



CELL

OUTLINES

WAITING...

These Cell Outlines are written by Youth and Children's Ministries. They are available every month from our website. For more information and other Cell resources, visit [salvationarmy.org.uk/children-and-youth-resources](https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/children-and-youth-resources)

OVERVIEW

This month we are exploring the theme of waiting on God.

SESSION ONE: WAITING FOR GOD TO MAKE A MOVE!

In Session One we'll start to explore the theme of waiting as we look at the story of Daniel. He spent most of his life in exile, waiting for God to make his move. Through the waiting, Daniel committed to a life of prayer and worship. He trusted in God's faithfulness, and in this session we will get the opportunity to follow in Daniel's footsteps.

SESSION TWO: WAITING FOR AN ANSWER

In Session Two we find Hannah waiting for God to answer her prayer. Crushed by the weight of the expectations of others, and her own desperate desire for a child, Hannah waited on God to give her a son. She was in a different time and place but her story and experience is relevant to us today. In this session we find out how Hannah's story links to ours.

SESSION THREE: WAITING FOR THINGS TO GET BETTER

David was lined up to be the next king. He was popular at the royal court, successful in battle and had the world at his feet. Then everything changed! In today's session we go deep into the cave with David and experience what it feels like to lose everything. After nearly ten years of exile, David was desperate for things to get better. In this session we'll learn from David how to live out our faith while we're waiting to climb out of the cave.

SESSION FOUR: WAITING FOR THINGS TO WORK OUT

Many of us like to know what's next, what the plan is and how things are going to pan out. It makes us feel safe and secure to know that God has a plan for us. What if that plan is more a purpose? Would that help us to navigate life when we are waiting for things to work out? In this session we consider the life of John Mark with all its twists and turns. There were many moments where life didn't go to plan for him, and yet God used this young disciple to grow into an essential part of the early Church. God is able to work in us and through us while we are waiting for things to work out.

SESSION FIVE: WAITING WELL

In this final session we revisit Daniel as he enters old age. He watched many kings pass through the palace, experienced times in the limelight and moments of obscurity. Throughout it all he waited on God. Right to the end Daniel prayed for God's guidance and wisdom, and there is much he can teach us about waiting well.

Any text in italics represents notes for the leader. It gives more context around the Scripture/activity. You may choose to share verbatim, summarise or not share at all.






WAITING FOR GOD TO MAKE A MOVE!

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WELCOME




Discuss the names of the group members together.

The following questions are closed, but encourage the group to explain their yes/no answers.

-  Do you know what your name means? If so, share it with the group. If not, then do a quick search and find out.
-  Do you like your name?
-  Are you named after anyone?
-  Do you have the kind of name that people spell or pronounce incorrectly? How does that make you feel?
-  If you could choose a different name, what would it be?


Names are an important part of our identity and this was particularly the case in biblical times. As we start to explore the theme of 'waiting', the first Bible character we are going to consider is Daniel. In a short space of time Daniel's life was transformed by circumstances beyond his control. Everything changed for Daniel, and he spent his life waiting on God to resolve the situation.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

-  Are you good at waiting for things?
-  What do you find challenging about waiting?
-  When are you happy to wait for something?

WORD

We have already introduced the character of Daniel found in the Old Testament.

 **Read Daniel 1:1-5 to find out what happened to him as a teenager.**



'In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility – young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.'

— DANIEL 1:1-5

Place yourself in Daniel's position. How would it feel to experience what he did?

Daniel's name meant 'God is my judge', but it was changed to 'Belteshazzar' which meant 'Bel protect his life.' Bel was one of the Babylonian gods.









-  What impact do you think this name change had on Daniel?
-  Have you ever had an experience where it felt like too many things changed all at the same time? If you feel comfortable, then share with the group.

Daniel's world was turned upside down. He had no idea how long the exile would last, but as time passed the Israelites continued to wait desperately for God to make his move.

Watch the Bible Project clip to discover more.

 **Bible Project – The Way of the Exile (5 min 20 sec)**
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/the-way-of-the-exile/>

After watching the clip, discuss the following questions:

-  What were the two main ways the people responded to their challenging situation?
-  What third way did Jeremiah suggest?
-  How did Daniel and his friends live out Jeremiah's 'third way'?
-  How do you think Daniel felt after a dream revealed that he would have to wait a long time for the exile to end?
-  Do you agree with the clip when it says, 'We all live and work in Babylon'? Explain your answer.
-  What version of Babylon are we living in today? What challenges come with that reality?
-  How did Jesus show us how to live lives of loyalty and subversion?
-  What modern-day parallels do you see in the Israelites' story of exile? What situations in the news come to mind?

The title of this session is 'Waiting for God to make a move!'. Although we know that God is present in every situation we face, it can still be frustrating when we feel like we are waiting for him to take action.

Describe a situation where you are waiting for God to 'make a move'.

When we want God to 'make a move' we usually mean that we want him to resolve the situation quickly.

How can we learn from the example of Jesus and Daniel as we wait for the resolution of a challenging situation?

Discuss the following quote:

“Waiting on God requires the willingness to bear uncertainty, to carry within oneself the unanswered question, lifting the heart to God about it whenever it intrudes upon one's thoughts.”

— ELISABETH ELLIOT

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar's petulance puts Daniel's life in danger. After many sleepless nights the king couldn't find anyone able to interpret his troubling dream. Frustrated with the wise men in court, he ordered their execution. Daniel and his friends faced the same fate. As was the pattern throughout his life, Daniel immediately turned to God in prayer to find a way through. He spent the night praying with his friends and God revealed the meaning of the dream.

 **Read Daniel 2:17-23.**

What do these verses reveal about Daniel's ability to keep trusting God throughout his exile experience?

WORSHIP

What do you think Steven Furtick means in the following quote?

“The only thing harder than waiting on God, is wishing that you had!”
— STEVEN FURTICK

How does our impatience when waiting on God get us into trouble?

Whether we are waiting for God to make a move in the war on Ukraine, or waiting for a resolution to a health issue, fears and worries can consume our minds. In the next part of the session we will focus on a few areas in our lives where we are waiting on God. Before we do that, our time of worship today reminds us of the God we pray to.

Listen to the words of the song ‘Waiting Here For You’ by Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves and Martin Smith, and rest in God’s presence before we bring our concerns and worries to him.

 **‘Waiting Here For You’ – sung by Christy Nockels (4 min 25 secs)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqZ3_xwJxTY

or sung by Martin Smith (6 min 16 sec)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8d80ok40TQ>

PRAYER

**Heavenly Father,
Thank you for the reminder that:
You are everything you’ve promised,
Your faithfulness is true;
And we’re desperate for your presence,
All we need is you –
Waiting here for you
With our hands lifted high in praise,
And it’s you we adore,
Singing Alleluia.
Amen.**

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

The theologian NT Wright describes worship in the following way:

“True worship is open to God, adoring God, waiting for God, trusting God even in the dark.”
— NT WRIGHT

How do you see the link between waiting and worship?

WITNESS

We’re going to follow Daniel’s example as we think about the situations where we are waiting on God. To do that we need a quick recap of one of the events that happened later in Daniel’s life. The clip is very obviously not aimed at your age group but it will get us up to speed with what’s been going on with Daniel. The full story is found in Daniel 6.

 **Daniel in the Lions’ Den (3 min 49 secs)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bEM_X25DWPk

No matter the circumstances, no matter the adversity, Daniel had a clear pattern of prayer that he followed daily. We could easily look at Daniel's story and conclude that he got his answer to prayer quickly as he was saved from the lions' den. However, remember that he was still in exile, and still waiting for God to make a move.

Over the next four weeks we're going to follow Daniel's pattern of prayer, bringing our concerns to God three times a day. You don't have to pray in your bedroom with the windows wide open, but there will be three times during the day where you pray as you wait on God to respond.

Give each member of the group a 'Waiting on God' prayer handout.


Throughout today's session the young people have had an opportunity to think about situations they are facing that feel unresolved. These situations may link to world events, or personal circumstances, but in all of them there will be a sense of wanting God to make a move and improve things. The prayer handout provides the opportunity for the young people to consistently pray, three times a day, about a situation where they would like God to move.

Discuss the different parts of the handout and give the young people time to complete the first few sections. If appropriate, share each prayer focus and commit to praying over the next four weeks.

This activity will be followed up in the final session where we will visit Daniel's story again.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

We often start an activity like this with the best intentions, but then three times a day quickly becomes once a day or not at all.

 What strategies can we put in place as a group to hold each other accountable to praying regularly for the next four weeks?

WAITING ON GOD

'When Daniel learned that the decree had been signed and posted, he continued to pray just as he had always done. His house had windows in the upstairs and opened towards Jerusalem.

Three times a day he knelt there in prayer, thanking and praising his God.'

— DANIEL 6:10 (THE MESSAGE PARAPHRASE)

DESCRIBE THE CHALLENGING SITUATION YOU ARE FACING:

.....

.....

.....

.....

WRITE DOWN THREE SPECIFIC PRAYER REQUESTS:

1
2
3

Bring your three prayer requests to God three times a day. At the end of each week jot down any progress that has been made and give thanks to God for his faithfulness. Use the song suggestion in each box to spend time praising God.

WEEK 1

'Endless Praise' – Planet Shakers

WEEK 2

'You have made me glad' – Charity Gayle

WEEK 3

'Hosanna' – Saddleback Worship

WEEK 4

'King of Me' – Rend Co Kids (just for fun!)

“Waiting on God requires the willingness to bear uncertainty, to carry within oneself the unanswered question, lifting the heart to God about it whenever it intrudes upon one's thoughts.”

— ELISABETH ELLIOT

WAITING FOR AN ANSWER

In Session Two we find Hannah waiting for God to answer her prayer. Crushed by the weight of the expectations of others, and her own desperate desire for a child, Hannah waited on God to give her a son. She was in a different time and place but her story and experience is relevant to us today. In this session we find out how Hannah's story links to ours.

WELCOME

Waiting can be challenging, especially if we are looking forward to something or really need something to happen.

When you think about having to wait, what scenario comes to mind?

For example: Waiting for a ride at a theme park, waiting at A&E, waiting for football club season tickets, or waiting for food to arrive etc.

After discussing the scenarios, divide the group into teams. Ask each team to choose one scenario and share it with everyone.

Each team has five minutes to create a 'Waiting Game' that could be played while waiting for this particular scenario. The dafter the better!

After five minutes ask each team to share their 'Waiting Game'.

Which one is the group's favourite?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

After the group have chosen their favourite game, have a go at playing it together.

WORD

As we think about the frustration of waiting for God to answer prayer, we are going to turn to the first book of Samuel in the Old Testament. Here we meet Hannah, who had been praying for something specific for a long time.

Just like the last session, the clip we are going to watch is not aimed at your age group but it simplifies Hannah's story and summarises how she waited on God. It also includes the happy ending!

 **Slapstick Theater (Hannah and God) (1 mins 4 secs)**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvVfSeG_1Ts


In the clip, Hannah's story of waiting is reduced to 64 seconds and is simplified for a younger audience. We're going to spend time discussing some of the statements from the clip and explore how Hannah must have felt as she waited on God.




Statement One: Hannah was married to a man named Elkanah but they were not able to have any children. This made Hannah sad.

 **Read 1 Samuel 1:1-2.**

'There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.'

— 1 SAMUEL 1:1-2

 What additional information do we find out from these verses?


-  How do you think Hannah felt about Peninnah having children?
-  As you place Hannah in history, what kind of social and cultural pressures do you think she felt when it came to having children?
-  How would you expand on the statement, 'Hannah was sad'?

Leader's notes: *Just in case the question of polygamy is raised, then the following information from the Biblical Theology Study Bible may be useful:*

'Monogamy predominates in the Old Testament, it is God's design for humanity (Genesis 2:18-25). But there are a few instances of men having more than one wife, such as Abraham, Isaac, David, and Solomon. The latter may mostly be explained by political factors such as treaty marriages. Hannah is presumably Elkanah's first wife; because she is barren, Elkanah may have felt it necessary to take a second wife and continue the line of inheritance through her.'

Statement Two: 'It's OK.'

In the clip Elkanah says, 'It's OK' to Hannah, but in the Scripture those around Hannah respond differently.

 **Read 1 Samuel 1:3-8.**

'Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb. Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"'

— 1 SAMUEL 1:3-8

Summarise the responses of Peninnah and Elkanah in modern-day language.

In what ways do we need to be careful when we respond to those around us who are waiting for God to answer their prayers?

Statement Three: Hannah was so upset that one of the priests, Eli, thought there was something 'off' about her.

 **Read 1 Samuel 1:12-14.**

'As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."'

— 1 SAMUEL 1:12-14

The fact that, in a place of worship, Eli the priest assumed that a praying woman was a drunkard was a poor reflection on the spiritual health of the people of Israel at that time. Instead of seeing Hannah's desperation, Eli passed judgement.

What assumptions do we often make about people who are facing challenging situations?

How can we avoid falling into the trap of judging others when we don't know the full story?

Statement Four: Hannah told him that she had been praying because she had a broken heart.

 **Read 1 Samuel 1:15-20**

"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking

wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." She said, "May your servant find favour in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. Early the next morning they arose and worshipped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

— 1 SAMUEL 1:19-20

Hannah surrendered her worries and concerns to God. She didn't have an immediate answer, but she did have peace.

What lessons can we learn from Hannah's experience of waiting on God?

Statement Five: Hannah prayed and gave thanks to God and Samuel grew up in the Temple serving the Lord.

When Hannah's prayer was answered, she didn't move straight on to the next prayer request. Instead, Hannah took time to praise God and thank him for his faithfulness.

When God answers prayer, do you take time to thank him? If so, how do you do this?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Hannah's prayer of thanks reminds us all how important it is to reflect on God's love and make time to say thank you.

Read Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10) taken from *The Message* paraphrase.

What words and phrases stand out for you?

Hannah prayed:

I'm bursting with God-news!

I'm walking on air.

I'm laughing at my rivals.

I'm dancing my salvation.

**Nothing and no one is holy like God,
no rock mountain like our God.**

**Don't dare talk pretentiously –
not a word of boasting, ever!**

For God knows what's going on.

He takes the measure of everything that happens.

**The weapons of the strong are smashed to pieces,
while the weak are infused with fresh strength.**

**The well-fed are out begging in the streets for crusts,
while the hungry are getting second helpings.**

**The barren woman has a houseful of children,
while the mother of many is bereft.**

**God brings death and God brings life,
brings down to the grave and raises up.**

**God brings poverty and God brings wealth;
he lowers, he also lifts up.**

He puts poor people on their feet again;

he rekindles burned-out lives with fresh hope,

**Restoring dignity and respect to their lives –
a place in the sun!**

For the very structures of earth are God's;
 he has laid out his operations on a firm foundation.
 He protectively cares for his faithful friends, step by step,
 but leaves the wicked to stumble in the dark.
 No one makes it in this life by sheer muscle!
 God's enemies will be blasted out of the sky,
 crashed in a heap and burned.
 God will set things right all over the earth,
 he'll give strength to his king,
 he'll set his anointed on top of the world!

— 1 SAMUEL 2:1-10 (THE MESSAGE PARAPHRASE)

As you reflect over the past few years, what prayers has God answered?






If you feel comfortable, then share them with the group.

WITNESS

Hannah's culture deemed her 'less than' because she was childless. Although Hannah genuinely wanted a child, she must have felt suffocated by the expectations of others. Hannah's story took place in biblical times, but as followers of God we still face similar struggles today.




Leader's notes: Discussion questions are provided below for this section but it will mainly be led by the circumstances of the young people. They may want to relate Hannah's story to the situations they are currently waiting for and praying about. These could include waiting for exam results, choosing the right apprenticeship or university, job hunting or health concerns. The discussion may also cover areas where it feels like there's no good reason for God to say no to a prayer request, but still, they are waiting. The aim of the discussion is to share what is on their heart and discuss the frustration that can come with unanswered prayer. Drawing on Hannah's example of praise and thanksgiving, the group could also discuss the speed at which we move on when our prayers are answered.

Suggested discussion questions:

-  Hannah felt societal pressure to have children. What kind of societal and cultural pressures do you feel?
-  What expectations do you feel that you currently have to meet?
-  Do you think these expectations are in line with what God wants for you?
-  Is there anything that you're praying for that you cannot understand why God hasn't said yes to? If you feel comfortable, then share with the group.
-  How does our faith grow and develop while we are waiting for God to answer our prayers?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

In the first session we started a focus prayer journey based on Daniel's experience of waiting on God.

-  How is it going so far?
-  Has there been any progress with the situation you are praying about?
-  Do you need to adjust what you are praying for? If so, in what way?

WORSHIP

For each of the sessions in this series there is a song linked to the theme of waiting. Today's song reflects the quiet determination of Hannah to keep praying, even when she couldn't understand what God was doing.

Read through the lyrics of the song 'Thy Will' before you listen to it.

How do the lyrics reflect your experience of waiting on God?

I'm so confused
 I know I heard you loud and clear
 So, I followed through
 Somehow I ended up here
 I don't wanna think
 I may never understand
 That my broken heart is a part of your
 plan
 When I try to pray
 All I've got is hurt and these four words:
 Thy will be done
 Thy will be done
 Thy will be done


I know you're good
 But this don't feel good right now
 And I know you think
 Of things I could never think about
 It's hard to count it all joy
 Distracted by the noise
 Just trying to make sense
 Of all your promises
 Sometimes I gotta stop
 Remember that you're God
 And I am not

So
 Thy will be done
 Thy will be done
 Thy will be done
 Like a child on my knees all that comes
 to me is
 Thy will be done
 Thy will be done
 Thy will

I know you see me
 I know you hear me, Lord
 Your plans are for me
 Goodness you have in store
 I know you hear me
 I know you see me, Lord
 Your plans are for me
 Good news you have in store

So, thy will be done
 Thy will be done
 Thy will be done
 Like a child on my knees all that comes
 to me is
 Thy will be done
 Thy will be done
 Thy will be done
 I know you see me
 I know you hear me, Lord

Spend some time together in prayer and reflection as you listen to the words of the song:

 **Hillary Scott and The Scott Family – 'Thy Will' (Official Video) (4 min 26 sec).**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dp4WC_YZAuw

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

What situations are you currently facing where you need to trust God and pray 'Thy will be done'?

WAITING FOR THINGS TO GET BETTER

David was lined up to be the next king. He was popular at the royal court, successful in battle and had the world at his feet. Then, everything changed! In today's session we go deep into the cave with David and experience what it feels like to lose everything. After nearly ten years of exile, David was desperate for things to get better. In this session we'll learn from David how to live out our faith while we're waiting to 'climb out of the cave'.

WELCOME

Today we're going deep into the cave with David in the Old Testament.

What feelings immediately come to mind when you think about going into a cave?

Watch the clip and then discuss which cave you would most/least like to visit.

 **Top 10 Most Amazing Caves (6 min 42 sec)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esCIKjLFOIE>

Our sense of danger may increase when we enter a deep cave, but as the video shows, they can also be places of amazing beauty. While waiting for things to get better, David had to spend time in a cave. In today's session we'll discover how this experience took his faith to a new place.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Are there any caves in your local area that you could go and visit as a group? If so, a trip there might give you a fresh perspective on David's experience in the cave.

WORD

Give each member of the group a 'Waiting for things to get better' handout. There are a lot of Scripture readings to cover on this handout but the aim is to skim read the passage and summarise the main events to track David's journey. Discuss the Scriptures and questions on the handout by following the arrows and use the additional information below to supplement the discussion.

1 Samuel 16:1-13 (Samuel anoints David)

God had rejected King Saul and wanted to put in place a new king for the future. Jesse lined up his sons to present to Samuel, but left David working in the fields. It didn't even cross his mind that David would make the cut. When the eldest son, Eliab, was presented to Samuel, God had something to say about it!

'But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

1 Samuel 16:7

As a teenager, and at God's command, David was anointed by Samuel as the future king.

1 Samuel 16:14-23 (David in Saul's service)

David was taken from his father's field to the royal court. There he soothed the king's tormented spirit, and Saul sent word back to David's father saying:

'Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him.'

— 1 SAMUEL 16:22

1 Samuel 17:1-54 (David and Goliath)

This is a long Scripture passage to read in full, but the summary is that David, through God's help, was able to defeat Goliath.





1 Samuel 18:1-7 (David is successful in battle)

Up to this point, how were things going for David? He was living out God's purpose for his life and it was going well. He was successful in battle and forging close relationships with members of the royal family. Everything seemed to be going to plan.

1 Samuel 18:8-9; 19:1-3; 23:7-8 (The tide turns for David)

Due to the king's jealousy, the tide turned for David and he found that he was reduced from the position of future king to a fugitive on the run.

At this point on the handout there is a place for the young people to jot down all the faith questions David may have been grappling with. For example:

-  Why is God doing this when I've only ever done what he asked?
-  When will this be over?
-  Will I ever be king?
-  Did I misunderstand what God wanted for me?

Read 1 Samuel 24:1-14

What happened in the cave at En Gedi?

WITNESS



Watch the clip that gives context to David's time in the cave at En Gedi.

Where David Hid From Saul / Cave in the Judean Wilderness / The Holy Land (9 min 7 secs)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYQ-AeHCdgQ>

In the clip we discovered the next part of David's fall from favour with the king. He had so much hope and promise ahead of him but now he was ten years into a period of exile and isolation.



Discuss the following questions in response to the content of the clip:

-  How do you relate to the quote: 'The truth is that when the Lord takes you into the wilderness, you do not come out the same person.'
-  In what ways have you, or others you know, been through a wilderness experience that has changed them?

David's brother Eliab didn't think much of David (1 Samuel 17:28) and made his feelings clear just before the confrontation with Goliath.

-  When we are in a time of wilderness, how do hurtful comments from the past impact our ability to stay focused on God's purpose for our lives?
-  Is this even harder when things aren't going well? If so, in what way?

David had spent nearly ten years in exile, on the run, waiting for things to get better.

-  In his position, what would you have been tempted to do as you hid in the cave?
-  Why is it so hard to continue following God's path when it feels like things are never going to get better?

Why do you think God lets us go through times in the wilderness?

What can we learn from David when we are waiting for things to get better?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Read Psalm 57 from *The Message* paraphrase. This is one of the psalms thought to have been written during David's time in exile.

How does this psalm teach us to 'wait well' when we want things to get better?

**Be good to me, God—and now!
I've run to you for dear life.
I'm hiding out under your wings
until the hurricane blows over.
I call out to High God,
the God who holds me together.
He sends orders from heaven and saves me,
he humiliates those who kick me around.
God delivers generous love,
he makes good on his word.
I find myself in a pride of lions
who are wild for a taste of human flesh;
Their teeth are lances and arrows,
their tongues are sharp daggers.
Soar high in the skies, O God!
Cover the whole earth with your glory!**

**They booby-trapped my path;
I thought I was dead and done for.
They dug a mantrap to catch me,
and fell in headlong themselves.
I'm ready, God, so ready,
ready from head to toe,
Ready to sing, ready to raise a tune:
"Wake up, soul!
Wake up, harp! wake up, lute!
Wake up, you sleepyhead sun!"
I'm thanking you, God, out loud in the streets,
singing your praises in town and country.
The deeper your love, the higher it goes;
every cloud is a flag to your faithfulness.
Soar high in the skies, O God!
Cover the whole earth with your glory!**

— PSALM 57 (THE MESSAGE PARAPHRASE)

WORSHIP

Our song for today comes from a songwriter who is open about her struggle with her faith in God. In her song 'Drawn to You', Audrey Assad laments the challenging time she is facing and her overwhelming feeling of loss. And yet the song speaks of a heart that, even when facing adversity, is drawn back to God.

Spend some time in prayer and reflection as a group while you listen to the song.

 **'Drawn to You' by Audrey Assad (4 min 21 secs)**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Yo_5KRQtI

Pray with the group as the song draws to a close.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

In what ways are you drawn to God as you are waiting for things to get better?

'WAITING FOR THINGS TO GET BETTER'

1 SAMUEL 18:1-17

1 SAMUEL 17:1-54

1 SAMUEL 18:8-9, 19:1-3, 23:7-8

1 SAMUEL 16:14-23

1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

WHAT IS ON DAVID'S MIND?

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What happened in the cave at En Gedi?

What can we learn from David when it feels like things are never going to get better?

Psalm 57

WAITING FOR THINGS TO WORK OUT

Many of us like to know what's next, what the plan is and how things are going to pan out. It makes us feel safe and secure to know that God has a plan for us. What if that plan is more a purpose? Would that help us to navigate life when we are waiting for things to work out? Today we consider the life of John Mark with all its twists and turns. There were many moments where life didn't go to plan for John Mark and yet God used them to help this young disciple grow into an essential part of the early Church. God is able to work in us and through us while we are waiting for things to work out.

WELCOME

We often get hung up on wanting to know the plan for our lives before we hit our mid-twenties, but guess the age of these celebrities whose lives took a different direction later in life. The nearest guess gets a point.

1. How old was Stan Lee when he created his first hit comic *The Fantastic Four*? [38]
2. How old was famous fashion designer Vera Wang when she first entered the industry? [40]
3. Donald Fisher opened the first Gap store in San Francisco in 1969. How old was he? [40]
4. How old was Samuel L Jackson when he landed his first big movie role? [43]
5. The famous chef Julia Child has recently featured in a mini-series about her life. How old was she when she wrote her first cookbook? [50]
6. How old was Arianna Huffington when she founded her namesake news publication, *The Huffington Post*? [55]

(The questions for this quiz are taken from the following article if you would like more background information - [27 People who became highly successful after age 40](#))

How does it make you feel to hear about people whose plans came together in later life?




Life takes various twists and turns, and although it's good to have a plan, it's OK if it changes along the way.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Watch the clip of two generations chatting about life.

 **57 Years Apart – A Boy and a Man Talk About Life (4 min 5 secs)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqSxjmvXzzY>

-  What benefits do you see in different generations meeting together and talking about their lives?
-  What do you think you could learn from some of the older members of your church? What could they learn from you?
-  What opportunities are there for you to share life with the older members of your church? If there aren't many, then how could you change that?

WORD





 **Read Jeremiah 29:11.**

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

— JEREMIAH 29:11

Why do you think Jeremiah 29:11 is such a favourite verse with Christians across the world?

This verse is often taken out of context and interpreted that if we just follow the plan God has for us then everything will work out perfectly. But life's not like that. However, we do like to know what's next and this verse provides the reassurance that a plan is in place.

-  What plan do you have for your life? What's next?
-  Do you think God has a plan for you? If so, what do you think it looks like?
-  Do you think there's a specific plan, with timelines and achievements, or is it an overall purpose?
-  Does our idea of God's plan for us match up with the experiences of characters in the Bible? Do these characters always follow the plan perfectly?

Today we're going to meet John Mark and see how God's purpose for his life took him on a journey with many twists and turns.

People often say, 'Where were you when...?' and then add some historical event.




 **Read Mark 14:43-51:**

'Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Then everyone deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.'

See if you can find John Mark in this story. How would he answer the question, 'Where were you when Jesus was arrested?'

Many scholars believe that John Mark was the young man fleeing the scene in his birthday suit! This young man went on to have an amazing adventure with the disciples, but it wasn't without its ups and downs.

The following clip is quite long but gives an overview of the life of John Mark and the twists and turns on his journey. As the group watch the clip, ask them to think about the following questions and discuss them at the end.

-  Do you think God had a clear plan for John Mark or a clear purpose, or both?
-  What are some of the moments when John Mark might have been waiting for things to work out?
-  What do we learn about waiting from John Mark's spiritual journey?

 **Acts Episode 6 John Mark – Eyewitness Bible Series (12 min 41 sec)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zdi6ipT1Ho&t=2s>

Discuss the questions the young people have considered throughout the clip.

If you're searching for a perfect plan to follow so that everything falls into place, then John Mark shows us that that's not the way God works. There may not be a perfect plan but there is a perfect purpose. As the clip says:

'The Holy Spirit will empower you to have the right values and to be courageous in the cause of Christ if you allow him to.'

While you're waiting for things to work out, follow John Mark's example and keep living out God's purpose for your life.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

If the group would like to explore the background of Jeremiah 29:11 in more detail then watch the clip together and discuss how it changes our perspective of this familiar verse.

 **What Jeremiah 29:11 Means (The Most Misunderstood Verse in the Bible) (6 mins 24 sec)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5X6pymKdAh8>

WITNESS

What are you waiting for?

What feels unresolved?

If we're not careful, we move through life waiting for the next thing to work out. Instead of taking in the moment, we move on to the next thing, and the next thing and ...

Read the extract from *Cold Tangerines* written by Shauna Niequist and discuss the questions together (also available as a handout).

“ ‘I have always, essentially, been waiting. Waiting to become something else, waiting to be that person I always thought I was on the verge of becoming, waiting for that life I thought I would have. In my head, I was always one step away. In high school, I was biding my time until I could become the college version of myself, the one my mind could see so clearly. In college, the post-college “adult” person was always looming in front of me, smarter, stronger, more organized. Then the married person, then the person I’d become when we have kids. For twenty years, literally, I have waited to become the thin version of myself, because that’s when life will really begin. And through all that waiting, here I am. My life is passing, day by day, and I am waiting for it to start. I am waiting for that time, that person, that event when my life will finally begin. I love movies about “The Big Moment” – the game or the performance or the wedding day or the record deal, the stories that split time with that key event, and everything is reframed, before it and after it, because it has changed everything. I have always wanted this movie-worthy event, something that will change everything and grab me out of this waiting game into the whirlwind in front of me. I cry and cry at these movies, because I am still waiting for my own big moment. I had visions of life as an adventure, a thing to be celebrated and experienced, but all I was doing was going to work and coming home, and that wasn’t what it looked like in the movies. John Lennon once said, “Life is what happens when you’re busy making other plans.” For me, life is what was happening while I was busy waiting for my big moment. I was ready for it and believed that the rest of my life would fade into the background, and that my big moment would carry me through life like a lifeboat. The Big Moment, unfortunately, is an urban myth. Some people have them, in a sense, when they win the Heisman or become the next American Idol. But even that football player or that singer is living a life made up of more than that one moment. Life is a collection of a million, billion moments, tiny little moments and choices, like a handful of luminous, glowing pearls. It takes so much time, and so much work, and those beads and moments are so small, and so much less fabulous and dramatic than the movies. But this is what I’m finding, in glimpses and flashes: this is it. This is it, in the best possible way. That thing I’m waiting for, that adventure, that move-score-worthy experience unfolding gracefully. This is it. Normal, daily life ticking by on our streets and sidewalks, in our houses and apartments, in our beds and at our dinner tables, in our dreams and prayers and fights and secrets – this pedestrian life is the most precious thing any of use will ever experience.’

— SHAUNA NIEQUIST, *COLD TANGERINES: CELEBRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY NATURE OF EVERYDAY LIFE*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 🗨️ Shauna mentioned the kinds of things she was waiting for. What were they?
- 🗨️ Which ones do you most relate to?
- 🗨️ What do you think Shauna meant when she said 'In my head, I was always one step away'? Do you ever feel like that? If so, how?
- 🗨️ How do you relate to Shauna's comments about waiting for her 'big movie moment'?
- 🗨️ As she looks back on her life so far, what observation does Shauna make 'in glimpses and flashes'?

“‘Life is a collection of a million, billion moments, tiny little moments and voices, like a handful of luminous, glowing pearls.’

— SHAUNA NIEQUIST

Let's make sure we don't miss the little ways God is working through us and in us while we're waiting for the 'next big moment' to arrive.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

As you reflect on all that we've watched and read today, how does it impact your outlook on life as you wait for things to work out?

WORSHIP

In our starter we heard about celebrities whose careers took off later in life. You could argue that while they had their 'big movie moments' later in life, they will have had many times where they were waiting for things to work out. As Christians, God has a purpose for each one of us and every day we have an opportunity to live that out, even when it feels like things aren't going right.

Our song for today speaks of the highs and lows of life's journey and the way that every step of that journey matters.

Read through the lyrics of the song 'Every Mile Mattered' by Nichole Nordeman before you listen to it.

What do you think the songwriter is trying to say about waiting for things to work out?

**Spread the map on the table
With the coffee stain
Put your finger on the places
Show me where you've been
Is that California where your teardrops dried?
You drew a circle around Georgia
Can you tell me why?**

**I see should have beens, could have beens
Written all over your face
Wrong turns, and bridges burned
Things you want to change**


**It's history, you can't rewrite it
You're not meant to be trapped inside it
Every tear brought you here
Every sorrow gathered
It's history
But every mile mattered**

Get the box off the top shelf
With the black-and-white
Snapshots of your old self
In a better light
Ghosts and regrets back again
I can see it in your eyes
Send them home, let 'em go
Don't you think it's time?

It's history, you can't rewrite it
You're not meant to be trapped inside it
Every tear brought you here
Every sorrow gathered
It's history
But every mile mattered

Every road and every bend
Every bruise and bitter end
All you squandered, all you spent
It mattered, it mattered
Mercy always finds a way
To wrap your blisters up in grace
Every highway you'd erase
It mattered, it mattered
But it's history, it don't define ya
You're free to leave it all behind ya
Every tear brought you here
Every sorrow gathered
It's history
But every mile mattered

Spend time reflecting on today's session as you listen to the song.

 **Nichole Nordeman – 'Every Mile Mattered' (Lyrics Video) (3 min 26 secs)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nY7HrPIlu-Q>

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Nichole Nordeman wrote these words about her song 'Every Mile Mattered':

“ Like most of us, I've travelled some roads I'd rather erase, but I wanted to write this song (and album) in light of the truth that all of those miles were important. They were a gift – pointing and prodding me on to where I am now – to the story God is still telling with my life. Erasing or diminishing the darker roads doesn't tell a true story, and can oftentimes makes us feel alone and isolated when no one is saying the hard truth about the miles behind them. Not a single mile was wasted.' **”**

If you were to write a song about your faith journey right now, then what would your message to others be?

EXTRACT OF COLD TANGERINES

BY SHAUNA NIEQUIST

I have always, essentially, been waiting. Waiting to become something else, waiting to be that person I always thought I was on the verge of becoming, waiting for that life I thought I would have. In my head, I was always one step away. In high school, I was biding my time until I could become the college version of myself, the one my mind could see so clearly. In college, the post-college “adult” person was always looming in front of me, smarter, stronger, more organized. Then the married person, then the person I’d become when we have kids. For twenty years, literally, I have waited to become the thin version of myself, because that’s when life will really begin.

And through all that waiting, here I am. My life is passing, day by day, and I am waiting for it to start. I am waiting for that time, that person, that event when my life will finally begin.

I love movies about “The Big Moment” – the game or the performance or the wedding day or the record deal, the stories that split time with that key event, and everything is reframed, before it and after it, because it has changed everything. I have always wanted this movie-worthy event, something that will change everything and grab me out of this waiting game into the whirlwind in front of me. I cry and cry at these movies, because I am still waiting for my own big moment. I had visions of life as an adventure, a thing to be celebrated and experienced, but all I was doing was going to work and coming home, and that wasn’t what it looked like in the movies.

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— SHAUNA NIEQUIST, *COLD TANGERINES*: CELEBRATING THE EXTRAORDINARY NATURE OF EVERYDAY LIFE

WAITING WELL

In this final session we revisit Daniel as he enters old age. He watched many kings pass through the palace, experienced times in the limelight and moments of obscurity. Throughout it all he waited on God. Right until the end Daniel prayed for God's guidance and wisdom and there is much he can teach us about waiting well.

For this session it would be useful if the group brought along their 'Waiting on God' handout from Session One.



WELCOME

This is our final session looking into the theme of 'Waiting on God'. We've met lots different Bible characters who, through their stories, have given us advice on how to wait well. We often learn from the experiences of others as we watch them make decisions and listen to their words of wisdom.

What one piece of advice would you give to someone younger than you?

The following clip follows people from the age of 5 to 75 as they give one piece of advice for someone younger than them.

Think about the following questions and discuss them after the clip has finished.

-  How does the advice change as the people get older?
-  What piece of advice will you take on board from the clip?

 **70 People Ages 5–75: Advice For Someone Younger Than You – Glamour (5 min 24 secs)**






<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyLFL-O3L0g>


ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Leader's notes: *Before the session you could ask members of your church to write down the one piece of advice they would give the young people and share them with the group.*

Which piece of advice will they take on board?

WORD

-  Why was Daniel living in Babylon? What happened to him?
-  Daniel's whole life was spent waiting to be freed from exile. How do you think that felt?
-  How did the jealousy of others lead to a night in the lions' den for Daniel?
-  What did Daniel do in response to this threat? How did he show that he trusted God to see him through?
-  What did we learn from Daniel about waiting on God?

 **Read Daniel 9:17-19 (The Message paraphrase):**

“Turn your ears our way, God, and listen. Open your eyes and take a long look at our ruined city, this city named after you. We know that we don't deserve a hearing from you. Our appeal is to your compassion. This prayer is our last and only hope:

'Master, listen to us!

Master, forgive us!






Master, look at us and do something!

Master, don't put us off!

Your city and your people are named after you:

You have a stake in us!”



Daniel said this prayer in the later stages of his life.

-  What was he still waiting for?
-  As he looked at the world around him, Daniel knew that nothing was as it should be and that God was not at the centre of the people's hearts.
-  How does Daniel's experience resonate with you as you look at the world around you?
-  What was Daniel asking God to do?
-  What situations make you want to pray, 'Look at us and do something'?

There will be an opportunity to pray through these concerns later in the session.



Even though he was still waiting for an answer, Daniel prayed to God from his first days in Babylon through to old age.

Explain your thoughts as you answer these questions.

-  Do you think there may have been times when Daniel wondered if God was listening?
-  Do you ever wonder if God hears your prayers?

In Daniel 10:12 (*The Message* paraphrase) God sent an angel to reassure Daniel that he had heard every prayer he had spoken:

“Relax, Daniel,” he continued, “don’t be afraid. From the moment you decided to humble yourself to receive understanding, your prayer was heard, and I set out to come to you.”

-  How do you think these words made Daniel feel?
-  Do you find them reassuring for yourself? If so, why?



Intertwined throughout the Bible is a story of waiting. The people of Israel are waiting for a Messiah and the book of Daniel plays an integral part in that journey.

Watch the clip together to bring your time in the book of Daniel to a close.

-  **The Bible Explained: Daniel (8 min 55 sec)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtrK2GnZyVg>





ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY


The book of Daniel is so much more than just the story of the lions' den.

-  What have you discovered about Daniel and his life?
-  How does Daniel inspire you to pray while you're waiting?

WITNESS

For the past four weeks we've attempted to follow Daniel's pattern of prayer by committing to pray about an issue three times a day. The following discussion isn't aimed to make you feel guilty if you didn't manage to pray. It's important to consider different aspects of our spiritual life and find ways to improve our relationship with God. That's the aim of this discussion.

-  Have you managed to pray regularly? If not, why was it a challenge?
-  What priority do you place on prayer?
-  What, if any, changes have you seen as you've been praying about this issue?
-  Reflecting on all the Bible characters we have met during these sessions, how do you feel about any prayers that remain unanswered? Do you feel like God is still working in the situation?

 What situations – that you are happy to share with the group – still need focused prayer?

Write down the prayer requests of the group on a flip chart sheet.

Earlier in the session you were asked to name any situations that make you want to pray to God, 'Look at us and do something.' What were they?

Add these concerns to the flip chart list.


Lead the group in a time of prayer where they bring these concerns to God.


To bring the prayer time to a close, read Daniel 10:12 (*The Message* paraphrase) but add the names of the young people after the word 'Relax'.

“Relax, ...don't be afraid. From the moment you decided to humble yourself to receive understanding, your prayer was heard, and I set out to come to you.”

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 For those of you who have followed Daniel's prayer routine, how have you found it useful?

 Do you think it is something that you will continue doing? If so, how?

 For those who weren't able to follow it, what other plan could you put in place to ensure that you spend regular time in prayer?

WORSHIP

This week's song is a different kind of song of worship. It encourages us to stand firm in the promises of God, even when we are:

- * waiting for him to make a move,
- * waiting for an answer,
- * waiting for things to get better,
- * waiting for things to work out.

As you listen to the song 'No Compromise' by Peter Furler, think about the following question and discuss it afterwards.

How does this song describe Daniel's approach to waiting during the challenging times of life?

 **'No Compromise' – Peter Furler (Newsboys) – Films and Music Inspired by the Story**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqZNfWc-8aw>

PRAYER

**Our knees bow only to one name,
 Our lips have one king to proclaim,
 We will lift none other high,
 This is our one heart's cry,
 No compromise.
 No compromise.
 Heavenly Father, help us to live like Daniel, place you at the centre of our lives and wait well.
 Amen.**