

upper elementary



Lesson 4 / June 23, 2024

# Hard to Wait

By RLD Editorial Team

**Lesson 4**

**Focus:**

Don't get discouraged;  
God is in control.

**ECHOES Focus:**

That your students  
recognize a time of  
waiting as a necessary  
part of the answer to  
some prayers.

**Lesson 4**

**Bible Basis:**

Ezra 1—6

**Lesson 4**

**Memory Verse:**

I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my  
help come from? My help comes from the  
LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

—Psalm 121:1-2

**ECHOES Verse:**

LORD, I wait for you; you will listen, LORD my  
God. Psalm 38:15

**Students will participate in an opinion game about waiting and discuss the challenges that come with having to wait for things as they reflect on the ways that God is in control in their lives.**

**Materials:**

Internet access

**Waiting for things to happen is a part of our everyday lives. No matter how young or old we might be, there always seems to be something that we are waiting for. Sometimes waiting is really easy to do, but other times it can be immensely difficult. How we feel about waiting for something depends on the situation and the people involved.**

**To help us think about waiting, let's look at some situations where you might have to wait. As I read out each one, decide whether or not it's easy to wait or hard to wait. If you think it's easy to wait, stand up. If you think it's too difficult to wait, stay seated. After reading each situation add, "Is it easy to wait or hard to wait?"**

- There are five minutes left in class for the day, and you're going to your best friend's house after school.
- You have three more days of school before summer vacation.
- You studied really hard for a test, and you're waiting for the teacher to give you a grade.
- You smell a batch of chocolate chip cookies baking in the oven.
- Your parents say they'll take you out for your favorite dinner, but they have to run some errands first.
- It's Christmas Eve, and you're pretty sure you're receiving the gift you really wanted.

Ask students to share about their own situations where it was very difficult to wait. As students share, talk through the following questions:

➤ **How do you feel when you have to wait for something, especially when you know that waiting is going to be hard?** (Answers will vary.)

➤ **Why is it so hard for us to wait for things?** (Answers will vary.)

**The video we're about to watch shows how hard it can be to wait.**

Show this video to your students [1:52; stop at 0:34]:

What can we learn from The Marshmallow Test?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjfAVn-YnkQ>

➤ **If the kids from the experiment were in our classroom today, do you think most of them would stand for “Easy to Wait” or stay seated for “Hard to Wait”?** (Most would probably choose the “Hard to Wait” option.)

➤ **Why do you think some kids give in and eat the marshmallow?** (Answers will vary.)

➤ **What might have helped other kids choose not to eat the marshmallow?** (Knowing that if they waited, they would get a second marshmallow.)

**We saw in the video how hard it was for those kids to wait about five minutes without eating their marshmallow. The different situations from our game might require you to wait for a few hours, days, or even weeks. But imagine having to wait for something for years and years! That’s what happens in our lesson today—the Jewish people have to wait for something they’ve wanted, and they become discouraged when they can’t hurry things along. Let’s find out how they handled their disappointment and how God showed them that He was in control the whole time.**

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher’s guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

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for use as  
STEP 4 

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**Materials:**

- Whiteboard or screenshared document (optional)
- Index cards (1 per student)
- Pens/pencils (1 per student)

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

**Seventeen years was a LONG time to wait to rebuild the temple—it's no wonder they became discouraged! Thankfully, God sent prophets to give them hope and encouragement while they waited. In the end, even though Israel had to wait for a long time, the temple was finished, and God's chosen people praised and thanked God for His plan.**

**You're always going to have things in your life that require you to wait, and you'll face discouragement when it feels like you're waiting with no end in sight. When things don't go the right way or move quickly, we can start doubting God's plan for us and try to take control ourselves. In those moments, we need to pray for patience and trust in what God's doing.**

➤ **Think about what you do from day to day, who you're with, and what you try to accomplish. What are some of the things in your life that you can control? What would be impossible to control?** (Answers will vary, but students should recognize that the only thing they can control is themselves. They can't control what other people do or say. They can't control what God is doing.)

**Taking the time to reflect on what it means for God to be in control of each part of our lives is important when we want to battle the reality of discouragement and worry. Thinking about the times in your life when you've seen that God was in control can help you be ready to trust Him and give Him full control down the road as new situations pop up that require you to be patient.**

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Direct students to write their memory verse on one side of the card. On the other side of their cards, invite them to respond to these two prompts:

“God has shown me He’s in control when...”

“This week, I can trust God’s in control by...”

You may want to write these prompts on a whiteboard (or screenshared document) for students to copy. Give your preteens time to think and pray as they reflect and write/draw their responses and ideas.

Come back together as a group; if time allows, invite students to share some of the thoughts from their reflection. Challenge your students to put the things they listed into practice as they head into this new week with a determination to be patient, to trust in God’s perfect plan, and to let Him be in control.

Close in prayer: **Jesus, we’re so thankful to know You’re in control of each and every step we take. Nothing is a surprise to You, and everything happens according to Your perfect plan. Help us to not allow discouragement and doubt to settle in and take hold of our hearts; instead fill our hearts with peace and certainty that You’ll answer when the time is right. Thank You for Your love, Your care, and Your grace. In Jesus’ name, amen.**

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