

Patience

Presented by Lisa Bishop

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Day One

Do you know God is patient with you? God himself states this about his character when in Exodus 34:6-7 he declares,

The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

We see throughout the Old Testament the numerous times the Israelites tested God's patience by chasing after their own man-made gods and continually disobeying the Lord's instructions on multiple occasions. And they did experience the repercussions brought on by their own behavior. But if you look closely, even when they rebel, God is always slow to anger and quick to forgive. He demonstrates patience as the Israelites defy him time and time again. And when he does express anger, it is a response to human evil and is ultimately an expression of his compassion and loyal love. He knows their rebellious ways and God is not content to let his people self-destruct. He gives them time to acknowledge their waywardness and repent; and in the waiting, he never removes his compassion, mercy, and love from them. He will never remove his compassion, mercy, and love from you.

Sometimes we think God is just waiting to unleash his dissatisfaction on us when we mess up, and that is not true. God is not punitive. Any punishment you deserve, Jesus paid the price for. Period. And God isn't like us. He doesn't lash out in the heat of a moment or get angry at petty and small things. His anger burns at true injustice, and again, even then, he is ultimately slow to become angry.

You may have had an earthly father who was quick with harsh words or ready to turn into a full-on rage when you made the slightest misstep. If that is what you experienced growing up, I want to say that I am sorry for the pain that caused you. You deserved to be loved fully, and treated with kindness, care and tenderness. Sometimes it is hard to believe our heavenly father is patient and loving because we did not have a great example of a compassionate father here on earth.

Whether you had a father who demonstrated patience or lack of, I pray that you would grow more and more in the true knowledge of God. That he is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love for you.

Day Two

Have you ever lost your cool or reacted in a way you later regretted?

We're examining patience—that all too important fruit of the spirit we can often bypass and find difficult to practice in our daily interactions. Yet, as followers of Jesus, patience is not optional.

If you were to reflect on the past 48-72 hours, can you identify moments where your patience was lacking? It can be tempting to get frustrated with a coworker or fly off the handle with a family member or spouse. But when you are tempted to have the flesh response of a quick temper or being easily

irritated, you can look to the words of the Apostle Paul to redirect you and ground you in your identity. And your identity informs your propensity toward patience.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you (Colossians 3:12-13).

As a chosen son or daughter that God loves, you are called to clothe yourself in Christ-like characteristics. I think we often spend more time planning and preparing our wardrobe for the day, and we don't give much intentional thought about putting on attitudes and behaviors that put the glory of God on display. Now don't get me wrong, living out these Christ-like qualities is not easy. Patience does not develop overnight. Yet, Colossians gives us clues on how to develop patience. When you have the mind of Christ, merciful, kind, humble, and gentle, you position yourself for patience. When you make allowances for people's faults, as you would like others to do for you, you find yourself less testy. I think a lack of patience can kick in when things are not going the way we want, or someone is not conforming to our preferences.

When we are not humble, we become easily offended and reactive holding onto minor offenses or irritations that build and then impatience becomes our default.

When and with whom do you find yourself lacking patience? To truly transform you will need to be proactive. Rather than getting wrapped up in the same old reaction, decide now how you will respond with patience. As you break the habit of being easily aggravated, ask the Holy Spirit to help you but also be determined to clothe yourself in patience rather than losing your cool.

Day Three

Do you consider yourself a patient person?

If you are anything like me, I really don't like waiting. I can get impatient when a meeting doesn't start on time or when I am waiting for a friend who is running late for our lunch date. I can also be impatient when I am not feeling heard or understood, or when I have been praying about something for a long time and I am just not getting the clarity I crave. When do you find yourself lacking patience? Impatience runs the gamut. From small scenarios when your patience is tested to bigger circumstances in life that require endurance.

Proverbs 14:29 teaches us,

Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.

I want to share a few tips with you on developing patience.

1. Stop and do an internal inquiry: The next time you feel impatience surfacing stop and ask yourself, "Why am I getting impatient?" Sometimes we find ourselves swept up in a moment and getting what I call emotionally hijacked. We are not using our rational thinking brain. Stop to really examine why impatience is your go to at that moment. Matthew 12:34 says, *the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart*. What is going on in your heart?
2. Make it a goal: When we set goals, they often revolve around things we want to achieve and not so much on who we want to be. Think about your vision for your relationships and how you want people to experience you. Be determined to have your mindset, attitude and heart set on practicing patience. This will create greater connection in your relationships.
3. Practice patience in your daily life: Train yourself to be patient in the small things, such as waiting in line or dealing with unexpected delays. Use those moments as opportunities to intentionally cultivate self-restraint.

4. Seek God's help: Remember you have the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you. Romans 8:26 says, *the Spirit helps us in our weakness*. Take time to ask for his help.

Join me in this prayer as we strive to live lives marked by patience.

“Father, thank you for being patient with me! Transform me with your love and with your spirit and help me to grow in my capacity for patience. I yield to you, Holy Spirit. Remind me I have a choice on how I respond to people and that when I ask, you will help me to handle any situation that comes my way with graciousness, kindness and patience. Amen.”

Day Four

Most people will admit patience is not their greatest strength, but it is a fruit of the spirit, and as a follower of Jesus, you and I are to grow in being patient. Take a moment to reflect on the impact your lack of patience has had on your relationships and life. We can all identify moments we wish we could rewind the clock and get a do-over on patience.

The other day I was reading through the gospel of Matthew and came to chapter 18 verse 7 when Jesus said, *woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come...*

It is necessary that temptations come.

What does that verse have to do with patience? If you think about it, impatience can be the impetus for very poor choices. When you lack patience, you can be tempted to take matters into your own hands, go your own way, and not trust God's way.

How has temptation tested your patience and caused you to give in? Maybe you have been longing for marriage and are tired of waiting so you are tempted to be in a relationship with someone who is not following Jesus. Or, perhaps you have been waiting on a job promotion and you are tempted to fudge numbers to make yourself look more productive. A coworker could be getting accolades, and it can create the temptation to talk poorly about them to discredit their efforts.

We have all experienced moments when our displeasure or dissatisfaction causes us to make choices we later regret. We are human after all. But don't let the lack of patience tempt you to fall.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Whenever you are tempted, God gives you a way out. The next time your lack of patience may try to pull you in a direction or to make a decision that will cause remorse; pause, remember God's faithfulness, and take the way of escape. God promises he will help you endure and prevail.

Day Five

Most of us recognize the importance of developing patience, we're just not in a hurry to grow in it; and patience has been said to be a test of our Christian authenticity and character.

One example of patience is the story of Joseph told in Genesis 37-50. I encourage you to read the story on your own but here's the gist. Joseph was a favored son of Jacob, betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery in Egypt. In Egypt he finds favor with one of Pharaoh's officials, Potiphar, and is given charge of Potiphar's household. Potiphar's wife unjustly accuses Joseph of trying to sleep with her and as a result he is thrown into prison. After years in prison, Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams, and is finally freed and put in charge of the whole land of Egypt. Then a famine strikes and Joseph's brothers,

who did not recognize him, come to ask him for food. Joseph provides for them and eventually reveals his identity. His brothers are afraid expecting him to seek revenge. But Joseph responds patiently:

Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children (Genesis 50:19-21).

Joseph's faith in God gave him the patience to persevere from pit to prison and ultimately being elevated to the palace.

His story shows that patience begins with knowing God is sovereign and in control. When you find yourself enduring hardships, setbacks, betrayal or uncertainties, this is the time to trust and lean into God.

I will be the first to say it's not easy, especially when suffering is involved. But you must have the patience and perseverance to know God will work all things out—most likely not in your timing or liking, but according to his love and sovereignty. And God will use the time to produce something in you as you cling to him.

Patience is learning to accept the things we cannot change as we lay them down at the foot of the cross, placing our trust in our heavenly father.

In difficult seasons, I want to encourage you to surrender to God's timing and embrace waiting as a time of growth. Allow God to shape your character and deepen your faith during these times. And remember the words of Proverbs 3:5-6.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.