

Patience

“Fruit of the Spirit and more. . .”



“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

Ephesians 4:2 NIV

Some versions translate patience as forbearance. Some people are very patient. Some seem to have no patience at all! A definition of patience can be difficult because it is so nebulous. It can include endurance, determination, forgiving, strength, or just trying to understand another person’s situation. How is patience like forbearance?

The King James Version says “*With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.*” That is a word we seldom use today. Looking at either word, we realize it is something that we cannot do alone. First we need to have love which is a gift from God, and then we have to have someone that we are forbearing with or have patience with. So we cannot do it alone. We need to understand in our own heart what patience or forbearance is before we can have it.

Often times we have what is referred to as a “short fuse.” This can happen many times, even as small a thing as shopping in a grocery store when a person ahead of us is taking a little too much time. We can get impatient in traffic when people are not moving as fast as we think they should. If the land lord gives the tenant some extra time to pay the rent who has come on bad times, that is a positive thing, but if the tenant begins to take advantage of this it becomes a negative and can cause problems. The story of the wedding banquet in the Bible tells us about a king who prepared a banquet for his son. He then sent invitations to some people who all had lame excuses. Then he opened the banquet to the people on the street. This parable is often compared to the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. The banquet is ready. If we do not choose to attend, we are the ones that lose. Christ is very patient and forgives us many times, but the ultimate decision is ours. I am thankful for the patience God has with us.

I live in a town where there are Amish families traveling in buggies. They don’t pay road tax, but the shoes on the horse hoofs tear up the black top. They don’t go anywhere near the speed limit. Sometimes I get very frustrated, and then other times, I think I need to step back and enjoy God’s nature. Sometimes I need to respect that they are being faithful to the way they think we are supposed to live each day. We can have patience with a person even though we don’t accept his actions. Sometimes having patience can give us a sense of calmness. We can realize that there are more important things in life than getting upset. Usually getting upset just puts us in a bad mood.



According to Scripture, patience, a fruit of the Spirit comes when we allow God to have control. We don’t usually think of patience as being

something that can be an answer to prayer. We tend to be so concerned with our own feelings that we don't always have a sense of another's feelings. We sometimes need to learn to get inside another person's mind and heart until we can see and feel things as he does. It is not easy to walk in another person's shoes.

There is a quote by Atticus, an attorney, to Scout, a six year old girl who is confronted with prejudice and the results of it in TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD by Harper Lee that talk about patience.

"First of all," he said, "if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

It is so typical of how we try to help the young people learn from our experience, while we often don't take our own medicine! Can we really know another's feeling about things? Sometimes we can, but sometimes, we have not had a certain experience and there is no way we are going to understand their feelings until we have that experience.

I am reminded of a young couple that had not been able to have children. Someone well meaning said "I know just how you feel." Unless they had also been unable to have children they



could not understand that loss. No one can fully understand the loss of a loved one or the experience of a loved one dying from cancer unless they have also been in that situation.

In these situations we can pray with people, we can have patience with their frustration, but we cannot fully understand it. We are shown that through God's Spirit we have many rewards today. Many times, the one showing patience receives a far greater blessing than the one being visited. Life has many disappointments and sometimes even through prayer, they are not answered the way we want them answered. We know that God knows best, but we tend to think often times, that we do!

Prayer: Lord, You have shown us the way of patience in the way you work with us every day. We saw examples in the way Christ worked with people when He was here on earth. But we stumble. Guide us, dear Lord, to work through prayer to show patience, love and forbearance to those we meet every day. Amen

1. What causes you to lose patience?
2. What calms you and allows you to have patience with others when things aren't going right.
3. Do you recall any times when Christ lost His patience?
4. What can be the benefits of having patience in the way we look at people and situations every day?

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Mutual caring relationships require kindness and patience, tolerance, optimism, joy in the other's achievements, confidence in oneself, and the ability to give without undue thought of gain

— Fred Rogers —

