

The following are excerpts from ...

INCONCEIVABLE
SEASONS

Lessons of Faith and Favor for Women



Theresa A. Dear

Chapter One



HIM, HER AND HORMONES

“He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.”

Can you imagine this household? Can you imagine the dynamics in this relationship? Two wives, several children and one man. Two wives — Peninnah who had several children with Elkanah and the other wife Hannah who could not have children. Two wives and one man. One wife with whom he had children and the other wife he loves. One wife he feeds and the other wife he nurtures. One wife he acknowledges and the other wife he gives his attention. One wife carried his children and the other wife holds his heart. Responding to one wife is duty. Responding to the other wife is delight.

Two wives and one man. He tries to appease and console Hannah, but at the same time he neglects Peninnah. Hannah is comforted. Peninnah is fuming. Now that Hannah is comforted, she can get on with her

duties. Peninnah is still upset because she has seen one kiss, one hug, one flirt, one touch of tenderness, one whisper, one rub on the back and one wink too many. The only thing she can get on with is her agenda to get this woman out of her household, her family, her marriage and her life.

Two wives and one man. Two wives who can be engaged in cattiness and pettiness. Two wives with claws out and gloves on. An atmosphere filled with assumptions, accusations and allegations. A climate filled with tension, huffiness, the silent treatment, stares, surveillance, tit-for-tat and one-upmanship.

Two wives who bring lots of aroma, fragrances, beauty, conversation, smiles, communication, loveliness, joy and warmth. Two wives who give affection, support and flattery. Two wives who grace any place with attractiveness, daintiness, cuteness, femininity and prettiness.

Two wives who bring sulking, pouting, friction, attitude, moodiness and neediness. Two wives with frowns, sadness and snippiness. Two wives who are curious and solicitous. Two wives who are competing. Two wives with suspicion and intuition.

Two wives each with hormones. Twice the amount of estrogen emissions. Twice the amount of pheromones. Twice the amount of emotions. Twice the amount of demands. Twice the amount of drama.

Two wives is synonymous with friction, rivalry and histrionics. Two wives represent complications, arguments and feuds. Two wives will almost always guarantee that there is disharmony, ruckus, discord, quarreling and hostility.

Two wives sometimes mean choosing sides, keeping the peace or exiting until things cool off. Two wives sometimes mean there is need for a mediator, negotiator or a referee. Two wives mean that there is one man caught in the middle.

One man seeking more faith and favor among two females. One man who sometimes finds himself between a rock and a hard place. One man who feels lonely and crowded at the same time.

One man who ducks and dodges the theatrics on the homefront. One man who tries not to get in the middle of it. One man who must take and test the temperature before

Three people who have to learn to compromise, negotiate, surrender, stand their ground and walk away.



entering the tent. One man who darts and dashes out to avoid whatever is flinging and flying between these two women. One man who probably had a lot of cold and cloudy seasons.

Two wives and one man. Him, her and hormones. Elkanah, Peninnah and Hannah. Three people who love the Lord, go to church and try to work out their salvation. Three people in a relationship who must make it work for the greater good. Three people who have to learn to compromise, negotiate, surrender, stand their ground and walk away. Three people who have to stay balanced in an imbalanced situation. The dynamics and the resolution of their relationship are not unlike what we have to deal with in some of our relationships.

Him and her represent two people who must function in the same space. Him and her represent the

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Chapter Three



THE “B” WORD

“Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.”

Barren was the burden that Hannah carried. Not being able to have children made her soul ache. This condition is what Peninnah used to tease, torture and torment Hannah. Barren, childless, unable to reproduce and infertile was Hannah's burden. This condition coupled with the manipulated cruelty of Peninnah was the source of Hannah's sorrow and her crutch at the cross. Not being able to bear a child was unbearable. It appeared to be a term that not only defined her but it also identified her destiny — childless.

When a woman knows she cannot have children and wants to have them, she feels incomplete, inadequate and ineffective. She thinks about the kind of mother she could be. She questions God about his plan and intention for her life. She knows she can pretty up the outside but she knows in her heart that there is nothing she can do to change the inside. When a woman wants a child and learns that she is infertile, the feeling of loss and emptiness can make a woman desperate.

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When another woman knows you are infertile and she wants to use this against you, it can hurt more than a strike, jab or a punch. Whatever you are already feeling about your condition, her comments can mount, magnify and multiply feelings of insecurity and inadequacy.

Barren does not mean unattractive or unappealing. Barren does not mean empty. It is one dimension of you. It is not all of you or who you are. It does not define you. Barren is not a destiny. It is a

season. It is a season when and a place where things are not growing.

Barren is the condition of things when they have not been watered and nurtured and they begin to wilt, wither and eventually die. Barren is when things are stagnant and may have been neglected. It is the overdrawn checkbook, unresolved concerns, unpursued goals, feelings of emptiness, not enough time to pray, unread books, dissolved hope, undisciplined children who don't go to church, no health insurance, not enough education, a loveless marriage or a working car with no money for gas.

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Barrenness represents the season in our life when we are not conceiving, creating or composing. This is a time when your efforts are not bearing fruit. Barren represents a lack of conception, birth and growth.

When seasons change, most people will change the kind of clothing they wear. They will switch from linen to cotton and from cotton to wool. Changing seasons beckon us not to simply change what we wear on the outside, but to also change who we are on the inside.

This season of Hannah's physiological barrenness is a metaphorical representation of our spiritual and sociological barrenness. In other words, Hannah went through a season when she could not give birth and we go through seasons when we cannot or do not give birth. It is reflected when we are not giving birth to new ideas, new leadership, new paradigms, new strategies or projects.

Some of us have become spiritually barren in the church because some preachers are talking about money, masses and millions but few seem to talk about the manger. Some church people have been so misguided and mesmerized with materialistic motives that when a recession hits, we don't know how to respond because we are fertile on the outside (house, cars, flat screens, computers etc.) but we are barren on the inside.

Barren seasons are when we remain silent, when we should speak up. When you are in a tense, hostile, antagonistic situation that is your opportunity to produce and advocate and not passively stand barren. Barren seasons are when we are called to do something but we do nothing. We let the opportunity — the fertility season pass.

Barren seasons represent a time to pluck unused parts, pull dormant parts and plant new parts of ourselves. It represents a divine opportunity for God to transform your life. This is the season where He can exchange

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barrenness for growth, lack for abundance, death for life, bleak for hope, no to yes, dull for vibrant, absent for present and natural for supernatural.

Are you applying the same practices and principles from ten years ago to today's demands?

Are you approaching situations with the same attitude and perspective from ten years ago? Are you pessimistic? Are you insecure, not trusting and doubtful? Do you blame others? Are you accountable? Are you threatened by the talent and contributions of others?

The following is an excerpt from ...

Chapter Four



THE PENINNAH PRESENCE

“And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her.”

point out to you what you lack. It may proudly show you what you don't have by displaying what they have. It will take what you long for and throw it up in your face. It will make you relive and revisit your shortcomings, until you are broken or decide to exchange your faith for fallacy, fear and falsehoods.

The purpose of the Peninnah presence is to kill your joy, steal your peace and destroy your desire to seek God. Its mission is to interrupt you, keep you from moving forward, and prevent you from reaching your goal. The Peninnah presence wants you to be sad, distraught, anxious, off balance and confused. If this presence is able to

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succeed at any of these, then they have distracted or delayed a more intimate relationship between you and God.

The Peninnah presence is present. She walks to and fro to see who she can devour, cut down, swallow and defeat. She walks

around sizing up women to see who is weak, vulnerable, not going to church, sinning, not praying and spiritually compromised. She is watching to see who is spending their money on shoes and clothes and not tithing. She does not need permission to enter your life. She only needs to find one area of weakness then she will intrude, infringe and impose in your life. The Bible says the enemy makes herself attractive to us and appears as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14) She will appear to be your friend, but she is really your enemy.

This kind of presence is bold, assertive, invasive and

relentless. She does not discriminate where, how or when she attacks. She is going to come at you at all hours of the day and at any location. Nothing is off limits. No topic is untouchable. No place is sacred. Your prayers do not scare her. Your tears do not move her. Her ultimate goal is not to just disorient you or throw you off balance. Her goal is defeat and destruction.

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The Peninnah presence likes to pick at you, pick on you and nit pick. She will belittle, degrade and minimize you until you surrender, collapse or give up. Peninnah likes to compete with you. The competition is not really about her winning, but rather it is about you losing.

She will try to barge in where she has not been invited. She will try to interject a comment to throw you off course. She will try to be cold to you to make you self-conscious. She will try to step in front of you to delay you. She will try to overwhelm you to distract you. She will try to overpower you and defeat you.

The Peninnah presence is a constant irritant who approaches as agents, agitators and antagonists that try to take your focus off God. They are the instigators, provocateurs and nuisances who constantly try to stir trouble in your life. If one attempt does not work, they are going to make as many attempts that are necessary to break you down. They are the ones who will bring up past mistakes. They are the ones who will identify your wounds, pull the scab off the wound and pour salt in it.

Even though the Peninnah presence is bold, assertive

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Chapter Fourteen



**BETWEEN THE PRAYER AND
THE ANSWER**

Chapter Fourteen



BETWEEN THE PRAYER AND THE ANSWER

The time between the prayer and the answer can be a span of a few hours or many years. This is a season when the passage of time tempts us to work it out ourselves, get mad at God or give up. This season can be experienced as a punishment with a sentence or reward with a journey.

This is the spiritual season between conception and birth. This is the time between the invocation and the benediction. This is the “Are we there yet?” journey. This is the season between weeping at night and joy in the morning. This is a season of waiting on the Lord.

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The time between the prayer and the answer is the

period where we negotiate with God and make promises to God. This is the time when we worry, hold our breath, shut down, withdraw or overindulge. We do whatever it takes to calm our nerves, silence the questions, subdue the fears and medicate the mind.

This season can bring about anxiety and nervousness or it can bring peace like a river. This is a time when we experience the duration and durability of God's grace, mercy and favor. Our personal inadequacies and professional failures create the perfect soil for God to

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plant deep roots of faith. When we experience losses, we should look at this experience as God allowing a pruning and purifying season to make room for favor.

The period between the prayer and the answer is where God sheds, removes, clears, cast out, cleanses and unburdens our life of that which is no longer needed. He thrashes dying and barren things from our life, so he can renew and grow us. This step is important, so that the unneeded stuff does not contaminate the blessings and favor. He drains us of some things, so He can pour Himself into us.

This season is the time when we seek and find balance. It is when we ultimately realize that we are defined by favor. It is where we are transformed and learn to discern. This is a season where we learn to love our enemies, make the right decisions, learn to be patient, learn to release, learn to plant, learn to speak, conceive, ask and grow in our season. This place is where we really become acquainted with God as an active, alive, moving,