

LEARNING TO BE PATIENT IN RELATIONSHIPS

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How Our Lack of Patience Can Injure People, Misrepresent God, and Undermine Our Spiritual Influence

A man was standing in a grocery-store line behind an elderly woman who was struggling to count her money. She moved slowly, repeatedly losing track of the coins in her hand.

The man became visibly frustrated. He sighed loudly, looked at his watch, and finally said, "Some of us have places to be."

Embarrassed, the woman stepped aside without completing her purchase. A cashier who knew her quietly explained, "Her husband died last week. He handled all of their finances.

This is her first time shopping alone in more than fifty years."

The man had judged in seconds what he had never taken time to understand.

He saw slowness.

He did not see grief.

He saw inconvenience.

He did not see a woman attempting to rebuild her life.

This is the danger of impatience. It causes us to respond to what people are doing without discerning what they may be going through.

"Impatience often makes a judgment before compassion has gathered all the facts."

Galatians 5:22–23 KJV

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance...

One of the clearest signs of spiritual maturity is not how loudly a person worships, how accurately they quote Scripture, or how confidently they operate in spiritual gifts.

Spiritual maturity is often revealed by how patiently a person handles people.

It is possible to love God and still become irritated with the people God loves.

It is possible to be anointed for ministry but emotionally unprepared for the inconvenience of human weakness.

It is possible to understand Scripture while failing to understand people.

Patience is not merely the ability to wait. Patience is the ability to maintain the right spirit while dealing with people who are still developing.

Everyone we encounter is somewhere in a process. Some are healing. Some are learning. Some are recovering from trauma. Some are unlearning destructive patterns. Some are fighting battles they have never found the courage to explain.

When we become impatient, we often make permanent judgments about people who are merely passing through temporary seasons.

"Impatience judges the unfinished version of a person as though God has completed His work."

#1 YOU FAIL TO BEAR SPIRITUAL FRUIT

Galatians 5:22–23 KJV

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance

The word longsuffering describes patience, endurance, restraint, and the ability to tolerate difficulty without becoming harsh, hostile, or vindictive.

Patience is not an optional personality trait. It is evidence that the Holy Spirit is governing our emotional responses.

A person may possess spiritual gifts while lacking spiritual fruit.

A person may preach powerfully, sing beautifully, prophesy accurately, and still be impatient, insensitive, and difficult to deal with.

Gifts reveal what God has placed upon your life.

Fruit reveals what God has developed within your life.

1 Corinthians 13:1–2 KJV

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

The tragedy of impatience is that it exposes the distance between our public spirituality and our private character.

If people must be perfect for you to remain kind, your kindness is not spiritual fruit. It is conditional behavior.

You do not prove that you are spiritual by how well you treat people who are easy to love.

Your spirituality is tested by how you respond to people who frustrate you, misunderstand you, disappoint you, or move more slowly than you prefer.

Convicting Question:

How can we claim to be filled with the Spirit while consistently refusing to demonstrate one of the Spirit's primary fruits?

Memorable Statement:

"Your gift may attract people, but your fruit determines

whether they are safe around you."

#2 YOU IRRESPONSIBLY FAIL TO DISCERN THE DEEPER REALITY OF THE PERSON

Proverbs 18:13 KJV

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

Impatience makes conclusions before understanding context.

It reacts to behavior without investigating the pain, fear, history, confusion, or exhaustion beneath that behavior.

What appears to be disrespect may actually be fear.

What appears to be laziness may be emotional exhaustion.

What appears to be stubbornness may be self-protection.

What appears to be distance may be the response of someone who has repeatedly been abandoned.

What appears to be anger may be unprocessed grief.

What appears to be indifference may be someone who has emotionally shut down because feeling anything has become too painful.

This does not mean destructive behavior should be excused. It means behavior should be discerned before it is judged.

1 Samuel 16:7 KJV

For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Impatient people respond only to what they see.

Discerning people ask what they may be missing.

Jesus rarely dealt only with a person's visible condition. He discerned the invisible need beneath it.

The woman at the well appeared to have a relationship problem, but Jesus discerned that she had a deeper thirst.

Zacchaeus appeared to be merely a dishonest tax collector, but Jesus discerned a man whose life could be transformed through acceptance and truth.

Peter appeared unstable and impulsive, but Jesus discerned the apostolic leader hidden beneath his inconsistencies.

"Discernment looks beneath the behavior to discover the battle."

Before labeling someone, ask:

What happened to them?

What are they afraid of?

What have they never been taught?

What are they attempting to survive?

What part of their behavior is rebellion, and what part is an unhealed wound?

Some people are not intentionally trying to be difficult. They are trying to function with damaged emotional tools.

Impatience simplifies people.

Love takes the time to understand their complexity.

Memorable Statement:

"You cannot properly minister to what you have not taken the time to understand."

#3 YOU PAINT THE BODY OF CHRIST WITH A FALSE IMAGE

John 13:35 KJV

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

For many people, their first impression of Jesus will come through their interaction with someone who claims to represent Him.

When Christians are consistently harsh, irritable, judgmental, dismissive, and easily aggravated, we present a false image of Christ.

We may preach that God is loving while behaving as though He is impossible to please.

We may teach that grace is available while refusing to extend grace to anyone who frustrates us.

We may proclaim that the church is a hospital while becoming angry when wounded people behave like patients.

Romans 15:1 KJV

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

The church is not a museum for people who have already reached perfection.

The church is a spiritual family filled with people at different stages of healing, maturity, understanding, and development.

Some people are crawling.

Some are learning to stand.

Some are walking steadily.

Others have fallen and are trying to rise again.

It is cruel to demand running speed from someone who is still learning how to walk.

The stronger believer does not use strength to shame the weak.

The stronger believer uses strength to help carry the weak until they become stronger.

"When the church has no patience for broken people, it contradicts the very gospel it was commissioned to preach."

Our treatment of people either confirms or confuses our message about Christ.

The world should not hear us preaching about a patient God while watching us behave like impatient people.

Memorable Statement:

"We cannot accurately represent a longsuffering Savior with a short-tempered spirit."

#4 IMPATIENCE WOUNDS PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY STRUGGLING

Isaiah 42:3 KJV

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench

Jesus did not break bruised people.

A bruised reed is already damaged.

Smoking flax represents a flame that is barely burning.

Christ does not crush those who are struggling to stand. He strengthens them.

Impatience, however, places additional weight on people who are already carrying more than we can see.

Harsh words may be quickly spoken, but their effects can remain in someone's mind for years.

A moment of irritation can destroy the courage it took a person months to develop.

A dismissive response can confirm someone's deepest fear that they are unworthy, unwanted, unintelligent, or beyond help.

Proverbs 15:4 KJV

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

This is especially important for parents, pastors, leaders, spouses, teachers, and mentors.

Authority magnifies the impact of our emotional responses.

What we consider a small remark may feel like a final verdict to someone who respects our voice.

A child may remember the impatient tone of a parent long after the parent has forgotten the conversation.

A new believer may stop asking questions because a mature believer made them feel foolish.

A struggling spouse may stop communicating because every attempt to explain themselves is met with irritation.

A church member may stop seeking help because the last person they approached made them feel like a burden.

"Be careful not to become another wound in the life of someone God sent you to help heal."

Impatience may give you temporary emotional relief, but it may leave another person carrying permanent emotional damage.

Final Memorable Statement:

"Patience is love refusing to give up on a person simply because their process has become inconvenient."

