

# The Fruit of the Spirit: Patience

## Lesson Five

radiate

### Settling In: About 10-20 minutes

- 1) Make a note to yourself who, if anyone, is missing from your home group this week:
- 2) Spend some time finding out how everyone is doing: make a note for prayer requests.
- 3) Introduce a time of conversational prayer. Make it clear that group members are not required to participate if they are not comfortable.  
*or*
- 4) After a more brief time of prayer...
  - a) Ask for a few volunteers to share how an attribute of God was demonstrated to them this past week.
  - b) Offer up prayers of thanksgiving for these attributes and for God's self-revelation to us in our daily lives.

This is only for your information...don't make a big deal of who is missing to the members who are present.

Conversational prayer means each member taking turns praying for various concerns with reasonably short and to the point prayers.

### Opener: About 10 minutes

- 1) What do you think people mean when they say, "Patience is a virtue"?
- 2) What kinds of situations test your patience?

### Mini-teach: About 10 minutes Heading

μακροθυμέω—patience, "to be long-suffering, be patient, persevere"

- 1) patience (n)
  - a) "The ability to endure waiting or delay without becoming annoyed or upset, or to persevere calmly when faced with difficulties"
  - b) "The ability to tolerate being hurt, provoked, or annoyed without complaint or loss of temper"
  - c) "U.K. name for solitaire"
- 2) Most of the greatest minds have considered patience to be an indispensable virtue for a successful and happy life:
  - a) *Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake.* --Victor Hugo
  - b) *How poor are they who have not patience! What wound did ever heal but by degrees.* --William Shakespeare
  - c) *Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.* --Aristotle
- 3) "But the spiritual nature produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There are no laws against things like that." (Gal. 5:22-23, GWORD)
  - a) A person's patience is directly proportionate to their faith and hope.
  - b) To have true patience we must have confidence in God and be assured that he has a better future planned for us.
    - i) The Bible goes beyond saying that patience is *good* for us; although it certainly is.
    - ii) The Bible is clear that patience is *required* of us.

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- c) In dealing with the virtue of patience, we can plainly see that these virtues are not gifts but *fruit* of the Spirit.
  - i) They do not simply drop out of heaven as blessings to make our lives easier.
  - ii) The fruit of the Spirit is *grown* in the soil of life's trouble.
- 4) There would seem to be two main arenas in which our patience is tried:
  - a) Patience with circumstances.
  - b) Patience with people.

### Discussion 1: *About 15 minutes*

#### Patience with circumstances - 1Cor. 9:24-10:13

- 1) "Don't you realize that everyone who [runs](#) in a race runs to win, but only one runner gets the prize? Run like them, so that you can win. Everyone who enters an athletic contest goes into strict training. They do it to win a temporary crown, but we do it to win one that will be permanent. So I run—but not without a clear goal ahead of me. So I box—but not as if I were just shadow boxing. Rather, I toughen my body with punches and make it my slave so that I will not be disqualified after I have spread the Good News to others." (1 Cor 9:24-27, GWORD)
  - a) What image does Paul use here? How does that compare to how we normally think of patience? What words, other than patience, come to mind as you read this passage? Explain.
  - b) What is the role of hope in this image of patience? How does Paul describe how he "runs" and "boxes"?
  - c) How does having a clear goal help us to be patient? What kind of goal is Paul talking about?
  - d) How do you think that Paul "toughened up" his body? Why did he do this? What was his concern? How could an undisciplined body cost us everything?
- 2) "I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that all our ancestors <who left Egypt> were under the [cloud](#), and they all went through the [sea](#). They were all united with Moses by baptism in the cloud and in the sea. All of them ate the same spiritual food, and all of them drank the same spiritual drink. They drank from the spiritual [rock](#) that went with them, and that rock was Christ. Yet, God was not pleased with most of them, so their dead bodies were scattered over the desert. These things have become examples for us so that we won't desire what is evil, as they did. So don't [worship false gods](#) as some of them did, as Scripture says, "The people sat down to a feast which turned into an orgy." We shouldn't [sin sexually](#) as some of them did. Twenty-three thousand of them died on one day. We shouldn't put the Lord to the test as some of them did. They were killed by snakes. Don't [complain](#) as some of them did. The angel of death destroyed them. These things happened to make them an example for others. These things were written down as a warning for us who are living in the closing days of history. So, people who think they are standing firmly should be careful that they don't fall." (1 Cor 10:1-12, GWORD)

This is a very complicated passage with references to several OT stories. Make sure you understand the background of each of the references. Follow the hyperlinks to references in the online Bible.

The imagery here implies much more than passive endurance of suffering.

Perseverance is an essential part of patience.

Many temptations come as a result of being creatures with physical bodies.

Paul made his body his slave rather than becoming a slave to its desires.

Baptism here is a metaphor for the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt. They had the common experience of being "baptised" under the cloud of God's presence and the waters of the Red Sea.

In the same way, the rock that provided water for the Israelites is used as a metaphor for Christ and holy Communion.

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- a) As Paul starts this section he emphasizes that the ancient Israelites had some common experiences. What were they? How does he draw a comparison between their shared experiences and the shared experiences of Christians?
  - b) If they were all Israelites, was God pleased with all of them? In the same way, if Christians all share baptism and communion, does that automatically mean that God is pleased with all Christians?
  - c) What three things did the Israelites do that displeased God? Do all three seem to be of the same degree of seriousness to you? Why or why not?
  - d) Paul says that these things are written as an example to us. Do you think that God takes these things as seriously today?
  - e) To better understand how this relates to patience, read [Ex 32:1](#). Why did the people turn to the false gods? How might we be tempted in a similar way?
- 3) "There isn't any temptation that you have experienced which is unusual for humans. God, who faithfully keeps his promises, will not allow you to be tempted beyond your power to resist. But when you are tempted, he will also give you the ability to endure the temptation as your way of escape." (1 Cor 10:13, GWORD)
- a) Why would Paul feel it necessary to say "There isn't any temptation that you have experienced which is unusual for humans"? How does temptation tend to make us feel we are an exception to what God commanded?
  - b) What part does faith play in patience? What part does "willpower" play in patience?
  - c) What can we be assured of in the midst of temptation?

Paul wants to emphasize what we have in common with the Israelites

Idolatry is not only bowing before a literal man-made god. It also includes giving our hearts to adore material wealth and non-material pleasures.

The devil often emphasizes the exceptions and special circumstances to make it easier to give into temptation.

If we are being tempted, we know God has already given us what we need to resist.

### Discussion 2: About 15 minutes

#### Patience with People - Matt. 18:21-35

- 1) "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked him, "Lord, how often do I have to forgive a believer who wrongs me? Seven times?" Jesus answered him, "I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy times seven. (Mt 18:21,22, GWORD)
- a) If you were to put a number on how many times to forgive the same person, would you put the number as high as seven? Why or why not?
  - b) How many times does Jesus say to forgive? How do you think Peter felt about that answer? Do you think that Jesus literally meant 490 times?
- 2) "That is why the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to do this, a servant who owed him millions of dollars was brought to him. Because he could not pay off the debt, the master ordered him, his wife, his children, and all that he had to be sold to pay off the account. Then the servant fell at his master's feet and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will repay everything!' "The master felt sorry for his servant, freed him, and cancelled his debt. (Mt 18:23-27, GWORD)
- a) The story assumes that the king would have been within his rights to settle the servant's debt by selling off his entire family to slavery.

Considering that the group of disciples was still rather small, it is unlikely that Peter's question was hypothetical. He was probably referring to a situation that Jesus was already aware of.

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- b) Do you think that the servant's plea to pay back the immense debt was persuasive to the king?
- c) What does the king do in response? How is this like God's forgiveness of our sin?
- 3) But when that servant went away, he found a servant who owed him hundreds of dollars. He grabbed the servant he found and began to choke him. 'Pay what you owe!' he said. 'Then that other servant fell at his feet and begged him, 'Be *patient* with me, and I will repay you.' But he refused. Instead, he turned away and had that servant put into prison until he would repay what he owed. (Mt 18:28-30, GWORD)
- a) Here, the story takes an unexpected turn. How does the debt of the first servant compare to the debt of the second?
- b) How does the plea of the second servant compare to the first? Do you think that the plea of the second servant was realistic?
- c) How would you describe the reaction of the first servant as compared to that of the king?
- 4) "The other servants who worked with him saw what had happened and felt very sad. They told their master the whole story. "Then his master sent for him and said to him, 'You evil servant! I cancelled your entire debt, because you begged me. Shouldn't you have treated the other servant as mercifully as I treated you?' "His master was so angry that he handed him over to the torturers until he would repay everything that he owed. That is what my Father in heaven will do to you if each of you does not sincerely forgive other believers.'" (Matt. 18:30-35, GWORD)
- a) How did the other servants feel about what the first servant did? What did they do and why?
- b) In your own words, what did the king say to the first servant? What does he call him? But wasn't the "evil" servant within his rights?
- c) What did the king do then? What do you think of this?
- d) What principle does Jesus draw from this story? What does God expect from us in terms of patience with other people?
- e) Does this mean we must simply suffer in silence when we are wronged? See Mt 18:16-17

It is important to refrain from judging ancient stories by modern values. The point here is that from an ancient perspective, instead of receiving mercy, the evil servant got what he deserved. In the words of an old Bruce Cockburn song, "Everybody loves to see justice done...on somebody else!"

Jesus speaks of forgiving a "brother" or a "believer". This doesn't mean we are exempt from forgiving a non-believer, but often it is hardest to forgive those who "should know better".

### Closer:

- Obviously, when the Bible talks about patience, it means much more than trying not to be annoyed while standing in a queue.
- Patience includes everything from persevering in suffering and temptation to forgiving when we are wronged.
- Take a few minutes for silent prayer. What situations in your life is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about regarding patience?

Have a suggestion to make this Home Group Guide better? Email us at: [contact@radiate-uk.com](mailto:contact@radiate-uk.com)