

Life on the Vine
Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community

Lesson Four: **Patience**

Introduction

1. How would our lives be different if we did not keep track of time so precisely with clocks and watches? How did past civilizations mark the passing of time during a day? What would be some advantages to think of time in larger blocks rather than hours, minutes and seconds?
2. How does our view of time affect such daily activities as eating, working, and relaxing?
3. Do you think our concept of time might contribute to our impatience with delays or with other people?

Lesson Plan

1. The word translated as “patience” (*macrothymia*) more literally means “long temper”—as opposed to our English phrase, “short temper.” Its primary meaning is the ability to restrain anger. In older versions of scripture, it is often translated “long-suffering.” Other synonyms include forbearance, endurance and steadfastness. Do you agree that we are more impressed in our society with endurance rather than patience?
2. What is the relationship between being patient with being a patient? Patience implies the _____ to another.
3. Like all the fruit of the Spirit, patience is rooted in the character of God. We see this in passages such as Psalm 103.8; Exodus 34.6; Numbers 14.18; Nehemiah 9.17; Psalm 86.15; 145.8; Joel 2.13; Jonah 4.2; Nahum 1.3. Can you think of any Bible stories where God does not appear to be patient? Why do these seem to be out of character for God.
4. If God is patient—and being patient means a willingness to yield control to another—how is God willing to yield control?
5. How might viewing the patience of God as a willingness to yield control reshape your view of God? How does it help you understand God’s love for us? His grace?

6. Read 2 Peter 3.8-14. How does God's patience provide room for our repentance? How does it encourage repentance? How would it be different if God were short-tempered with us?
7. Why should our patience be formed like that of God? Remember, patience, like love, is _____. (See James 1.19-20)
8. How does the development of our own patience involve a struggle with yielding control?
9. Why is listening not only difficult to do but is also more effective in cultivating relationships?
10. What is the between patience and relationships? Look at Peter's question about patience (Matthew 18.21) with Jesus' answering parable (Matthew 18.23-35.) What control issues did the unmerciful servant have?
11. From Philip Kenneson: "God has broken the cycle of vengeance and expects us to do the same. Only by patiently forgiving one another do we have any hope of being that community which God has called us to be." Thoughts?
12. Read and discuss Ephesians 4.1-3 and Colossians 3.12-13.

Class Discussion Questions

1. Do you tend to think of patience as something that would benefit you or something that would benefit others?
2. Besides our "time-consciousness," what other elements of our society make patience difficult?
3. How is impatience selfish or self-centered?
4. When you feel anger rising within you, what are some thoughts or prayers that might be helpful in opening yourself to the Spirit's guiding toward patience?