

The Gracious Life, Part 5 | be patient

I. Patience is required to be gracious.

- Can a gracious person be an impatient person? Absolutely not. Impatience grows out of the fact that the situation or person is not moving as quickly as we believe they should, and therefore they deserve whatever it is being felt, said, and done in order to move the process along.
- Merriam-Webster nails the definition on every level: “bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint, manifesting forbearance under provocation or strain, not hasty or impetuous—steadfast despite opposition, difficulty, or adversity—able or willing to bear.”
- Let’s say that a child or student or coworker or spouse is making poor choices that is wasting time and making it difficult for you to do what you need to do. For example, you cannot do your job on the production line until your coworker completes her job, but she is moving so slowly that you can’t do your job . . . in fact, the whole line is being backed up. Does a patient person just “grin and bear it”? Are we not allowed to say or do anything in that situation and still be patient?
- Everything we do, say, feel, and want grows from what we believe. We learned that in our Grow Your Worship Series. An impatient response in our words, actions, feelings, and desires reveals a sinful belief. But a Godward focus and an others focus would produce a very different response.
- In these situations we must subtract ourselves from the occasion. If doing what’s in their best interest helps us, that’s God’s providential grace, but it’s definitely not the goal. And if helping them actually takes more of our time or makes our lives more difficult, that doesn’t matter. It was never about us in the first place.
- No, a patient Christian is not a silent doormat who never gets involved, never confronts people, or never helps people. A patient Christian does what they can do to the glory of God and best of other people, and they don’t choose to be bothered by the things they can’t control.

II. Impatience is a result of spiritual immaturity.

- The uncomfortable reality is that there are areas of our lives where we are patient, and there are some glaring areas where we are not, but all impatience always boils down to self-worship.
- Our immaturity in impatience is also revealed by our vocabulary. It’s really easy to say, “I succumbed to impatience” as if it were a foe that overpowered us. We say things like, “Slow drivers make me so impatient.” We talk about having short fuses—as if that were the way God created us, and there’s nothing we can do about it. But all of that is a delusion. We choose to be impatient; nothing pulls impatience from us. And it’s amazing the circumstances under which we choose to be impatient.

III. God gets to set the expectations for our patience.

- **Patience is expected.**
 - II Timothy 2:24
 - This Greek word translated patient denotes “patiently forbearing evil,” literally, “patient of wrong.”
- **Patience doesn’t take sin personally.**
 - II Timothy 2:24
 - We quarrel when we allow ourselves to believe that we have the right to take another’s sin personally. But we need to be like Joseph who recognized that sin is first and foremost against God.

- **Patience is kind.**
 - To be gracious is to be humble, kind, compassionate, gentle, and patient. The person doesn't deserve it, but "the beauty of grace is that it makes life not fair." No one deserves it. If life were fair, we'd all be in hell, so praise God that He's gracious and enables us to be gracious.
- **Patience is actively pursuing God's will.**
 - Luke 18:6-7; II Peter 3:9; James 5:7-8; Hebrews 6:15
 - These verses show the miraculous tension in the fact that God doesn't delay and isn't slow when it comes to accomplishing His will. His patience is not inaction. His patience is actually accomplishing His will. Patience is all about God's timetable and His expectations. Patience is an active choice to accomplish the will of God in the moment by being gracious and doing what is best for everyone involved.
- **Patience is required with everyone.**
 - I Thessalonians 5:14
 - There's no escaping or excusing it. We are not allowed to justify impatience in any circumstance with any person.
- **Patience is the only loving response.**
 - I Corinthians 13:4
 - When it came to defining biblical love, it's interesting that Paul—under the authority of the Holy Spirit—started his description of love with "*Love is patient.*"
- **Patience is redemptive.**
 - Romans 2:4; II Timothy 4:2
 - Not only do we exemplify the character of God when we're patient, but our patience with people needs to be rooted in the fact that whatever sin or simple inability may be inconveniencing us, helping the person work through it should be for the redemptive purposes of helping them come to know God and mature in Him.
 - A patient person is not merely a grin-and-bear-it person. A patient person will reprove and rebuke and exhort and instruct as necessary because they are working toward the redemptive purposes of their God.
- **Patience should flourish in conflict.**
 - Romans 9:22; I Peter 3:18-21; Matthew 5
 - God is patient with people He sovereignly knows are going to reject Him. A beautiful New Testament example of this is Jesus and Judas.
- **Patience is a result of spiritual maturity.**
 - II Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:1-2; Colossians 1:10-12; Colossians 3:12-13; I Timothy 1; II Timothy 3:10; Hebrews 6:12; James 5:10-11
 - We can rejoice and be glad when people abuse us because we recognize their war is with God, and all of God's people have been and will be persecuted.
 - Our rejoicing and gladness is not rooted in the persecution but in the fact that we serve an awesome God, and we recognize that He has a plan for maturing us through the trials.
 - And this is also why we can be patient during these times. We can be patient because we recognize that God's will is being worked in our lives through the conflict.
 - We have been chosen by Christ to be like Christ, to walk in a manner worthy of our calling in the Lord, and that will always involve being patient.