

# SEASONS

OF *Waiting*



52  
DEVOTIONS  
—  
*An Invitation  
To Hope*

Written by Barb Hill, LPC-MHSP | Illustrated by Shealeen Louise Bishop

FOREWORD BY BIANCA JUÁREZ OLTHOFF



*Presented to:*

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*From:*

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*Date:*

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## *Endorsements*

When I work with clients who are in a season of waiting or even when I struggle with waiting in my own life, there is a feeling of being stuck or trapped, accompanied by a sense of hopelessness or resignation. What Barb has captured in *Seasons of Waiting* is the expectancy and the discipline of approaching waiting as a way of pursuing balance between the active pursuit of God's presence, and the rest found in the assurance of His promises. Barb integrates her work as a counselor with solid biblical examples and practical exercises that will shift your mindset on the experience of waiting to one of purpose and partnership with God and with others. If you've struggled in a season of waiting or find yourself in one right now, this book will compel you to reconsider the story of waiting that God is writing in your soul, and to embrace a new narrative that includes opportunities for curiosity, hope, and courage.

**DR. DEBORAH GORTON**

Clinical psychologist, professor, author of *Embracing Uncomfortable: Facing Our Fears While Pursuing Our Purpose*

*Seasons of Waiting* is unique as it merges the world of faith and mental health with so much grace and wisdom. Barb's insight as a counselor shines a beautiful light on not giving up hope while we navigate the not-so-easy seasons of waiting for our dreams and promises to be fulfilled, and as we learn to trust God with the process of our growth. This book will come as such an encouragement to those who find themselves on a journey of longing and waiting.

**ADRIENNE CAMP**

Author and musician

Barb Hill is a talented writer and gifted storyteller. She doesn't just give us an invitation to hope, she gives us the permission we desperately need to wrestle with the paradox of hope and pain in seasons of waiting. Whether we're waiting for someone to love, something steady to hold onto, a change in our circumstances, or a shift in our perspective, Barb reminds us that seasons of waiting also hold the potential and possibility to bring out the best in us if we're willing to wait with hope.

**BETH GRAYBILL**

Consultant, teacher, and storyteller

*Seasons of Waiting* not only offers encouraging revelations to those who find themselves journeying through the process of waiting, but author Barb Hill offers keen insights on how to walk that road with thoughtful and joyful hope. Her beautiful, personal approach to writing, colored by the wisdom she has gleaned from her years as a therapist, make this book an excellent read for those in a season of waiting, or those who simply wish to consider how they might respond to the God-ordained purpose of each moment.

**GINNY OWENS**

Singer/songwriter, author, teacher, and advocate





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*To my late grandmother,*

*Mary Lou Sasso.*

*Even though you are not physically here,  
your spirit remains, and is felt every day  
in the deep faith and hope you always held for me.*





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# Foreword



I first met Barb in Southern California when she was an intern at an organization I worked for. At the time, I had no idea how much life we would eventually share. We went on to organize events and travel (and experience almost-missed flights) together. The two of us spent many evenings laughing, crying, and eating Mexican food—usually all at the same time. After nearly eight years of friendship and countless texts and phone calls, there’s one topic, one supremely human struggle, that we often come back to: the process of waiting.

None of us enjoy waiting—not for a plate of tacos, not for a promotion, not for a spouse. We prefer our desires to be delivered on our terms and time line. But none of us can avoid waiting, can we? It greets us around every corner through painful delays and the ache of deferred hope. In these moments, we face tough choices to release control and courageously wait with hope. Even more than that, our waiting seasons present us with opportunities to be transformed.

*Seasons of Waiting* is not only an invitation to hope but also to be transformed. To come as you are, but to leave changed. To let go of what doesn’t belong and embrace what does. To wrestle with the doubts and questions and experience God’s presence and overwhelming peace. To be more convinced than ever that God cares as much about the state of our hearts as he does about our heart’s desires.

Barb isn’t on the sidelines shouting empty clichés about waiting and hope; she’s in the game with you, sharing from the depth of her heart and lived experience.

In each devotion you’re about to read, Barb shows up as a compassionate

therapist, a kindred friend, and an honest human to offer a fresh perspective about what it means to wait with intention and a heart full of hope. She gently corrects the false narratives that say waiting is a passive experience where you cross your fingers and simply hope something changes. She offers a better and more true narrative—that waiting is empowered participation with God to bring transformation and a deeper experience of wholeness for body, mind, and spirit.

*Bianca Juárez Olthoff*

*Pastor, podcaster, and bestselling author of How to Have Your Life Not Suck*



## *Author's Note*



This book has been in my heart for a long time, and it brings me so much joy that you are holding it in your hands. Naval Ravikant says, “To write a great book, you must first become the book.”<sup>1</sup> The process of becoming this book began well before I was gifted the opportunity to write it and continues to be one of my most challenging experiences.

Although I have navigated many seasons of waiting, the one that has remained in my life until now is waiting for a family of my own. Through each season, I have needed to learn how to navigate this particularly painful experience of waiting.

Yet this is not a book only about waiting for a family. I wanted to be very intentional about how I share my story so you can find your own within these pages, even if our waiting experiences look different. My hope is that every part of you feels honored—mind, body, and spirit—as you move through this book. I endeavor to weave in my expertise as a therapist, my empathy as a friend, and my honest humanity as I navigate the difficult terrain of waiting with you.

Many years ago, a friend said to me, “God’s plans are always for you, and always beyond you.” Through the years, God has deposited in me deep insight and revelation about waiting, and I see now that it wasn’t just for me. It was for you as well. I believe you, too, know the pain and the longing for resolution, change, and fulfillment in significant areas of your life.

Several common threads keep us interconnected as human beings. Our shared human experiences are one of those threads, and if we look deeper, we discover that we are woven together by something even more significant. Genesis 1:27 says, “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of



God he created them” (NIV). This means we are connected not only by the experiences we share but also by the God who created us. Our experiences and our pain may look similar or very different, but the feelings are the same when it comes to waiting.

Waiting highlights the ultimate paradox of being made for heaven but finding ourselves on earth. Romans 8:23 says that we “groan inwardly as we wait eagerly” (NIV). The struggle of waiting has an uncanny way of unearthing thoughts, feelings, and reactions in us that not many other things can. It exposes what we believe, challenges our patience, refines our character, and confronts where we’ve placed our hope. My own story includes the hope, longing, and disappointment that may be familiar to you. And even though some parts sting with lack of closure, I’m committed to offering my imperfect story within these pages.

Our experiences of waiting look and feel different depending on the season of life we’re in and who we are in each one. To honor this reality, the devotional weeks follow the unique rhythm of the fall, winter, spring, and summer seasons of our lives. They capture the comingling of expectation and disappointment, fear and hope that ebb and flow. It is meant to be a journey leading to healing and transformation. My hope is that these words will meet you in your current season and help introduce you to the new person you are becoming.

As you enter fall, you may be deeply discouraged. Waiting has taken its toll, and you aren’t sure how to keep going. Fall is where you are refined. Your mind, heart, and spirit are collectively evaluating what belongs and what needs to be released.

Winter is a time of solitude, vulnerability, and self-reflection. It is an invitation to bravely venture below the surface and dig deeper than ever. Profound insights that can only be won in winter are rebuilding the person you are becoming.

As you enter spring, you are reemerging, holding fresh hope. Your journey has been hard-fought, and you are still learning how to live into this ever-evolving transformation.

Finally, as you enter summer, you are uncovering renewed youthfulness along with a greater depth of maturity.

The main devotion begins each week, and on the days that follow, prompts

encourage you to go deeper—mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. I suggest you write your responses to the prompts in a separate journal. These prompts follow an intentional framework with a different focus for each day:

Day One (You/Soul Care)

Day Two (God)

Day Three (You and God)

Day Four (You and Others)

It is in the tension between our present experiences and our future hopes that we most need a friend. Every word is an extension of my friendship as you navigate the challenging but fruitful terrain of waiting. My deepest hopes are that you would leave different than how you came and that these words would bolster you with the courage to wait well and resurrect hope in every season.

The messages of pain and hope we share with the world are ones we have learned to wrestle with and live out. I wonder what words are being written, what messages are being formed in your life right now as you wait. Your story matters, and it's not for nothing.

I'm cheering you on as you are in the process of becoming the message you will share with the world.

*Love,  
Barb*





*There was a man who had four sons.*

*He wanted his sons to learn not to judge things too quickly. So, he sent them each on a quest, in turn, to go and look at a pear tree that was a great distance away.*

*The first son went in the winter, the second son went in the spring, the third son went in summer, and the youngest went in fall. When they had all gone and come back, he called them together to describe what they had seen.*

*The first son said that the tree was very ugly, bent, and twisted.*

*The second son said no, it was covered with green buds and full of promise.*

*The third son disagreed; he said it was laden with blossoms that smelled so sweet and looked so beautiful, it was the most graceful thing he had ever seen.*

*The last son disagreed with all of them; he said it was ripe and drooping with fruit, full of life and fulfilment.*

*The man then explained to his sons that they were all right, because they had each seen but only one season in the tree's life. He told them that you cannot judge a tree, or a person, by only one season, and that the essence of who they are and the pleasure, joy, and love that comes from that life can only be measured at the end, when all the seasons are up.*

*If you give up when it is winter, you will miss the promise of your spring, the beauty of your summer and the fulfilment of your fall.<sup>2</sup>*

Author unknown





FALL

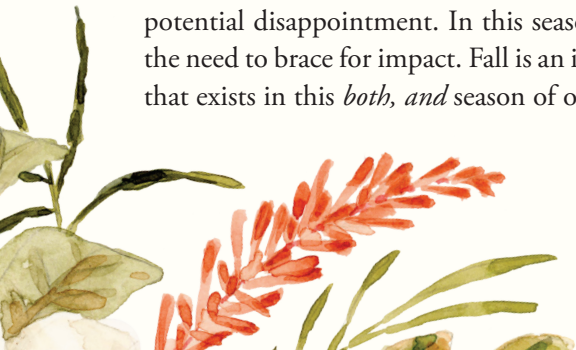
FALL EMBODIES THE TENSION OF *BOTH, AND*. The world around us bursts with color, while the crispness in the air signals that change is coming. We feel both a relief and a resistance as our pace slows and we prepare for our world to change. Fall is like approaching a yellow light at an intersection. It alerts us to slow down and ready ourselves for change.

Herein lies the tension: We want to hold on to the delight of summer and remain in the nostalgia of fall forever, but with every falling leaf we are invited to learn how to hold beauty and grief in our hearts at the same time. In his book *A Moveable Feast*, Ernest Hemingway observed, “You expected to be sad in the fall. Part of you died each year when the leaves fell from the trees and their branches were bare against the wind and the cold, wintry light. But you knew there would always be the spring, as you knew the river would flow again after it was frozen.”<sup>3</sup>

The fall season of waiting is when we learn to release the pain of unfulfilled desires and hold on to our hope and expectation. We have promises and we have longing. We have evidence and we have empty hands. We have joy and we have sorrow. Fall is the in-between. It’s the tension-filled place between desire and fulfillment.

In psychology, there is a term known as the *window of tolerance*. Research reveals that it’s at the edge of this window—at the cusp of our ability to tolerate the discomfort—where we grow, heal, and change. The *both, and* nature of fall invites us to the cusp of our capacity. It teaches us how to hold competing beliefs and feelings, learning how to honor both and find a new level of hope and acceptance there.

As we observe nature letting go in surrender to the coming winter season, we also learn to release limiting beliefs, distorted thoughts, and all-consuming feelings. As we learn to wait in fall, we realize that some beliefs about our worth and God’s character have served as armor to protect our hearts against potential disappointment. In this season we learn to be brave and to release the need to brace for impact. Fall is an invitation into the unexpected freedom that exists in this *both, and* season of our waiting.



WEEK ONE

## *It Is about You*

*My darling, everything about you is beautiful,  
and there is nothing at all wrong with you.*

SONG OF SOLOMON 4:7, NCV



I WALKED IN TO SEE MY THERAPIST, full of grief and grappling with the nos that kept coming my way. I plopped down on her big white chair. “I just feel like it’s all about me, like there is something wrong with me.”

In her trademark way, she shot back. “Well, it *is* about you.” Her response hung in the air.

I’m sure horror covered my face as my fears seemed to be coming true. *Well, there you have it, folks. Even my therapist confirms that it’s all my fault.*

Then she smiled. “But not in the way you think.”

I dared to raise questioning eyes.

“The reason things haven’t worked out *is* about you, but not in the way you think. It’s not because something is wrong with you. It’s because of all that is right about you. It’s because of the quality of who you are that you’ve waited this long. What is for you must match you, and that takes time.”

“No.” It’s hard to hear that word as anything other than rejection and an indictment of our worth. It reverberates in our minds like a mallet hitting a gong. Formative experiences of rejection scar us, and honestly, they’re what keep me in business as a therapist.

In her research on shame, Brené Brown says, “We are psychologically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually hardwired for connection, love, and belonging. Connection, along with love and belonging (two expressions of



connection), is why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives.”<sup>1</sup>

This hardwiring makes rejection painful. One of the most challenging aspects of waiting is the resounding “no” to something we anticipate with excitement. When we get a no, it’s as if someone stuck a pin in a balloon letting the air escape, leaving it deflated and pitiful looking.

After experiencing one of these nos, I remember someone reframing the rejection as protection. *Protection from what?* I didn’t see anything wrong with what I wanted or that I needed protection from it. If I was honest, God felt cruel, as if he had gotten my hopes up only to dash them to pieces.

But after the conversation with my therapist, I wondered if God really had been protecting me from circumstances not meant for me. In time, his provision would match how he had made me and the life he had called me to live.

As you challenge the false story that waiting is your fault, you will be free to see previous nos differently and the kind intention behind certain closed doors. The nos are not the end of your story. I believe they are gateways to your yes, to many yeses. Don’t allow the nos to whisper lies about you. The waiting is about you, but not in the way you think.

### ———— Day 1 Prompt: Choosing Vulnerability over Shame ————

In his book *The Soul of Shame*, Curt Thompson says this:

We deeply long for connection, to be seen and known for who we are without rejection. But we are terrified of the vulnerability that is required for that very contact. And shame is the variable that mediates that fear of rejection in the face of vulnerability. But in the Trinity we see something that we must pay attention to: God does not leave. The loving relationship shared between Father, Son and Spirit is the ground on which all other models of life and creativity rest. In this relationship of constant self-giving, vulnerable and joyful love, *shame has no oxygen to breathe.*<sup>2</sup>

In our longings for connection and fears of rejection, the truth that “God does not leave” has power to allay our fears and dispel our shame.

*Living It Out* Consider how you can begin interpreting the nos and delays through a lens of love rather than neglect. Write down what comes to mind.

### ———— Day 2 Prompt: Reconciling God and Waiting ————

Reconciling God as good and kind with the pain of our circumstances can be challenging. In *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers references Luke 11:11-13, where Jesus is talking about fatherhood.

There are times when your Father will appear as if He were an unnatural father—as if He were callous and indifferent—but remember, He is not. “Everyone who asks receives” (Luke 11:10). If all you see is a shadow on the face of the Father right now, hang on to the fact that He will ultimately give you clear understanding and will fully justify Himself in everything that He has allowed into your life.<sup>3</sup>

*Living It Out* How have you struggled to reconcile pain with a kind and loving God? Write down what stands out to you in the quote.

### ———— Day 3 Prompt: Choosing Right over Wrong ————

It can be healing to realize the nos are because of what is *right* about you.

Have you been tempted to believe you’re waiting because of something that’s wrong with you? Consider the Old Testament stories of Joseph, David, and Abraham. They waited much longer than they imagined for promises to be fulfilled. Joseph waited thirteen years for his dream to come to pass, David waited about twenty-two years to be recognized as king, and Abraham waited twenty-five years to hold his promised child.

It’s possible they looked inward and questioned whether the delay was

because something was wrong with them. In reality, God’s infinite love for them was at the heart of the delay.

*Living It Out*    Pray and invite God into this struggle. Ask him to show you all that is right about you, and how this truth is at the heart of the delay.

————— **Day 4 Prompt: Trusted Community** —————

In 1912, French sociologist Émile Durkheim introduced the term *collective effervescence*,<sup>4</sup> the experience of connection, communal emotion, and a “sensation of sacredness”<sup>5</sup> that happens when we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Durkheim also proposed that during collective effervescence our focus shifts from ourselves to others.

Powerful changes take place in us when we wrestle with our questions and pain within a trusted community. In this “sensation of sacredness,” we remember there are purposes in our waiting that extend far beyond us. We aren’t alone or to blame, and although we aren’t privy to how God is providing for us, he is still worthy of our trust and confidence.

Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

GALATIANS 6:2, NLT

*Living It Out*    Reflect on a time when you shared your burdens with someone you trust, or they shared theirs with you. Remember how this helped you feel less alone and more connected to them and to God.



WEEK TWO

## *Hidden Treasure*

*If we wait in the conviction that a seed has been planted  
and that something has already begun, it changes the way we wait.*

HENRI NOUWEN



WHEN I LOOK UP THE DEFINITION for the word *wait*,<sup>1</sup> this is what I find:

to *stay in place* in expectation of  
to *remain stationary* in readiness or expectation  
to *pause* for another to catch up  
to *look forward* expectantly  
to *hold back* expectantly  
a *hidden or concealed position*  
a *state or attitude* of watchfulness and expectancy

What I notice about each definition is our power to choose. *Staying in place, pausing, looking forward, holding back* all reflect choices we make. At some point, we may have believed that to wait was to be passive and powerless. But I don't see passivity or powerlessness anywhere in these descriptions. Instead, I see courage, bravery, vulnerability, acceptance, surrender, and hope.

The description I never saw before but that resonates deeply is a *hidden or concealed position*. We often mistake being hidden for being unseen, and this mislabeling reinforces the lie that we aren't valuable.

In Matthew 13:44 Jesus says, "Heaven's kingdom realm can be illustrated like this: A person discovered that there was hidden treasure in a field. Upon finding it, he hid it again. Because of uncovering such treasure, he was

overjoyed and sold all that he possessed to buy the entire field just so he could have the treasure.”

The treasure’s hidden state didn’t depreciate its value; rather, the person hid the treasure again *because* it was so valuable. He sold everything to buy the field just because it contained the hidden treasure.

Though hidden, the treasure wasn’t unseen. And the person who discovered it was anything but passive and powerless. Although this verse speaks to our value to Jesus and the sacrifice he made for our salvation, I also believe it communicates truths that extend into other areas of life, including waiting seasons.

We have infinite value to God, and what matters to us matters to him. Who we are and what we hope for are like hidden treasures, and in our waiting, we are not only discovering our value but also learning how to partner with God in faith.

We come to God in faith knowing that he is real and that he rewards  
the faith of those who passionately seek him.

HEBREWS 11:6

Shifting your mindset from passivity and powerlessness to empowered participation with God will transform you and the way you move through your seasons of waiting. May you be convinced of your worthiness and choose to believe you are seen by God, even in hiddenness.

### ● ————— Day 1 Prompt: Finding Your Agency ————— ●

During my counseling sessions, I use the word *agency* a lot. According to psychologist Albert Bandura, agency is defined as “the human capability to influence one’s functioning and the course of events by one’s actions.”<sup>2</sup>

Bandura suggests there are four functions of agency: the ability to set intentions, the ability to have forethought, the capacity to self-regulate, and the ability to self-reflect.<sup>3</sup>

A lack of agency is like the old “chicken and the egg” adage. It’s hard to know which one came first—limiting beliefs or painful experiences. Either way, the pain of both is detrimental to us.

*Living It Out* Do you struggle to embrace your sense of agency? What has led you to feel powerless: Circumstances that feel out of your control? The daily weight of unfulfilled desires? Write down any limiting belief you may have, as well as a quote, verse, or prayer that reminds you of the agency God wants you to embrace.

### Day 2 Prompt: The Seeds of Waiting

Have you been feeling hidden—like you were walking around in the dark? When we consider the conditions in which seeds grow, they are first planted in a concealed, dark place. In John 12:24 Jesus says, “A single grain of wheat will never be more than a single grain of wheat unless it drops into the ground and dies. Because then it sprouts and produces a great harvest of wheat.”

According to Chong Singsit, a biotechnologist, “The endosperm [contained in the seed] must die and give up its contents in order to support life [and] regenerate the dying seed. If the endosperm refuses to give up itself and support the developing embryo, there could not be a new life springing up from the dying seed.”<sup>4</sup>

Being hidden is painful, and it’s hard to imagine life springing from this obscurity. But as you keep choosing surrender, deep transformation is happening in you.

*Living It Out* Reflect on this example and ask God to illuminate the transformation taking place in you.

### Day 3 Prompt: The Problem with Slowing Down

*Pausing, remaining stationary, staying in place, and holding back* can be difficult. The other day at the drug store, the cashier rushed to apologize to the customer in front of me for the three-second wait they had to endure. How impatient has our society become if we feel slighted by the briefest delay and those serving us feel obligated to profusely apologize for these “inconveniences”? The world around us has influenced this difficulty to slow down and wait.

*Living It Out* How can you reclaim the beauty of slow and stationary living? Notice how pausing, being stationary, and holding back for even a few moments can help redefine this challenging part of waiting.

#### Day 4 Prompt: Looking for Other Seeds

If we follow the analogy of the seed from Day 2, we see that although each seed is buried alone, many other seeds have been buried too. The juxtaposition here is that the seed is both alone and not alone, since many other seeds are undergoing the same process.

Waiting is part of the human experience, both personal and collective. In one season, we may wait for restoration in a relationship, and in another, for healing of mind and body. Each person, like a single seed, knows what it is to wait, making up a collective human experience we can all relate to.

*Living It Out* Who are the other “seeds” in your life undergoing different versions of the season you’re walking through? Do you have a friend who is waiting for a baby? A parent who is waiting for physical healing? A sibling who is waiting for a spouse, or a spouse who is waiting for direction? Reach out to one of these people this week. Let them know you see them, and allow space for both of you to share about your personal seed-like experiences.



WEEK THREE

## *The Stories We Tell Ourselves*

*These seasons of suffering are not for nothing. They will grow you.  
They will shape you. They will soften you. They will allow  
you to experience God's comfort and compassion.*

LYSA TERKEURST, *IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THIS WAY*



ONE OF THE REASONS we anxiously ruminate on a thought is because we are trying to “close the loop” and resolve our stories.

It reminds me of when someone is playing the piano, and the song seems to end on a note that leaves the audience in a suspended state. *Resolution* in music happens when the musician moves from a note of dissonance to consonance (a final or stable-sounding one). It’s not until the pianist hits the final sounding note that our ears can rest, and we feel satisfied as the melody resolves.

When we’re waiting, it’s as if we were existing within that suspended state. We’re longing for the note that brings resolution to our stories. The stories we tell ourselves about our stories will keep us either ruminating or moving toward resolution. In my work as a therapist, so much of what I do revolves around shining a light on these stories and helping clients engage them with curiosity and compassion.

Brené Brown says, “Storytelling helps us all impose order on chaos—including emotional chaos. When we’re in pain, we create a narrative to help us make sense of it. This story doesn’t have to be based on any real information. . . . This unconscious storytelling leaves us stuck.”<sup>1</sup>

The pain of waiting compels us to fabricate stories to ease the discomfort we feel. If you’re waiting for direction, financial breakthrough, physical or emotional healing, a restored relationship, a baby, a job, or a spouse, what



stories have you been telling yourself about it? Perhaps stories about your worth, God's character, and the probability that God would *want* to come through for you.

In Matthew 8:1-3, a man with leprosy approaches Jesus for healing.

After [Jesus] came down from teaching on the hillside, massive crowds began following him. Suddenly, a leper walked up to Jesus and threw himself down before him in worship and said, "Lord, you have the power to heal me . . . *if you really want to.*" Jesus reached out his hand and touched the leper and said, "Of course I want to heal you—be healed!" And instantly, all signs of leprosy disappeared!

This man didn't question God's ability, but rather his desire. This gives us insight into the stories the man was most likely telling himself: Stories that cast doubt on God's kindness, and whether he cared to heal him. Stories about whether he was worth finding an audience with God. We need to pay attention to the questions we ask, because they reveal the stories we tell ourselves too.

Jesus allayed this man's fears by saying, "Of course I want to heal you." This was Jesus' gentle way of correcting the stories the man had been telling himself.

We can rest within what's true about God and ourselves. God cares, and even now he is drawing near to answer your questions and gently correct any false narratives so the stories you tell yourself reflect his *willing* heart of love towards you.

### ● ————— Day 1 Prompt: Expanding Our Stories ————— ●

One story that may surface when you're in pain is "If I can just understand what is happening in my life and why, then it will hurt less." Putting your experiences into their proper context does hold value. However, this story is limiting because it suggests that understanding is the only suitable remedy to alleviate your pain. How can you expand this story to include important details that may have been left out?

*Living It Out* In your journal, write down the story you've been rehearsing about your waiting experience, and then write down the new and expansive one you've discovered (or want to discover).

### ●———— Day 2 Prompt: God's Desire or Ability ————●

The man with leprosy in Matthew 8 revealed his doubts about Jesus' *desire* to heal him. We don't read about him doubting Jesus' ability, but if you listen closely, the third voice in his conversation with Jesus is, "I'm not sure if your power is personal."

You may carry doubts about whether God is able to come through for you, or you may question if God wants to. Or perhaps you believe God is able to come through for everyone but you. What have your doubts centered on?

*Living It Out* Read the story in Matthew 8. Notice how Jesus addresses the man's doubts, and consider how Jesus wants to approach the doubts you have been carrying.

### ●———— Day 3 Prompt: Taking Inventory ————●

I've found one practice particularly helpful in challenging the stories that circulate in our minds: In your journal, draw one column and write down all the things you are afraid of. In the second column, write everything you know to be true as it relates to that fear. For example, you might fear the uncertainties that come with waiting, so in the next column, remind yourself of what you do know and are certain of. Or you might fear a conflict with a loved one, so in the next column, recall the responsibilities you have taken to repair the relationship and any outstanding opportunities that may belong to you.

*Living It Out* After you have written down your fears and truths, notice how aligning your heart with the truths helps shift your perspective and provides relief from your worries.

### Day 4 Prompt: The Power of Sharing Our Stories

Did you know that sharing stories with one another activates parts of the brain that deepen connection? An article titled “The Science of Storytelling: What Listening to a Story Does to Our Brains” discusses how the brains of the storyteller and the listener synchronize. Listening to a story activates the listener’s brain in a way that turns the story into their own experience.

When we hear a story, not only are the language processing parts in our brains activated, but also any other area in our brains that we would use when experiencing the events of the story. This research helps to confirm the experiences we have all had when sharing our stories with someone we trust. We feel seen, understood, and less alone.<sup>2</sup>

*Living It Out*    Identify someone you trust to share the story you have been carrying about God’s desire or ability. Allow this act of storytelling to relieve your heart of loneliness and provide the connection you need.

