

How Can We Grow in Biblical Patience?

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“Never ask God for patience, or else He will give it to you.” This sentiment is a common joke among many who note that when someone wants to grow in patience, they experience difficult situations that force them to be more patient.

Characterized by the ability to face trying, hard, or annoying experiences without getting angry, upset, or lashing out, patience may be one of the Biblical traits humans struggle with the most. In today’s world, it seems almost everything is designed to test patience. Traffic. 24-hour-news cycles. Other people.

God calls His people to be more like Jesus, who demonstrated great patience during His earthly ministry. By studying Christ’s example, understanding what the Bible says about patience, and personal examination, one can grow in Biblical patience, even if it is a struggle.



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What Does the Bible Say about Patience?

When examining the state of the world, and the causes of one's own sins, many issues seem to stem from impulsive mistakes or angry outbursts. Random acts of violence, foolish and rash decisions, and unhealthy cycles contribute to silly accidents at best, and the ruination of lives and relationships at worst. Many sins and mistakes come from a lack of patience, which is, "the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset."

How long does it take for someone to lose their temper, storm off, or get exasperated? Being able to accept or tolerate problems allows people to work through issues, facilitate compromise, and prevents inappropriate behavior.

Some people say "patience is a virtue." While this saying is true, it does not come from the Bible. It comes from a text called "Psychomachia," written by the poet Prudentis in the fifth century AD. However, the colloquialism is in line with what the Word of God does say about it. The Apostle Paul wrote, "But the [fruit of the Spirit](#) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

Other words used in other translations that also mean patience include forbearance and longsuffering. The [fruits of the Spirit](#) are virtues, behaviors, and characteristics that grow in believers and serve as evidence of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Patience is not only one of the first ones in the list, it also facilitates some of the others. It is easier to be gentle with others when full of patience. Self-control can also be related to patience, as an abundance of patience can help someone not over-react to others or to annoying situations.



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What Are Some Bible Verses about Patience?

The importance of patience can be seen in the many verses in the Bible about this virtue. This list includes but is not limited to:

[1 Corinthians 13:4](#) “[Love is patient](#) and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant.”

[Psalm 37:7-9](#) “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.”

[Romans 12:12](#) “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

[Proverbs 16:32](#) “Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.”

[Ecclesiastes 7:9](#) “Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.”

[Romans 5:4](#) “And endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”

[1 Thessalonians 5:14](#) “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

[2 Peter 3:9](#) “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

[James 1:19](#) “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.”

[Hebrews 6:12](#) “So that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through [faith](#) and patience inherit the promises.”



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What Are Some Biblical Examples of Patience (or Impatience)?

When looking for examples of what patience looks like, as well as what impatience is, the Bible is full of both. Many people in the Old and New Testaments wait with grace for promises to be fulfilled or for justice to be rendered. The Father of the Hebrew nation, Abraham waited until he was 100 years old before his wife Sarah became pregnant and they had a child together.

In the New Testament, Luke recorded a wonderful and inspiring story of patience in his gospel. A devout man named Simeon received a message from the [Holy Spirit](#) that he

would get to see the Messiah. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple as a baby to be dedicated and circumcised, God fulfilled a lifelong promise to a righteous man. The Bible records Simeon saying, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in [peace](#), according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people” ([Luke 2:29-32](#)). He waited many years, but God rewarded that patience with the opportunity to see the hope of mankind made flesh.

Unlike Abraham and Simeon, Saul - the first king of Israel - lacked appropriate patience. The Israelites and the Philistines came into a military conflict, and they were cornered. The High Priest Samuel was on his way to sacrifice an offering to the Lord, but after seven days Saul lost patience, “So Saul said, ‘Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings.’ And he offered the burnt offering” ([1 Samuel 13:9](#)). Just as Saul finished, Samuel arrived. Saul disobeyed God, and sacrificed out of fear and impatience, and the sacrifice was not blessed by God. Because of this moment, God took His blessing away from Saul, and God, “sought out a man after his own heart” ([1 Samuel 13:14](#)).

Saul’s arrogance and inability to wait for Samuel to arrive caused him to sin, doing what was wrong in the Lord’s eyes. Patience helps people make wise decisions, and empowers them to wait for God’s blessings. The lack of patience breeds recklessness, sin, and settling for less than God’s plan.



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How Can We Grow in Biblical Patience?

Growing in patience is never easy. In order to grow in this [fruit of the spirit](#), it often means being in a situation that requires it. A good way to tell if an action is driven by patience or impatience is if there is an opportunity to do something in one’s own power, or if there is an opportunity to wait on God to act. Can I lash out on this person now, or rely on the Spirit for a calm mind? Can I make something happen today or is God inviting me to wait for Him to act?

Relying on God's timing is always the patient decision. Relying on the Lord means letting Him work in His way and His time. His timing is different than ours, "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!" ([Isaiah 30:18](#)).

Ultimately, building patience requires prayer and the Holy Spirit. While that may feel like a big challenge, it is important to remember that God is patient with sinners; "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" ([2 Peter 3:9](#)). If God extends this patience to humanity, and believers are called to be like Him, He will teach those who ask how to be like Him.

A Prayer to Be More Patient

Holy Father,

Thank you for the love You've shown your creation. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ to show us Your infinite love. Thank you for Your great patience with us. We are imperfect, like sheep who wander away from the rest of the flock. As the good shepherd, You send Your Spirit to convict us, find us, and bring us back. We return to sin and vice, reject Your ways, but like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, You wait for us to return to You. Lord, I want to be more like You, to have Your character, and that includes patience. Teach me to be willing to wait to listen, and to pray. Fill me with the Spirit so that I can grow more patient. Help me to be more patient with people and circumstances. Grow my character, please.

In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen.

Sources

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