

Session 4: Persisting through Delays

October 20, 2026

Have you ever wondered why God waits to answer prayers? Why does he allow delays?

Dream phases:

1. Phase 1: God gives you a dream
2. Phase 2: Decision to go after the dream
3. Phase 3: Delay, waiting period, time lapse. Examples:
 - a. Abraham had the dream of being the father of a great nation, but he waited until he was 100 years old before he and Sarah had their first son.
 - b. Noah had the dream of building an ark, but he waited 120 years.
 - c. Joseph was going to be the ruler in Egypt but spent years in prison waiting.
 - d. David was anointed king as a young man but did not become king immediately. He was chased all around the country by Saul who tried to kill him.
 - e. The children of Israel were brought out of slavery in Egypt and then wandered around the desert for 40 years before they went into the promised land, even though it only takes 2 weeks to walk from Egypt to Israel. They were delayed by design. God knew they were not ready for the promised land.
“When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, ‘If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.’” Exodus 13:17 NIV

God uses delays to prepare us, and test us for the difficulties ahead.

“Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.” Deuteronomy 8:2

How do we respond to delays – when things do not happen on our time schedule?

Four things God says not to do:

1. **Don’t fear.** God led the Israelites to the banks of the Jordan River to look at the promised land, but the Israelites were afraid of the people living there. They had faith to leave Egypt but not to move into the promised land. So they had to wait 40 more years.
 - a. “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.’ ... But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.’” Numbers 13:1-2, 31 NIV
 - b. Fear keeps you stuck in the desert of life and prolongs the delay. Don’t fear; focus on God’s consistent presence in your life.
 - c. “I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.” Hebrews 13:5 GNT
 - d. You may think God has forgotten you but he has not. He wants to build your character and trust before he answers your prayer.
2. **Don’t fret.** Don’t get worried, stressed out, and complain – rest. Rest is an act of faith!

- a. "On the way the people lost their patience and spoke against God and Moses. They complained..." Numbers 21:4-5 GNT
- b. "Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for him to act Don't fret and worry – it only leads to harm." Psalm 37:7-8 TLB
- 3. **Don't faint.** Don't get discouraged, lose heart, and give up. Be determined, diligent, disciplined, persistent, and patient.
 - a. "All the Israelites grumbled against Moses ... 'If only we had died in Egypt! ... We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.'" Numbers 14:2, 4 NIV
 - b. Don't lose heart and second guess yourself. The grass isn't greener on the other side; it is greener where you water it. The Israelites were in slavery for 400 years but they wanted to go back; in the moment, they would rather live in slavery than face the fear of freedom. Don't settle for less than God's best for your life. Don't let the delays discourage you. Be persistent and pray.

Reflection: Do you ever prefer to stay in a codependent relationship, stay stuck in a rut, or settle for mediocrity rather than face your fears and step forth into God's freedom?

- c. "The Lord said to Joshua, 'See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands The wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up.'" Joshua 6:2, 5 NIV
- d. They marched around Jericho seven times; on the seventh day they marched around it seven more times. Jericho was the most fortified city at the time.
- e. "March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days On the seventh day, march around the city seven times." Joshua 6:3-4 NIV
- f. God could have made the walls fall down without them doing anything. Why didn't he do it the first time? He is teaching a lesson - to be persistent and pray.
- g. "Let us never grow tired of doing what's right, for if we do not faint, we'll reap our harvest at the right time." Galatians 6:9 Moffatt version
- h. There is often a delay between the dream and the deliverance, and between sowing and reaping. Like in gardening, God wants you to keep sowing, watering, and weeding. If you only pray about it one time, on a whim, that is different than if you really desire it, and are consistent. God is not a vending machine; he is more interested in your character. Delay develops character, and builds your faith.
- i. "We must 'always pray and never lose heart.'" Luke 18:1 Phillips
- j. What can I pray for during the delay? Lord, help me hold on and not give up. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:31 TLB
- 4. **Don't forget.**
 - a. During the delays, we can forget the dream, God's goodness, closeness, and promises. We can focus on our problems instead of what God has done for us, just like the Israelites.

- b. "They forgot the many times [God] showed them his love, and they rebelled against the Almighty at the Red Sea. But he saved them, as he had promised..." Psalm 106:7-8
- c. They lacked patience for his plan. By the time they got to the Red Sea, they forgot, even after the ten plagues, and God delivered them from Egypt. Even then, God opened up the Red Sea, and they walked to the other side, and immediately, they forgot that miracle and complained about
 - i. Thirst - God provided water.
 - ii. Food - God provided manna. They missed what they had in Egypt, and complained about the manna.
- d. "I will bless the Lord and not forget the glorious things he does for me." Psalm 103:2 TLB
- e. "The Lord is not being slow in carrying out his promises; rather, he is being patient with you." 2 Peter 3:9 New Jerusalem Bible

Reflection: Think of a situation in your life now where there has been a delay. Do you have patience to wait for God's plan, or do you insert your own plans when God's plan takes longer than yours? When you don't get an answer to your prayers immediately, do you feel like God has never done anything for you? Can you remember God's past faithfulness, present closeness, and future promises?

God's delays are not God's denials.

When we wonder why God isn't answering our prayer or fulfilling a dream we made a decision about, we can remember that as much as we are waiting on God, he may actually be waiting on us – to fear not, fret not, faint not, and forget not, and to develop our character before he brings a solution. He is developing faith patterns in our lives.

God is never in a hurry. Jesus never ran anywhere. God is working on a much larger agenda than our human time frame. The delays in our lives do not destroy God's purpose; they fulfill God's purpose. A delay is not a denial...and "not yet" is not the same thing as "no".

God can bring fulfillment – don't fear, fret, faint, or forget.

Reflection: What are you waiting on God to do? Solve a problem, answer a need, fulfill a prayer request? To make a way in a place where it seems impossible, in health, finances, personal life? God has not forgotten you. Trust him and you will marvel that God has arranged it so perfectly.

“These things I plan won’t happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, do not despair for these things will surely come to pass. Just be patient! They will not be overdue a single day!” Habakkuk 2:3 TLB

Reflection: How has God brought you through delays in the past? What lessons did you learn about yourself and about God while you were waiting?

Reflection: Review the verses in this lesson. Which is the most meaningful to you and why?

Reflection: What is one thing you can change about your schedule or expectations so you are not tempted to try to rush God in the delay phase?

What do you need to change about your attitude as you spend time in God’s waiting room?