

“Waiting Is Suffering While Still Hoping in God”

1. Introduction: Hidden Battles

- Story of a seminary friend’s silent struggle with infertility.
- The weight she carried: medical procedures, emotional exhaustion, loneliness.
- Her quiet strength and compassion even as she suffered internally.

2. Hannah’s Story and the Painful Phrase: “The Lord Had Closed Her Womb”

- 1 Samuel and the comfort found in that verse.
- The hard truth: If God is involved, He can be approached.
- Waiting is not passive—waiting is suffering while still hoping.

3. Patience vs. Long-Suffering

- Modern translation: “patience.”
- Older translation: “long-suffering.”
- The honesty of that term—waiting often hurts.
- Trusting God during suffering requires faith and endurance.

4. The Silence of Infertility

- Statistics: 1 in 6 experience infertility.
- The hidden nature of the struggle—no announcements, no easy conversations.
- Why the Church must speak compassionately and honestly about it.

5. God’s Strength for the Waiting

- Isaiah 40: God renews the strength of the weary.
- Doctors, medicine, and healthy habits matter—but God is ultimately the one in control.
- Prayer doesn’t guarantee a child, but it does guarantee God’s presence, strength, and love.

6. Biblical Stories of Long Waiting

- **Elizabeth & Zechariah:** Hope delayed until “very old.”
- **Isaac & Rebekah:** A 20-year gap between prayer and conception.
- These stories remind us that God hears, God knows, and God can act—though not always on our timeline.

7. The Hard Truth and the Deeper Hope

- Not every prayer for a child is answered with pregnancy.
- But every prayer is heard by God—the One who strengthens through the waiting.
- 2 Corinthians 4: Earthly suffering vs. God’s eternal perspective.

8. Expanding the Message Beyond Infertility

- Many kinds of long-suffering:
 - Desire for marriage
 - Unhappy marriage
 - Chronic illness: cancer, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, dementia
- In every circumstance, God's love remains unshaken.

9. Final Call: Honest Prayer and Confident Hope

- Cry out, yell, lament—God can handle it.
- Waiting ≠ passivity; waiting = suffering while still hoping in God.
- With God all things are possible.
- Invitation to pray together now.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever gone through something heavy that few people around you knew about? What helped you keep going during that time?
2. Why do you think infertility—and other deep sufferings—are so hard for people to talk about?
3. How does it change your perspective to know that God is *involved* in the waiting, even when His reasons aren't clear?
4. Which do you relate to more: “patience” or “long-suffering”? Why?
5. What emotions do you bring to God in prayer when life feels unfair or delayed?
6. Do you ever feel hesitant to be honest with God about your frustration or anger? What might change if you prayed more honestly?
7. Read Luke 1:5-25. Which biblical story in the sermon (Hannah, Elizabeth, Isaac/Rebekah) resonated most with you, and why?
8. Read Isaiah 40:28-31. promises renewed strength to “those who hope in the Lord.” What does hoping in God look like for you right now?
9. Read 2nd Corinthians 4:16-18. What is something in your life that you are waiting on, praying for, or longing for?
10. How might God be shaping, strengthening, or sustaining you *in the waiting*?
11. How can the church better support people who are suffering silently—whether through infertility or other struggles?
12. Is there someone you feel called to encourage, pray for, or reach out to because of this message?