

Patience: “Bear with Each Other”
Matthew 18:21-35; Colossians 3:12-14

Definitions:

Longsuffering (Makrothumia-n, Makrothumeo-v)—forbearance, *patience*, (*markros*, long, *thumos*, temper, anger). Vine’s Expository Dictionary, Nelson.

Note: “Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy.”

Patience (hupomone-n, hupomeno-v)—an abiding under, endurance as in trials, perseverance, to wait for, still abide. Vine’s Expository Dictionary, Nelson.

Note: “Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope.”

These two definitions are given because some versions of the Bible use the word *patience* while others use the word *longsuffering* as the fourth trait/grace of the fruit of the Spirit. **Both** are mentioned throughout the Bible and are very important. But this study of the fruit of the Spirit focuses on longsuffering as it relates to controlling anger, forgiveness and self-restraint.

The English poet, John Donne (1572-1631), wrote the poem No Man Is An Island. The first line reads, “No man is an island, entire of itself, everyman is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” Many have written songs by the same title, but the opening line is, “No man is an island, no man stands alone.” The point being that people are connected to each other and what effects the one effects the whole.

Life cannot be lived in isolation. We live in the context of relationships, good and bad. Impatience and anger, justifiable or not, are often our responses to unpleasant situations and people. Let’s face it. Some people drive us up the wall. Annoying habits grate our nerves until we begin practicing avoidance. With others we may pour out our love but find them totally insensitive to us. We draw them out and ask questions, but they never show interest in learning about us.

Just as God models for us love, joy, and peace, we see that He is the perfect example of patience in relationships. His wrath and anger against sin are quite real. But this righteous anger is “slowed down” by his great love for us. He is longsuffering and patient with us and asks us to be the same with others. With so many frustrating situations in our lives, we have boundless opportunity for the fruit of the Spirit to blossom into patience.

Think about it, when do you get most impatient: with irritating (causing annoyance, impatience, mild anger) people or irritating circumstance?

1. Read Matthew 18:21-35

- The first servant asked that his master have patience with him. This same servant, because of his lack of patience and compassion, responded angrily with his fellow servant.
- Half of the Greek word for *patience* in verse 26, (*makrothumia*) means “*anger*” and the other half means “*long*” or “*slow*” (i.e., handling anger slowly). This definition tells us we need to be slow in applying anger. It means “bear long with,” “longsuffering,” or “to have long patience.”
- In order to display patience, oftentimes one has to put forth forgiveness or release the debt or suspend the just penalty. Even in this passage of Scripture, Matthew writes of forgiveness and patience.
- We can be comfortable (many are not) with God being a God of love as well as a God of wrath. Some even shy away from teaching God’s wrath. Even with His wrath, God expresses His love and mercy. The slowness of God’s expression of His wrath is an example of His love for us. He even allowed His children to be taken away into captivity, but He also demonstrated His mercy by sending prophet after prophet with a message of repentance—(2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”).
- We see people express impatience and anger inappropriately through violence, by throwing objects, by overreacting over petty things, by being unforgiving over obvious unintentional mistakes. Even sometimes people express impatience when a person tries to explain or apologize for their wrong.
 - God’s solution to this problem of inappropriate anger and impatience is for us to remember how God has responded to our wrongs and how he has been longsuffering toward us. He has also spoken through His Son in **Matthew 7:12**, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

2. Read Colossians 3:12-14

- Paul described the believers in Colosse in the beginning of verse 12 as “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.” Do you (we) see ourselves like that?
- Knowing how God sees us should affect our behavior and want us to strive to live up to God’s view of us. After all, we are being transformed into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Knowing God sees us as chosen, holy, and beloved should be humbling and move us to treat others with kindness.
- In **Colossians 3:12-14**, Paul listed several virtues (behaviors showing high moral standards) that express love and patience. This type of love and patience, “bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven us, can benefit our families, churches, and the world. These virtues can promote relational peace with others and patience, understanding and forgiveness with one another .

- The theme of forgiveness is in both this passage of Scripture in the book of Colossians as well as the passage of Matthew 18.

Food For Thought: Here are some Scriptures that speak of some of the qualities of a patient person. **Proverbs 14:29, 15:18, 16:32, 19:11, 25:15; and Ecclesiastes 7:8-9.**

Some Things to think about:

- How has God expressed his patience to you?
- Is there someone in your life right now toward whom you need to show patience?

Now or Later

Read **Luke 23:32-46**. How can a fuller understanding of Christ's love and forgiveness as demonstrated on the cross help you to make a conscious decision to be patient with and forgiving others?

Spend time with God, asking Him to make you more sensitive to what He has done for you. Then regardless of your feelings, ask Him for the courage to forgive those who have wronged you.

Homework: Read **2 Samuel 9; Ephesians 2:4-7**

Topic: Kindness: "Be Kind and Compassionate to One Another"