

If you have your Bibles I invite you to turn with me to the 15th chapter of Genesis. I also encourage you to turn in your packets to the first session entitled “Forgotten” so that you can follow along.

Nobody likes sitting in a waiting room. The chairs are uncomfortable. The magazines are out-of-date. The coffee is stale. Nowadays, it seems like we are all waiting on something ...

- We're waiting on the economy to turn around.
- Waiting for a job period ... or a new job.
- Waiting for a spouse to change. (boyfriend/girlfriend)
- Waiting to get pregnant ... or kids to return home.
- Waiting for the Pirates to win a World Series.
- Waiting for a diagnosis.
- Waiting for retirement.
- Or simply waiting our turn (grocery line, stop light, etc.)

Are we waiting on
God or is God
waiting on us?

There is a tremendous amount of restlessness that comes with these seasons of waiting. And with each passing minute, sitting there waiting for your name to be called, you get a disturbing sense that you've been forgotten. But is that really the case? In life's waiting room, have you been forgotten, or is all this waiting part of a larger plan? The Bible has a lot to say about it.

Most of us don't really want to know what to **do** while we're waiting. We don't want to hear that the waiting builds character or helps us to appreciate life in greater ways. What we really want to know is “when” do we get out of the waiting room? How much **longer** do I have to wait?

Waiting feels like **purposelessness**. One of the things we do while we're waiting is ask **questions**:

- Should I consider a new career? Should I update my resume?
- Should I make the call or send the email?
- Should we consider infertility treatments?
- Should I hang up while I'm waiting for tech support (upgrading to Windows 7)?

Many times these waiting seasons of life result in anger or resentment. Not necessarily at others who have the great jobs, the nice cars and the right number of kids. We may be jealous but **our anger is often turned toward one person** ... God. (**Pause**)

Have you ever looked at your circumstances and felt like God has **forgotten** you? Have you ever felt like He's **overlooked** you? Have you thought that God is **paying more attention** to everyone around you than He is to you and what you're going through?

Trust God

Forgotten

In our time together tonight I want to introduce you to a couple who can relate to what you're feeling. If you've ever **lost sleep** wondering how things are going to turn out, this couple can identify with those feelings of abandonment and worry. If you've ever **gotten angry** with God about those times when it seems like His time table is much slower than yours, these folks share your pain.

Having said that, let me invite you to prepare to have your **perspective** changed. Because the perspective of this couple will help us to take that frustration of being in the waiting room and can turn it into **perseverance**. The fear, anxiety and worry can be turned into **endurance**. This story from the Bible can help you move from purposelessness to **vision** and a **hope** for the future.

So whether or not you're waiting ... let's pause and pray for each other.

Let me introduce you to Abram & Sarai (Abraham & Sarah) ... their story begins in Genesis 12 as God makes a promise to Abram that he'll have children as numerous as the sand on the seashore despite the fact that he was 75 years old and could not have children (**can you imagine?**)!

God tells Abram to leave Harran and go to the land of Canaan. So Abram leaves the familiar surroundings of family and friends and after a pit stop in Egypt they arrive at their destination along with all of their traveling entourage, flocks and supplies needed to sustain a large and wealthy family.

It's at this point, several years later, that we pick up the story and we have the chance to listen in on a heart to heart conversation Abram has with God ...

"After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." ² But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." ⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them."
Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Genesis 15:1-5 (NIV)

So they have this exchange and the Lord makes a covenant with Abram. But days turn into weeks, weeks become months, months evolve into years and years become decades ... and there are no changes in their circumstances ...

How much longer God?

What is taking so long?

Are You even out there?

Are You paying attention to us (me)?

Trust God

Forgotten

At some point the tension becomes too great ... the disappointment, frustration and pent up anger overwhelm the couple and they make a dangerous decision based on an **incorrect assumption**. They allowed their feelings to override God's promise and resulted in an assumption that would prove to be tremendously costly.

Examples: people get called before you in the doctor's office; pager at the restaurant

This is such an injustice! And it drives you crazy!!

When we feel **overlooked** and **frustrated** it's so tempting to take matters into our own hands. Have you ever found yourself trotting up to the hostess in the restaurant asking her if she's mistakenly missed you ... maybe your battery has gone bad ... perhaps you were out of range?

That's one thing, but how many of you have ever been in the dentist's office and taken his tools and started working on your own mouth? Why didn't you do that? (**Pause**) How many of you have ever performed a biopsy on yourself? Why not? (**Pause**)

The unfortunate thing is that while we wouldn't do that to our dentist our doctor or our attorney, we do that with God all the time. We **take matters into our own hands** and decide that God can't be trusted and we move forward without consulting Him or allowing His will to unfold in our lives.

Fast forward 10 years from the promise God gave Abram in Harran in chapter 12 ...

“Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, “The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal.”

Genesis 16:1-2 (NLT)

What was the false assumption that Sarai made in this scenario? **She assumed that God had forgotten them and that He wasn't paying attention to them.**

Song: The Waiting (Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers)

Oh baby don't it feel like heaven right now
Don't it feel like something from a dream
Yeah I've never known nothing quite like this
Don't it feel like tonight might never be again
Baby we know better than to try and pretend
No one coulda ever told me 'bout this
I said yeah yeah

Chorus
The waiting is the hardest part
Every day you see one more card
You take it on faith, you take it to the heart
The waiting is the hardest part

Well yeah I might have chased a couple women around
All it ever got me was down
Then there were those that made me feel good
But never as good as I'm feeling right now
Baby you're the only one that's ever known how
To make me wanna live like I wanna live now
I said yeah yeah

Oh don't let it kill you baby, don't let it get to you
Don't let it kill you baby, don't let it get to you
I'll be your bleedin' heart, I'll be your cryin' fool
Don't let this go too far
Don't let it get to you

The hardest part is NOT waiting. It's trying to **deal with the aftermath of our poor decisions and our rushing ahead of God's will for our lives.**

Trust God

Forgotten

“So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.” ⁶“Your servant is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.”

Genesis 16:3-6 (NIV)

Sarai and Abram took matters into their own hands and things got messy!

History shows that **God kept His word**, doesn't it? **God never forgot them**. Rather, He was preparing them for what He was going to do through them. What the Bible records in the nature and character of God is that **He's preparing you in the season of waiting!** We must stand on this foundation! **God doesn't forget you!!** (**Tell your neighbors**)

God is preparing us for the next chapter of our lives. And the next chapter and the next chapter. It's in all of this that our stories will be written. And if we will walk with Him in faith (trust Him), our story will bring Him honor and glory!

Will you view those times of waiting as preparation for the next stage of life or will you conclude that God doesn't care and take matters into your own hands?

What is God preparing you for? (A change in attitude, confidence & courage)

“For we are God's workmanship (handiwork), created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

Before you were born ... there was a plan already formed for you. What this means is that **what you're facing did not catch God by surprise** (**wayward child, loss of employment, frail body, shattered friendship, etc.**). It's part of the story. It's NOT an accident. Startling, huh?

This requires a heart-to-heart conversation with your heavenly Father. You need to go to Him in prayer and claim that verse. And share with Him how you're feeling. Why? Because He doesn't know? No. But so that you can express your frustration, hurt and pain to Him (real, authentic, genuine). He's invited you to cast all your care on Him. He can handle it.

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

James 4:8 (NASB)

“So, humble yourselves under God's strong hand, and in his own good time he will lift you up. You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern.”

1 Peter 5:6 (Phillips NT)

Exercise: Prayer Cards (to help us remember to take our fear, frustration, anxiety and worry to our God who loves us - when we find ourselves in the waiting room)

This is not a magic prayer but it's designed to help you open up in transparent ways ...

“Heavenly Father, Thank You for the promise that I am Your handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which You have prepared in advance for me to do. But I need You to encourage me this week because I'm tired, scared, frustrated, worn out, disappointed, hurt and lonely. Thank You for preparing me during this season of waiting. In Jesus' Name, Amen.”

If you feel overlooked ... tell God. If you feel forgotten ... share it with Him! After all, He knows our struggles and our desires. He loves you.

Song: Arms That Hold The Universe (Fee)

I know it seems
Like this could be
The darkest day you've known
But believe you me
The God of strength
Will never let you go
He will overcome, I know

And the arms that hold the universe
Are holding you tonight
You can rest inside
It's gonna be alright
And the voice that calmed the raging sea
Is calling you His child
So be still and know He's in control
He will never let you go

Through many dangers, toils and snares
You have already come
His grace has brought you safe this far
(And) His grace will lead you home

And the arms that hold the universe
Are holding you tonight
You can rest inside
It's gonna be alright
And the voice that calmed the raging sea
Is calling you His child
So be still and know He's in control
He will never let you go

You can hope, you can rise, you can stand
He has still got the whole world in His hands
You can hope, you can rise, you can stand
He's still got the whole world, the whole world in His hands

Let's Pray!

For those who feel overlooked & forgotten ... help them to trust, to hope, to rise & stand.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your worst waiting room experience? Perhaps it was at the dentist's office, an emergency room, a car repair shop, or some other waiting room environment. What made it so bad?
2. In what area of life do you currently find yourself in a waiting room? What emotions are you experiencing as you wait?
3. In Genesis 15:1-4, God promised Abram that he would have a son. How do you think Abram felt immediately after this promise was made? How did those initial feelings most likely change as time passed and the promise remained unfulfilled? Do you have a similar story in your life? Explain.
4. The most dangerous part is not the actual waiting, but when we begin to assume that God has forgotten us and we decide to take matters into our own hands. Share about a time when you have done that. What were some of the consequences?
5. Read Ephesians 2:10. Do you believe that rather than forgetting about us, God is actually preparing us while we are in “the waiting room”? Explain.