

Resolving Conflict

Chapter 3 - Prerequisite Three: Patience

“...¹walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,”
(Ephesians 4:1–2 ESV)

I. Definition

“Patience. *Makrothumia* (**patience**) has to do with tolerance and long-suffering that endure injuries inflicted by others, the calm willingness to accept situations that are irritating or painful.”¹

“...*endurance* is used for being patient in circumstances, whereas *patience* refers to being patient with people.”²

“Many of us think that we are patient when we handle the larger trials well. But what about those minitrials — how do you handle them? ...How about having to sit at the same red light for a second go-around because the elderly gentleman in the car in front of you wasn’t paying attention to the traffic and lollygagged around until the light changed back to red or how about being late for church because one of your family members overslept, or took too long to dress, or had to run back into the house because she forgot something inconsequential? I daresay that the things that most often tempt us to impatience are life’s little trials!”³

1. Why do you think “minitrials” test our patience more than larger trials?

II. Description

- A. **“Patience is the ability to accept a difficult situation from the Lord without accusing Him of wrongdoing or giving Him a deadline to remove it.”**

“7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” (James 5:7–11 ESV; emphasis added)

¹John F. MacArthur, Jr., *MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians* (The Moody Bible Institute, © 2015 WORDsearch), 167.

² Priolo, *Conflict Resolution*, 66.

³ Lou Priolo, *Conflict Resolution* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2016), 67.

2. According to James 5:7-8, what is the key to remaining patient? How does that help?
3. What exactly was the outcome of the Lord's dealings with Job? How was the Lord compassionate and merciful toward Job?
4. In 1 Corinthians 13:4, Paul first defines "love" saying, "Love is patient..." How can our impatience toward God displayed? How is our impatience toward other displayed? (pp.74-75)
5. What are we choosing to believe about God when we are impatient during a trial? (1 Cor. 13:7?)

B. "Patience is the ability while experiencing physical or mental distress, to keep one's emotions (grief, fear, and anger) from developing into sinful thoughts, words, attitudes, or actions (especially toward God and others)."

"1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted." (Hebrews 12:1-3 ESV)

6. What did the Old Testament saints fix their eyes on to help them endure hardship? What is revealed about our perspective when we struggle to be patient? (Mk. 8:33)
7. How would the command in verse 3 to "consider" Christ's suffering help us remain patient in our suffering?

Considering the suffering of others has a unique effect of drawing us out of our own trials and making them seem small in comparison. How much more is this true when we meditate on the suffering of Christ who suffered more severely than any person in all history.

C. “Patience is the ability to endure tribulation without resorting to any sinful means of deliverance.”

8. What are some sinful forms of deliverance from conflict? (p. 77, 79)
9. What biblical hope can you give someone who feels trapped and unable to endure?

D. “Patience is the ability to endure suffering while continuing to acknowledge and be thankful for God’s sovereignty, justice, wisdom, love, and goodness.”

10. What can help us cultivate thankfulness when our circumstances *seem* like there isn’t anything to be thankful for?

E. “Patience is the ability to keep a biblical perspective about one’s troubles by not magnifying a tolerable trial so that it appears to one’s mind as an intolerable one.”

“Although we may see our need to depend on God’s grace more in the larger trials than in smaller ones, for the Christian all trials are tolerable because of the grace that is promised to us throughout any trial we may experience (see I Cor. 10:13). It may be more accurate to say that we don’t so much magnify the trial as we minimize our view of God in proportion to it (make Him not as large as it is).”⁴

F. “Patience is the ability to rejoice in the assurance that one’s present distress will produce godly character, which is of great value not only in this life, but also in the next.”

⁴ Priolo, 81.

11. How do the following verses help someone endure trials patiently?

“3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:3–5 ESV)

“7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:7–10 ESV)

Scenarios

Jean has been struggling to be patient with her husband and her kids. Her husband has a habit of blameshifting and finger pointing when situations are difficult or when he sins. Her kids are constantly fighting with each other and she has to continually ask them to do simple tasks. Jean tells you that she tries to not get sinfully angry at her husband and kids. She knows she needs to be humble and examine her own heart before addressing others. She also knows she needs to be gentle with her words, her tone, and her body language. Jean says she has tried handling the conflict “God’s way.” She has tried praying before conflict, tried not to dishonor her husband by interrupting him when he is in the middle of his blameshifting, to encourage him, to appeal to him, and commend valid points he makes. When it comes to parenting, she has tried disciplining the kids in various ways, she has tried to talk with them after a conflict and not during, and she has tried to heap praise and encouragement when she sees the kids doing the right thing. But whenever her husband or her kids repeat the same sin, she says she loses her cool. Jean says, “I’ve been working on this for six weeks now and I just want to throw in the towel! I have tried it God’s way and it’s not been any better!”

1. What is the most important issue that Jean needs to deal with first in this scenario?
2. What might be some sinful issues residing in Jean’s heart in relation to her husband that make it hard for her to be patient? What about her children?
3. What passages would be helpful for encouraging Jean to respond patiently to her husband’s weaknesses?

4. How might Jean craft a biblical and helpful response to her husband when he is blameshifting? What should be the ultimate goal for her husband? (Eph. 4:22-24)

5. After taking these steps, Jean's husband continues in this pattern of sin without any sign of willingness to change, what would Jean's next recourse be per Matthew 18:16? How could she do this in a loving and submissive way?

6. What biblical lessons might God be teaching to Jean through this trial? How would a question like this help Jean maintain patience in trials?

7. What is the most important Jean should ask herself when she faces this difficulty? (1 Cor. 10:31)