

Patience Is Loving

Presented by Lauren Stibgen
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Day One

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

You have likely heard this verse many times, but what does John 3:16 have to do with patience? When I think about my own salvation, I would say God was patient! In fact, he waited 30 years for me to realize Jesus was my savior! Patience first comes to us from God himself, reflected in the love he has for us at the cross. In our worldview, this seems slow, but not in God's standard.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

God is just on time—his time. Let's consider love again, but in the context of the greatest commandment.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39).

Now, how is love described? 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 leads with *love is patient and kind*. Love is patient! Who should we have patience with?

First, we need to have patience with God! We will explore this more, but this looks like trusting him when we are in the valleys of life and when we feel like our prayers are going unanswered. It looks like endurance during trials and perseverance when we just want something to happen already!

Next, we need to have patience with our neighbors, which is basically everyone! Our neighbors are our bosses, colleagues, and subordinates. They are vendor partners and partners within the communities our businesses are part of. It is even the community you are building on a social platform like LinkedIn or members of a business association related to your profession. You have a lot of neighbors to love! Rather, you have a lot of neighbors with whom to be patient!

Day Two

We love it when things happen quickly! Wouldn't it be great if the dream that came to your mind could just—poof—happen tomorrow? I admit, the thought of a good vision suddenly happening mused in my mind. Culturally, this is sometimes referred to as manifesting something. Basically, if you think about it enough and envision it as done, then it will be so. You and I know only God can perform a mighty miracle like this, and more often than not, he prefers to use the long game of endurance to help us build that one fruit of the Spirit we are talking about this month—patience.

The more I thought about enduring in patience, I realized it is part of how God created us in his image. About 4,000 years passed from the fall in Genesis to Jesus in the Gospels. During this time, God

endured in patience while his people fell in and out of obedience. Our God is a super patient God. As his people, we really need to work on this enduring part!

Let's consider the story of Moses and Mt. Sinai. This is the time he had to go up to meet with God to receive the commandments for the people of Israel. First, he had to cut two giant tablets of stone. While we don't know how long this took, I can imagine this took patience in the form of endurance. Next, he went up for 40 days in the presence of the Lord. The Lord himself inscribed those stone tablets with the 10 Commandments for his people.

During those 40 days, the people of Israel did not endure patiently! In Exodus 32 you can read more about the Israelite's impatience and their demands on Moses's brother Aaron to create something for them to worship—the golden calf. They were so impatient in waiting on God, they used their worldly possessions of gold and jewelry to create this golden calf.

Moses comes down from Mt Sinai to this sight and drops the tablets—breaking them into pieces. The word of God—his own penmanship—shattered!

After the destruction of this man-made idol, Moses again cuts two more tablets and heads back up Mt. Sinai for another 40 days. God must redo the tablets for Moses to take back down to the remaining people of Israel.

How often are you trading the endurance God may be calling you to for something you are making for yourself? Are you leaning into what culture tells you to do? Going it alone—creating your own destiny? We are created in God's image, and God is very patient! He wants us to be patient with him! God's timing is always perfect!

Day Three

Many things can happen when we are impatient! Impatience brews increasingly when there is a difference between the pre-conceived or set amount of time we have in mind for something to happen and when it actually occurs. The fact remains we are merely human, and God is God alone. I sometimes wonder if the creation of the measurement of time is something God has used to demonstrate this. If we had no concept of time, we could not grow in learning to be more patient!

One of the ways that a lack of patience can often show up is jealousy. We see something we want or are aspiring to happen for someone else, and we become jealous. This can cause us to act impulsively in our own will, often to results we then regret.

Sarah, then Sarai, was impatient. Her husband Abram was the promised Father of Israel, yet she failed to conceive and bare a son for him. In her impatience, Sarai enrolled their Egyptian slave, Hagar to know her husband. The result was Hagar's pregnancy and the birth of Ishmael.

Sarai became jealous of Hagar and treated her poorly. God then renewed his covenant with Abram, and called him Abraham and Sarai, Sarah. Sarah gave birth to Isaac, but with continued jealousy from Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. You can read more about this in Genesis chapters 15-18.

Sometimes our haste to see something come to pass can make us jealous of someone else we see in the circumstance we want. Have you been searching for a new job? Maybe it is taking longer than you expected, so you take a job because you need to work. A friend suddenly lands their dream role, and they weren't even looking! In your impatience, how do you respond to this friend? Are you loving? Are you jealous? How can you lovingly show up and trust that God will send the perfect job for you, in his timing.

Acting out of impatience can cause us to make hasty choices that can lead to jealous feelings.

Day Four

Do you have a colleague who gets on your last nerve? Do situations in the workplace just get to you sometimes? How we display patience at work with others reflects our faith.

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

We surely cannot accomplish this with impatience! Think of a simple example of showing patience during a meeting. You wait and wait to make a statement. In fact, you think it is a very important point. Your colleague seems to be droning on and on about a topic with which you wholly disagree. In your impatience, do you end up so annoyed that you quarrel over the relevance of what they are saying, or do you wait patiently for them to speak, carefully listening so that you can perhaps patiently present a counter point? I think we have all been in this scenario. Your patience in a situation like this can help you reflect more respect and help others to listen to you!

Are you perhaps charged with training new hires as they start with your company? Maybe these new hires are even new to the workforce. Sometimes they just don't catch on as quickly as you would like. Are you impatient and quick to judge them as not able to do the job at hand, or do you patiently teach them to do the job well?

Ultimately, 2 Timothy 2:24-26 reminds us our opponents—in our case those that we work with—need to be instructed and dealt with gently by us. The instruction to lovingly display our patience in all circumstances, can be a good way to live out what I often call Faith at Work 1.0—showing up differently so that someone asks why.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

Showing up with patience at work when people frustrate you can be just one way you start a conversation about Jesus with them. Don't waste this opportunity with impatience! I am praying for you to increase your patience at work today!

Day Five

Do you view patience as passive? Patience is anything but passive behavior. In fact, patience is powerful. Remembering God's power, his patience, and the fact that we are made in his image can help us rethink this attribute.

In our society, patience often is viewed as quiet, timid, and, as I stated a moment ago, passive. We get this sense of waiting—somewhat of a pause. This waiting, patience, and pause can give us the space we need to advance in ways that remain unseen by others until the moment of action.

Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone (Proverbs 25:15).

Think about the art of persuasion. We hear about it in business a lot. Persuasion is defined as the action or fact of persuading someone or of being persuaded to do or believe something through reason or argument.

Persuasion isn't fast. It requires patience. Patience to learn about someone's objections to what you are trying to get them to believe, patience to prepare for how you want to present your idea or solution, patience to get the other party to even be willing to meet with you, patience to meet on more than one occasion. I could go on with this list.

Resisting the urge to impatiently blurt out what you want, why your way is better, why your company should win a bid, or why what you want or need is imperative. It can mean the difference between ultimately winning and losing.

Patience listens. Patience walks away and thinks. Patience is not argumentative. In Proverbs 25:15, we read that a soft tongue will break a bone. To me, this feels like well thought out, patient words. Words that are planned in advance and not hasty and harsh. Words that are considerate of the other person's point of view. Ultimately, this soft approach can break someone who has a long-held point of view.

Our aim with using the fruit of the Spirit of patience with persuasion and a soft tongue should be more about sharing the gospel than it is about winning in our work, business, or career. The biggest win for us is to see someone know the saving power of Jesus!