right now? How might this season be strengthening your spiritual muscles? Choose today to lean into God rather than pull away.

## Day 3: When We Hurt, God Hurts

**Reading:** John 11:32-37; Psalm 34:18

**Devotional:** "Jesus wept." Two words that reveal the heart of God. He didn't weep because He lacked power—He was about to raise Lazarus. He wept because He entered into human grief. God is not a distant observer of your pain; He is a compassionate Father who hurts when His children hurt. The psalmist declares that God is close to the brokenhearted. In your waiting room moments, you may feel alone, but you are not abandoned. God sees every tear, knows every ache, and walks beside you through the valley. He doesn't promise to remove every difficulty, but He promises His presence. Today, pour out your honest emotions to God. He's big enough to handle your anger, confusion, and grief.

## Day 4: Even If You Don't

**Reading:** Daniel 3:16-18; Habakkuk 3:17-19

**Devotional:** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced a fiery furnace with remarkable faith: "Our God is able to deliver us...but even if He does not, we will not bow down." This is mature faith—trusting God's character regardless of His specific actions in our circumstances. Habakkuk expressed similar resolve, choosing to rejoice in God even when everything around him failed. Your waiting room faith isn't measured by receiving the outcome you desire, but by maintaining trust when answers don't come. God may heal, provide, or rescue—and He may not in the way you expect. Either way, He remains good, loving, and worthy of worship. Can you say "even if You don't" today and mean it? That's where authentic faith flourishes.

## Day 5: You're Not Alone

**Reading:** John 11:38-44; Hebrews 10:24-25

**Devotional:** Jesus didn't raise Lazarus in isolation; He did it surrounded by community. Mary, Martha, mourners, and disciples all witnessed God's glory together. In your waiting room, you may feel isolated, but God designed the Church to walk alongside one another through difficult seasons. We weren't meant to carry burdens alone. Today, consider who might walk with you—or who you might walk alongside. Authentic community means letting others into your mess, your doubts, your questions. It means being vulnerable enough to say, "I need prayer." It also means being available when others need support. God's presence often comes through human hands and hearts. Will you let someone in? Will you reach out to someone else? The waiting room doesn't have to be lonely.