

Lesson 5

Growing in Patience

Cultivating an atmosphere of trust, respect, and love within our homes

Before you begin:

Read the Following Passages:

- Ephesians 4.2
- Colossians 3.12-13
- Proverbs 14.29
- Galatians 5.22-23
- James 1.19-20
- Proverbs 15.18
- Proverbs 16.32
- 1 Corinthians 13.4
- Romans 12.12
- Proverbs 19.11

Pray For:

1. Guidance in cultivating a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere within your home.
2. Help in slowing down to respond with grace and understanding, even in moments of frustration.
3. Strength and patience as you bear in mind that your children are still growing and learning.
4. Help to see your children through God's eyes, recognizing their unique needs, strengths and weaknesses.
5. Help to listen attentively, better understand their perspectives, and respond with kindness.
6. During times of impatience, remembrance that God has unfailing patience toward you and for the power to extend that same patience to your children.
7. Strength of resolve to be a calm and understanding parent, a model and reflection of God's nature, even amid trial, so that your children may experience your love through you.

A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath, Proverbs 15.1.

God presents every parent with the opportunity to embark on a remarkable journey filled with joy, love, and growth alongside their children. However, parents will also encounter moments that test their patience and challenge them in unexpected ways. It is in these moments that the virtue of patience becomes essential.

Yet, exercising patience has almost become extinct in our world. All over society we see people acting out, unbridled anger and yelling on display, all caught on camera for the world to see. We see road rage, people acting out in checkout lines, protesters yelling at each other over politics and social issues, and ugly exchanges on social media. If these things are happening in public before the world to see, it is hard to imagine what kind of outbursts are happening behind closed doors. Ours is a time where most people are living on edge... any little thing can set them off. In a world driven by emotion, moving with patience and restraint is disregarded. If they are not careful, parents and their children can bring these problems into the home.

This lesson will explore the significance of parental patience and delve into practical applications rooted in biblical principles. Drawing from Scripture, we will uncover the profound impact that patience has on our parent-child relationships and the overall well-being of our families.

We will also uncover the transformative power of modeling patience as parents. Our children observe and learn from our actions, attitudes, and responses. As we embody the characteristics of patience, self-control, and active listening, we demonstrate God's love, grace, and understanding. By modeling patience, we shape our children's understanding of God's nature and cultivate an atmosphere of trust, respect, and love within our homes.

Additionally, we will explore practical ways to cultivate and grow in patience as parents. From practicing self-care and seeking God's guidance to setting realistic expectations and using discipline with love, we will uncover actionable steps that enable us to navigate the challenges of parenting with grace, understanding, and unwavering patience.

Finally, we will discover how patience can strengthen our relationships, shape the character of our children, and ultimately glorify God in our homes and families. Let us embrace the call to be patient, loving parents who exemplify the enduring virtue of patience in every aspect of our lives.

Modeling the Way God Cares for and Understands Us

Key to any discussion on parental patience is to first examine the way God cares for His children. His actions toward us are always directed in caring, relational love. The Psalmist described His care for us in this way:

Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I stand up; you understand my thoughts from far away. You observe my travels and my rest; you are aware of all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you know all about it, Lord. You have encircled me; you have placed your hand on me. This wondrous knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty; I am unable to reach it, Psalm 139.1-6.

When we read this passage we see God's deep desire for relationship. God not only knows who we are, but He discerns all the details of our life. I love the way the NRSV words verse 5: *You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.*²² The GNB paraphrases the last half of the verse in this way: *you protect me with your power.*²³ We can envision God placing His hand around us, encapsulating us in His love and care. The amazing reality that God is personally involved with us in the closest possible way defied David's understanding, v. 6. Even still, it was for him a source

of great comfort and peace.

What was true for David is true for us. God is thoroughly acquainted with us as His children. He designed us and knows our ways. He understands who we are mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Better than anyone else, He knows our weaknesses, strengths, thought patterns, motives, and habits. While parents are far away from the knowledge level of God, His example here patterns the type of attitude parents should possess toward their children. If we are going to move with the type of patience required for a fulfilling relationship, parents must invest the time to observe and study their children for the purpose of understanding their physical, social, spiritual, and emotional needs.

Let's refer again to Psalm 139.1: *Lord, you have searched me and known me.* The key word in this verse is *search*, which describes diligent, difficult probing about a person's character or feelings through an examination of the heart or mind.²⁴ Another dictionary describes the word as meaning to examine thoroughly. For the parent, this involves the responsibility of carefully studying their children for the purpose of knowing them for the individuals they are.

Later in Psalm 139 we learn why God searches us the way He does:

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way, Psalm 139.23-24.

God wants to help us walk *in the everlasting way*, i.e., a blessed life while on earth that leads to eternity in heaven. This should be every parent's desire for their child. There should be a strong commitment to lead children away from anything that *offends God* and points them toward spiritual growth and maturity, ultimately bringing the child true significance and satisfaction. Parents have a unique calling to follow through and will do so effectively when they pay attention, bathe the process in prayer, and walk closely with the Lord.

Training a Child According to the Tenor of His Way

You have probably read Proverbs 22.6:

Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he grows older he will not abandon it, NASB.²⁵

Many misapply this verse assuming that if they raise their children in a Christian home, taking them to church and Bible class every week, work to keep them in a safe environment that protects them as much as possible from the world, that when they are older they will embrace our faith. On the surface this may *seem* to be correct, but is it? Time or space will not permit the retelling of countless stories where children were raised in this way only to reject the teaching of their youth when they got out on their own. The misapplication of Proverbs 22.6 has led to an unbelievable amount of shame and guilt among parents whose children did not turn out as they intended. Remember, this passage is a *proverb*, not a statement of absolutes. There must be a better way to understand this verse.

Train in this verse comes from a Hebrew word that means to cause to change, to develop, or to grow. One Bible dictionary defines it this way: "to train someone in accordance with proper rules

of conduct and behavior."²⁶ The principle here matches what Paul teaches in Ephesians 6.4 when he says to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

But the training that is done must be done effectively, and that is what Solomon is referring to in the next part of Proverbs 22.6. The NASB contains a footnote in the part of this verse where it says *in the way he should go*. It says, "according to his way." So ... "train up a child...*according to his way*." This is also seen in the way verse 6 is translated in the Amplified Bible:

Train up a child in the way he should go [**and in keeping with his individual gift or bent**], and when he is old he will not depart from it.²⁷

The Darby Translation says it this way:

Train up the child **according to the tenor of his way**, and when he is old he will not depart from it.²⁸

A synonym for *way* in 22.6 is the Hebrew word for "bend." This is the word used in Psalm 11.2 where the writer is referring to the bending of a bow. A bow was made from a tree limb. To be successful, a person would need to study the limb in order to figure out what its natural bent was. Then he would string it... according to its natural bent. Why? If he pulled the bow back against its bent, the bow would snap.

So the proverb Solomon is teaching about in Proverbs 22.6 means that we train our children toward their natural bents so that they will flourish and grow. We must come along side them with a plan to help them develop their natural and unique gifts and skills into highly developed assets that they can lean on in the future. We must understand that each child is different. They have:

- Differing personalities
- Learning styles
- Attitudes
- Attention spans

We must study our children and be flexible with the teaching methods we employ. As we study our children, we should begin to know them enough to understand which natural bents they have that could push them in the wrong direction. Some kids struggle with fear, shyness, stubbornness, argumentativeness, etc. While we may not be able to make these liabilities completely disappear - we can commit to raising our kids in such a way that we give them the tools to process things properly.

Having the Right Attitude Toward Your Child's Uniqueness

God made your children as one-of-a-kinds. He built great gifts into them, as well as weaknesses that require them to lean heavily upon Him for power and help. We need to be enthusiastic about helping them build discipline around their gifts and skills. This will require grace from us. Some of their strengths may actually be weaknesses for us. For example, a mother may be the non-athletic type, but she becomes interested in the sports their kids love - and she gets excited to see them play. Maybe as a dad, you are the "non-artsy" type, but you are interested in them enough to take

them to a museum, etc. We have not been called to make our children into mini-clones of ourselves. We should never try to "rewire" them from the schematic that God assigned to them. We especially need grace as they struggle with their liabilities and weaknesses. Your patience *and sanity* as a parent will definitely be tested. But children must come to see parents who approach those shortcomings without venom or condescension. Never forget that your children want to know you love them supremely and want what is best for them. Love them like God loves you.

How to Grow in Patience

Cultivate Compassion and Empathy:

Patience is closely linked with compassion and empathy. Parents can grow in patience by seeking to understand their children's perspectives, feelings, and needs. Philippians 2:4 encourages believers, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." By empathizing with their children and considering their unique circumstances, parents can respond with patience and grace.

Recognize Developmental Stages

Children go through different stages of development, and each stage presents its own challenges and opportunities. Parents can study and educate themselves about the typical behaviors, needs, and milestones associated with each stage. This knowledge can help parents approach their children with patience, understanding that certain behaviors are part of the natural growth process. Connect with other parents or seek guidance from mentors and trusted resources to gain insights and encouragement in navigating parenting challenges. Understand and embrace the developmental stages of your children, adjusting your expectations accordingly and responding with patience.

Model Patience

Parents serve as primary role models for their children. Children observe and learn from their parents' behaviors, including their level of patience. James 1:19 advises, *My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.* Parents can intentionally model patience in their interactions with their children, demonstrating self-control, active listening, and a calm response. Practice active listening: Take the time to listen attentively to your children's concerns, thoughts, and emotions, demonstrating that you value their perspective.

Practice Self-Care

Parenting can be demanding and exhausting at times. Taking care of one's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being is crucial for maintaining patience. Parents should prioritize self-care, which can include setting aside personal time for relaxation, seeking support from brethren in the local church, engaging in activities that bring joy and refreshment, and spending time in prayer and meditation. Prioritize self-care to recharge and maintain emotional well-being, allowing you to respond to your children with patience.

Seek God's Guidance and Strength

Patience is a virtue that requires reliance on God's grace and guidance. Parents can grow in patience by seeking God's help through prayer, studying His Word, and relying on the Holy Spirit for wisdom and strength. Galatians 5:22-23 reminds us that patience is a fruit of the Spirit, and as parents yield to the Spirit's work in their lives, they can experience growth in patience.

Use Discipline with Love

Discipline is an essential aspect of parenting, but it must be done with love and patience. Ephesians 6:4 instructs, *Fathers, don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.* Discipline should aim to teach, correct, and guide children toward maturity and godliness. Patiently explaining expectations, offering guidance, and providing consistent consequences can contribute to a healthy parent-child relationship. Regularly express love, affirmation, and encouragement to your children, creating an environment of trust and security that fosters patience. Teach your children the importance of forgiveness and grace, both in giving and receiving, modeling patience and reconciliation within the family.

Embrace a Long-Term Perspective

Parenting is a journey that requires patience for the long haul. It is important for parents to remember that they are investing in their children's lives and character development. The training of Proverbs 22:6 takes time and patience. Embracing a long-term perspective can help parents maintain patience during challenging moments.

By incorporating these aspects of parental patience into their lives, parents can cultivate an environment of love, understanding, and growth within their families. Remember, growing in patience is a journey, and parents can lean on God's grace and guidance as they seek to exhibit patience in their role as parents.

For Discussion:

1. Reflect on a time when you experienced the impact of parental patience in your own life. How did it shape your understanding of God's love and influence your relationship with your parents?
2. Share a personal experience where you struggled with patience as a parent or in your interactions with children. How did it affect your relationship with them, and what did you learn from that experience?
3. How does the lack of patience in our society today affect our parenting and family dynamics? What steps can we take to counteract the prevailing impatience and foster a

culture of patience within our homes?

4. In what ways can empathy and compassion contribute to cultivating patience in our interactions with children? Share practical examples of how empathy and compassion can transform parenting dynamics.
5. Discuss the role of self-care in maintaining patience as a parent. What are some effective self-care strategies that can help parents recharge and respond to their children with patience and grace?
6. How does seeking God's guidance and strength enable us to grow in patience? Share personal experiences or insights on how prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit can help parents develop patience in challenging moments.
7. Explore the connection between discipline and patience in parenting. How can discipline be approached with love and patience? Share practical strategies for disciplining children while maintaining a patient and nurturing environment.
8. How can understanding and embracing the unique developmental stages of children contribute to cultivating patience as parents? Share practical ways to adjust expectations and respond patiently to the changing needs of children at different stages.
9. Discuss the importance of modeling patience as parents. In what ways can our actions, attitudes, and responses influence our children's understanding of patience? Share specific examples of how parents can model patience in everyday situations.

10. Embracing a long-term perspective is crucial in parenting. How does viewing parenting as a journey of character development impact our ability to exhibit patience? Share personal stories or insights on how embracing a long-term perspective can help parents stay patient during challenging moments.

²² *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989.

²³ American Bible Society. *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*. 2nd ed. New York: American Bible Society, 1992.

²⁴ Wolf, Herbert. "729 הַקָּר." *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1999.

²⁵ *New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2020.

²⁶ Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1996.

²⁷ *The Amplified Bible*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1987.

²⁸ Darby, John Nelson. *The Holy Scriptures: A New Translation from the Original Languages*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1996.