

Patience:

The Benefits of Waiting

By Stephen Eyre

Study 1: The Benefits of Patience

WARMING UP

1. Take a patience inventory. At what times and in what circumstances do you tend to be impatient?

DIGGING IN

2. Read the following verses from the book of Proverbs: 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11; and 25:15. How would you summarize the qualities of a patient person?

3. What contrasts are drawn between a patient and an impatient person?

4. According to Proverbs 15:18, how does patience/impatience affect our relationships with others?

How have you seen patience/impatience affect relationships in your life?

5. Reread Proverbs 16:32. Why do you think a patient person is better than a warrior or one who takes a city?

6. How could patience be a great asset in your (choose one) workplace, classroom, home?

7. How does patience — or the lack of it — reveal whether a person is wise or foolish (14:29; 19:11)?

8. Think of a person you know who is very patient. In what other ways does that person seem wise?

9. According to Proverbs 15:18 and 25:15, how does patience or impatience affect the impact of our speech?

10. Look at Proverbs 16:32 and 25:15. What is the difference between patience and passiveness?

What is the difference between patience and powerlessness?

11. What changes do you need to make in the way you act and think in order to become more patient?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Based on this study, perhaps we could say that patience requires faith and leads to wisdom. Ask God to bless you with a faith that trusts and leads you to wisdom.

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Study 2: The Blessings of Perseverance

WARMING UP

1. In what area of life have you been tempted to “give up”?

DIGGING IN

2. Read James 5:7–12. What three examples of perseverance does James give?

3. What can the farmer teach us about the value of patience (v. 7)?

4. What might cause us to grumble against each other (v. 9) as we wait for the Lord’s return?

5. What happens to fellowship among believers when they grumble against each other?

6. How does the warning that “the Judge is standing at the door” (v. 9) address the problem of grumbling?

7. Three times in verses 7–9 James refers to the Lord’s coming. Why does James see it as so important for perseverance?

How does the Lord’s return affect your perspective on life?

8. The prophets (v. 10) are an example of patience in suffering, especially since few ever saw any results from their ministry. How do you think they could keep going when God’s people rejected their message?

9. Job is also an illustration of patience (v. 11). When he faced severe suffering, his friends weren’t good comforters. How can friends sometimes increase the pain of suffering?

How can friends give us strength to persevere in suffering?

10. Another reason to be patient is because of the Lord’s compassion and mercy (v. 11). How can these aspects of the Lord’s character give you strength to keep going?

11. James gives a severe warning against swearing —taking an oath to guarantee the truth of what you say (v. 12). Why does swearing bring God’s condemnation (v. 12; see also Matthew 5:33–37)?

12. Look again at the entire passage. Summarize why perseverance is important for us as Christians.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask the Lord to give you the faith and spiritual strength to persevere in the challenges and difficulties you face.

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Study 3: Virtue of Slowness

WARMING UP

1. How do you respond when others around you don't seem to know what they are doing and get in your way?

DIGGING IN

2. Read James 1:19–27. The three paragraphs included in these verses are very closely connected, yet don't necessarily appear to be at first glance. To help you get an overview of the passage, give a brief title to each one (vv. 19–21, 22–25, 26–27).

3. In verse 19, being slow to speak and slow to anger is an important part of a righteous life. How do you think “quick listening” can slow us down and help us to live righteously?

4. Recall a time when you spoke too quickly. Was it related to anger?

What consequences did it have in your life?

5. Hasty talk and anger are often expressions of worldliness still in our hearts. How can we get rid of moral filth and evil (v. 21)?

6. Getting rid of moral filth and evil requires that we accept the Word (v. 21). If the Word is already implanted in us, why do we need to humbly accept it?

7. “Slow” action doesn't mean no action. What is the proper approach to God's Word according to verses 22–25?

8. Self-identity is a major issue in counseling today. How can Scripture affect our sense of identity (vv. 23–25)?

9. In our culture there is a tendency to think of laws as inhibiting, yet James describes Scripture as the perfect law that gives freedom (v. 25). How can God's law give freedom?

10. Twice James warns against self-deception (vv. 22, 26). How would you define self-deception?

We can deceive ourselves by forgetfulness, listening without doing, or undisciplined talking. Which kind of deception are you most prone to?

11. Read verses 26–27. Which of the three marks of godly religious behavior mentioned here do you find in your life?

What can you do about the areas where you are weakest?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask God to show you ways to slow down the pace of your life so that you can listen properly to God's Word as he guides you.

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Study 4: Patience and Forgiveness

WARMING UP

1. When someone offends you, how do you tend to respond?

DIGGING IN

2. Read Matthew 18:15–20. When a Christian sins against us, Jesus tells us to “go and point out their fault” (v. 15). Why not just avoid the person who offended us?

3. Why do we sometimes want to avoid the process of confrontation and reconciliation?

4. Initially, why is it important to talk privately with the person, keeping the matter “just between the two of you” (v. 15)?

5. If the person will not listen to you, what is the benefit of taking one or two others with you (v. 16)?

Why can taking others also be threatening?

6. Why do you think a person is to be treated as a non-Christian if he or she refuses to listen to the church (v. 17)?

7. How does the presence of Jesus among his people (vv. 18–19) relate to the process of reconciliation?

8. Read verses 21–35. What is the connection between Jesus’ teaching on reconciliation and Peter’s question about the frequency of forgiveness (v. 21)?

9. What is the difference between forgiving seven times and forgiving seventy-seven times (v. 22)?

10. How does the parable of the king and his servant illustrate God’s patience and mercy toward us (vv. 23–27)?

11. After being forgiven his massive debt, why do you think the servant refused to be patient and merciful with his fellow servant (vv. 28–30)?

12. God is the master who has forgiven our massive debt of sin. How does the experience of being forgiven affect you?

13. Because God has forgiven us, Jesus requires that we forgive others (v. 35). What does it mean to forgive them “from your heart”?

PRAY ABOUT IT

As you consider someone who has offended you or sinned against you, ask God to give you the courage and resolve to speak to that person. Pray that the discussion that occurs opens the way for reconciliation and forgiveness.

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Study 5: Waiting For the Lord

WARMING UP

1. When have you been in a situation in which you had to wait for the Lord?

DIGGING IN

2. Read Psalm 40:1–5. David waited patiently for the Lord’s help (v. 1). What is the difference between waiting patiently and waiting impatiently?

3. Why is waiting patiently for the Lord often difficult?

4. David was in a slimy pit and a muddy mire — hardly a place to wait patiently! What do you think he was feeling in such circumstances?

5. What “slimy pits” have caused you to cry out to the Lord?

6. God delivered David from the slimy pit and set his feet on a rock (v. 2). What “rocks” has God provided in response to your prayers?

7. Patient waiting requires trust (vv. 3–4). What does it mean to put your trust in the Lord?

8. When we tell others about God’s help (v. 3), their faith and ours is strengthened. How does David’s account of God’s deliverance strengthen your faith?

9. What can you tell others about God’s help in your life so that their faith can be strengthened?

10. Why is there such a strong temptation to look to others for help rather than to God (v. 4)?

What “gods” are you tempted to look to when you are in trouble?

11. It is important to see God’s involvement in the everyday events of life. How does your ability to see God’s “wonders” compare to David’s (v. 5)?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask God to give you spiritual eyes to discern his shaping hand behind the frustrations and challenges that you face.

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Study 6: Waiting Until the End

WARMING UP

1. What are some of the things that you hope for?

DIGGING IN

2. Read Romans 8:18–30. Paul writes that present sufferings are nothing compared to our hope of future glory. Consider the phrases *subjected to frustration* and *bondage to decay* (vv. 20–21). What type of world do they describe?

3. Why do you think Paul places such emphasis on the physical world being restored (vv. 18–21) before talking about the future benefits of our salvation (vv. 22–25)?

4. How would thinking about your troubles as birth pangs (v. 22) affect the way you view them?

5. What do the “family” words Paul uses, like *children of God* (vv. 19, 21), *childbirth* (v. 22), and *adoption to sonship* (v. 23), convey about our present and future as Christians?

6. How has the Christian family been a help to you in facing hard times?

7. Although we are already God’s children (v. 16), what experiences still await us (v. 23)?

8. What causes you to “groan” (v. 23) as you wait for God to complete his work in your life?

9. Hope is central to the Christian faith (vv. 24–25). From these verses, how would you define Christian hope?

10. How is it possible to wait both eagerly (v. 23) and patiently (v. 25) for our hopes to be fulfilled?

11. As we wait, how does the Holy Spirit help us with our weakness and groaning (vv. 26–27)?

12. How does it help you to know that the Spirit is praying for you during your struggles?

13. The ultimate future for which we wait is something we can count on because it is grounded in the plan of God (vv. 28–30). How does knowing that all things work together for good give you a sense of hope?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God for the hope we have in Christ. Ask him for the grace to wait for Christ’s return with both eagerness and patience.