

When you find yourself in a season of waiting, do you tend to question God's presence or His timing more, and why do you think that is?

The sermon suggests that God was not just getting Israel out of Egypt, but also getting Egypt out of Israel. What 'Egypt' might God be trying to remove from your heart during your current season?

Moses told the Israelites to 'stand firm' and 'be still' rather than giving them a five-step plan. Why is it so difficult for us to simply wait in God's presence instead of seeking actionable steps?

The Israelites romanticized their slavery in Egypt when faced with uncertainty in the wilderness. What past circumstances or old patterns do you find yourself romanticizing when current trials feel overwhelming?

How does the promise that God collects all our tears in a bottle change your perspective on suffering and waiting?

The sermon states that miracles alone do not produce mature faith. What role does prolonged waiting and wilderness experience play in developing deeper trust in God?

God intentionally led Israel on the longer, more difficult path through the wilderness rather than the shorter route. Can you identify a time when God's 'longer route' in your life produced spiritual growth you would not have gained otherwise?

The Israelites could physically see God's presence in the pillar of cloud and fire, yet still struggled with fear and trust. Why does proximity to God's presence not automatically produce trust in our lives?

When facing overwhelming circumstances, do you tend to abandon God's presence and try to handle things your own way, or do you draw closer to Him? What makes the difference?

The sermon challenges the cultural saying 'God will not give you more than you can handle' and reframes it as 'God will not give us more than He can handle.' How does this shift in perspective change the way you approach difficult circumstances?

# Small Group Guide: Trusting God in the Waiting

## Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

**Icebreaker Question:** Share about a time when you had to wait for something important. How did the waiting change you or affect you?

---

## Sermon Overview

This week's message explored Israel's journey from Egypt through the wilderness, focusing on how God works in us *while* we wait, not just *after* He answers our prayers. The key question: **What is God doing inside of me while I wait?**

**Key Scripture:** Exodus 3:7-14:31

---

## Discussion Questions

### Part 1: Understanding the Waiting

1. **The pastor confessed he's "not much of a handyman" but often believes he can fix things anyway. What areas of life do you tend to think you can "fix" on your own before turning to God?**
2. **Read Psalm 56:8. How does the imagery of God collecting our tears in a bottle impact your view of how God sees your struggles?**
3. **The sermon stated: "Freedom can happen in a moment, but transformation usually happens in the wilderness." What's the difference between being physically free from something and being emotionally/spiritually free from it?**

### Part 2: Israel's Pattern

4. **Israel repeatedly complained and romanticized their slavery in Egypt despite God's miracles (Exodus 16:3, 17:1-3, 32:1). Why do you think we're tempted to romanticize the very things God has rescued us from?**
5. **The pastor said, "Fear has a way of rewriting our memory." Can you share an example of when fear distorted your thinking about your past or present circumstances?**

6. **Read Exodus 14:13-14. Moses told the people to "stand firm" and "be still." Why is this so difficult for us? What does "standing firm in the presence of God" look like practically?**

### **Part 3: God's Presence in the Wilderness**

7. **God intentionally led Israel the long way (Exodus 13:17-18) because "sometimes the longest route physically becomes the deepest route spiritually." How have you experienced this in your own life?**
  8. **The sermon corrected the phrase "God won't give you more than you can handle" to "God won't give you more than *He* can handle." How does this shift change your perspective on difficult circumstances?**
  9. **Israel had the visible presence of God (pillar of cloud and fire) and still struggled with fear. What does this teach us about the relationship between God's presence and our trust?**
- 

## **Key Takeaways**

✓ **God hears our cries and knows our suffering** - We don't suffer alone; God is intimately aware of every tear.

✓ **Miracles alone don't produce mature faith** - Transformation and trust are formed in the waiting and wilderness seasons.

✓ **God isn't just changing our circumstances; He's changing us** - Sometimes the greatest work God does is inside us, not around us.

✓ **Waiting reveals what we truly trust** - The wilderness exposes whether we trust God's heart when we can't trace His hand.

✓ **Stand firm in God's presence** - When we're overwhelmed, we need to get into God's presence more than ever through prayer, Scripture, and worship.

---

## **Practical Applications**

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

Choose one or more of the following practices to implement this week:

1. **Prayer Posture:** Set aside 10-15 minutes daily to "stand firm" in God's presence through prayer. Resist the urge to run or fix things on your own.
  2. **Remembrance Journal:** Write down 3-5 times God has been faithful in the past. When fear tries to rewrite your memory, review this list.
  3. **Wilderness Check:** Ask yourself: "Is this circumstance making me more fearful, bitter, and cynical—or is it teaching me to trust God more deeply?"
  4. **Scripture Meditation:** Memorize Proverbs 3:5-6 - "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."
  5. **Community Connection:** Reach out to someone in your group who you know is in a "waiting season" and encourage them. Pray with them.
- 

## Reflection Questions for Personal Time

- What "Egypt" has God freed me from physically that I still need Him to free me from emotionally or spiritually?
  - Am I currently in a wilderness season? If so, what might God be trying to teach me about trust?
  - Where am I tempted to "run" instead of standing firm in God's presence?
  - How can I position myself better in God's presence during difficult times?
- 

## Closing Prayer Focus

Pray for:

- Group members who are currently in waiting seasons
  - Deeper trust in God's timing and faithfulness
  - The courage to stand firm rather than run when circumstances are difficult
  - Eyes to see what God is doing *in us* while we wait
  - Protection from fear that distorts our thinking and memory
- 

## Next Week's Preparation

Continue reading through Exodus to see how God continues to work in and through Israel's wilderness journey. Pay attention to patterns of complaint and God's faithful responses.

---

## Leader Notes

- **Be sensitive:** Some group members may be in painful waiting seasons right now. Create a safe space for honest sharing.
- **Avoid clichés:** Don't minimize people's pain with quick fixes or "just pray harder" statements.
- **Share your own story:** If you've experienced a wilderness season, share how God worked in you during that time.
- **Encourage community:** Remind the group that "the waiting room is crowded" - we don't wait alone.

# 5-Day Devotional: Standing Firm in the Wilderness

## Day 1: God Sees Your Tears

**Reading:** Psalm 56:1-8

**Devotional:** "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle." What a profound promise. In your moments of deepest pain, when you feel most alone, God is intimately aware of your suffering. He doesn't just observe from a distance—He captures every tear, records every heartache. The Israelites cried out from Egyptian bondage, and God heard them. Today, whatever burden weighs on your heart, know that your prayers don't fall on deaf ears. God is not surprised by your troubles. He sees you completely, knows your pain thoroughly, and cares deeply. You belong to Him, and He will not let you walk through this alone. Take comfort today that the God of the universe is concerned about what concerns you.

## Day 2: The Longest Route, The Deepest Growth

**Reading:** Exodus 13:17-22

**Devotional:** God intentionally led Israel through the wilderness rather than the shorter route. Why? Because some lessons can only be learned in the waiting. God wasn't punishing them—He was preparing them. The same is true for you. When God takes you on a longer journey than expected, He's not being cruel; He's being careful with your spiritual formation. Sometimes the longest route physically becomes the deepest route spiritually. God may be doing His greatest work inside you while you're waiting for Him to work around you. The pillar of cloud and fire never left Israel's presence, and God never leaves yours. Trust that if God guides, God provides. He will never take you where He cannot sustain you. The wilderness isn't your punishment—it's your classroom.

## Day 3: Stand Firm When You Cannot Understand

**Reading:** Exodus 14:10-14

**Devotional:** "Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring." Moses didn't give the Israelites a five-step plan when they faced the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army closing in. He simply told them to stand firm and be still. Sometimes faith isn't about having all the answers—it's about refusing to run when you don't understand what God is doing. Waiting reveals whether we trust God's heart when we cannot trace His hand. When you're overwhelmed, that's precisely when you need to position yourself in God's presence more than ever. You cannot control your circumstances, but you can control your position. Get into prayer. Open your Bible. Worship Him. Stand firm in the Lord, and wait for God to do His thing. Don't abandon His presence when trouble comes.

## Day 4: Miracles Don't Guarantee Maturity

**Reading:** Exodus 16:1-8; 17:1-7

**Devotional:** Even after witnessing the Red Sea split open, Israel complained when they got hungry and thirsty. This teaches us something crucial: miracles alone do not produce mature faith. You may have seen God work powerfully in your past, yet find yourself questioning Him in your present trial. How quickly we forget. Transformation and trust are formed not in a single miraculous moment but through consistent faithfulness in the wilderness. God wasn't just trying to get Israel out of Egypt—He was working to get Egypt out of Israel. Perhaps God is trying to free something inside you too. The wilderness has a way of exposing what we truly trust. Don't let waiting make you romanticize the very thing God rescued you from. Mature faith develops through seasons of trusting God when circumstances don't make sense.

## Day 5: Changed From the Inside Out

**Reading:** Proverbs 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

**Devotional:** God loves you too much to leave you unchanged. The greatest miracle He performs may not be around you but inside you. While you're praying for God to change your circumstances, consider what this season might be doing in your character. Is the waiting making you more fearful and bitter, or is it teaching you deeper trust and dependence on God? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. God will not give you more than He can handle—notice, not more than you can handle, but more than you can handle. You need Him. The wilderness will not destroy your faith if you stay in God's presence; it will deepen it. Don't turn from Him in the waiting. The same God who parted the Red Sea is still faithful today.