

I'm being patient as fast as I can!

We've all heard the fable about the tortoise and the rabbit. They decide to race and the rabbit is so confident in his speed that he allows himself to get distracted, drifting here and there, maybe catching a nap, always confident that he'll be able to reach the finish line well ahead of that slow tortoise. The tortoise, on the other hand, stays at the race, following the course carefully, never stopping or turning aside. When the rabbit finally decides it's time to get moving, he finds that it is too late: the tortoise has already crossed the finish line. The moral, we are told, is that slow but steady wins the race.

Seriously now, even knowing how the story ends wouldn't you still bet on the rabbit to win? We all fall into thinking that moving quickly is better, and resent anything that slows us down (just think of the last time you were at the store and the person ahead of you paid for their items by counting out pocket change, searching for just one more coin in order to have exact change).

This week we will learn about patience. God's patience, our patience, and the patience others show to us are all discussed in detail in the Bible. Let's take the time to study what God wants to teach us, and wait patiently for the Lord (Psalm 40:1).

Monday – The Qualities of Patience

"You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it." Arnold Glasow, 20th c. American humorist

1. Please read Colossians 3:12-14. What qualities are listed in verse 12? How would the first four qualities enhance your ability to exercise patience?
2. Now look at the list of qualities in Colossians 3:5-8. How do they hinder patience?
3. In Romans 2:4 we see the relationship between God's kind patience and our repentance. How might that relationship lead to greater patience in the way you live your life?

Making it Personal: Ask God to open your mind to all kindnesses to you, so that you will show patience and kindness to others.

Tuesday – Slow to Burn

"Patience is sorrow's salve." Charles Churchill, 18th c. English clergyman and poet

1. Please read Colossians 3:12 and put in your own words the relationship with God described there. How does God treat you? What effect should that have on how you treat others?
2. How is God's patient treatment of his people described in Nehemiah 9:13-21?
3. According to 2 Peter 3:8-10, how and why has God chosen to exercise patience? Why is patience such an integral part of the proclamation of the gospel (the good news that Jesus came into the world to save sinners)?

Making it Personal: How should knowing that you are chosen, holy and dearly loved by God affect the way you treat others?

Wednesday – Put Up with It

"One of the great disadvantages of hurry is that it takes such a long time." G.K. Chesterton

1. Please read Colossians 3:13. How does bearing with someone differ from forgiving them? When have you really appreciated someone putting up with your shortcomings?
2. What do you learn about patience in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7? How does it compare with Psalm 103:10?

Making it Personal: Who do you have trouble putting up with, exercising patience toward? Pray for God's help in showing that person the same patience that God has shown you.

Thursday – Grievances

"Men often bear little grievances with less courage than they do large misfortunes." Aesop, 6th c. BC storyteller

1. Please read Colossians 3:13. How would you describe the forgiveness that God is calling us to show? Think of someone you have a grievance against. What does this verse instruct you to do?
2. What is Jesus emphasizing in Matthew 5:21-16? Is he instructing those who need to forgive others, or those who need forgiveness? Which position do you find yourself in each today?
3. How far does your responsibility extend according to Romans 12:17-18?

Making it Personal: Do you have a grievance against anyone? Ask God to guide you in forgiving them. Is there someone who has a grievance against you? Pray for the strength to make things right.

Friday – Echoes of the Lord's Forgiveness

"He who cannot forgive breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass." George Herbert, 17th c. Welsh clergyman and poet

1. Please read Colossians 3:13-14. How does putting on love help you forgive as the Lord forgave you?
2. What hard truth does Jesus explain in Matthew 6:14-15? Why do you think Jesus was so strong on this point? How does this help you see the needs of those around you?

Digging Deeper: Read Matthew 18:21-35. What insights about your relationship with God do you see in this passage? What insights about your relationship with others?

For the Weekend: Read Ephesians 4:2 and 1 Thessalonians 5:14. What can you do to be patient with someone around you today? What about tomorrow? Pray for God's help in this each day.