

The Fruit of the Spirit is PATIENCE

See if you can figure out our next fruit by thinking about the following question. What do these things have in common: your birthday, ketchup in a bottle, Christmas, and lunchtime when you're really hungry. *(Pause for student responses.)* These are all times when you want something but you have to wait patiently until it comes.

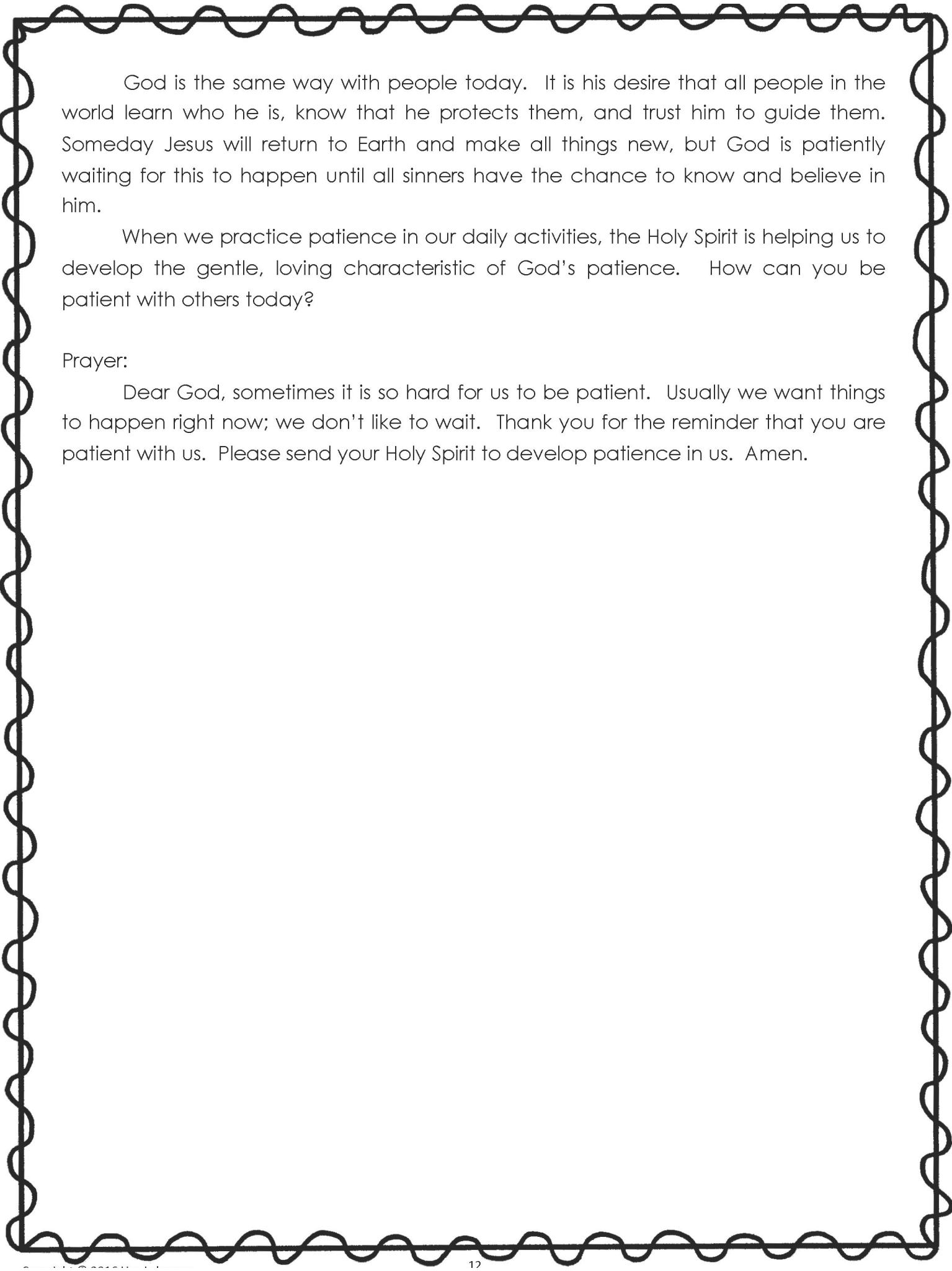
How many of you find it easy to be patient? How many of you find it hard to be patient? Waiting can be a hard thing. Sometimes we have to wait for just a few minutes. Other times we have to wait a few days or weeks, maybe even months! Does complaining or talking about what we're waiting for make the time pass faster? Not usually. Read what the Bible says in Ephesians 4:2 about patience:

•*Ephesians 4:2 – Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*"

When you're waiting to take your turn at something, is it easy to be gentle with the person in front of you who takes too much time or keeps messing up? While you're watching someone do a task that you need to do next, do you tend to tell him or her how to do it, or say that you can do it better and faster? Is that acting in a humble way? Being patient at such times shows love to those around you.

In the Bible there is a story about the Israelite people who went on a trip. God rescued them from slavery in Egypt and promised to give them a land of their own. The Israelites had to walk to get there. They should have gotten there in about two weeks, but because the Israelites complained, disobeyed God, and generally didn't know much about God or trust him, they had to wander around in the desert for forty years before they entered the land God gave them! How many times do you think the Israelite children asked, "Are we there yet?" Those questioning children were grownups by the time they got to the Promised Land.

Now why would God make them wander around the desert for forty years? God had a plan for the Israelites. He wanted to show them who he was by doing miracles to feed them, to keep them safe, and to guide them. He wanted the Israelites to learn to trust him. It took a long time for them to learn to trust God – forty years to be exact! God had to be gentle and patient with them while they learned to trust him.



God is the same way with people today. It is his desire that all people in the world learn who he is, know that he protects them, and trust him to guide them. Someday Jesus will return to Earth and make all things new, but God is patiently waiting for this to happen until all sinners have the chance to know and believe in him.

When we practice patience in our daily activities, the Holy Spirit is helping us to develop the gentle, loving characteristic of God's patience. How can you be patient with others today?

Prayer:

Dear God, sometimes it is so hard for us to be patient. Usually we want things to happen right now; we don't like to wait. Thank you for the reminder that you are patient with us. Please send your Holy Spirit to develop patience in us. Amen.