

The Servant



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The purpose of this newsletter is to pass along information and ideas to help the Lord's servants as they minister to others. Feel free to use any of it in your ministry

No Purple Hearts for Patience

Patience is likely to go un-noticed. There are spiritual qualities that sparkle and dance or cause the people to sit up and take notice. Patience is not one of them. Patience is usually not noticed until it is absent, as when a chill in the air causes you to realize you have forgotten to bring your overcoat. Someone once called patience “unglamorous courage.” No one gets the Silver Star for being patient, and yet more often than not it requires a greater grace and strength.

Real patience does not pace the floor. Nor does it wring its hands, or drum its fingers on the table. When real patience is present it is un-noticed. Nobody knows it is there, except God of course. Patience does not grit its teeth or look like a martyr “taking out the garbage.”

Real patience accepts unpleasant circumstances – realizing that this is how things must be, for now. Now is a wonderful gift from God. Impatience robs us of the moment. Impatience wants us to hurry through the NOW that is, into the “what comes NEXT.” NOW is all we have. Impatience robs us of a gift. Impatience gulps down the food of the moment without even tasting it. Impatience has no time to appreciate the pearls.

The western world is in a hurry. We might want to slow down. Eastern Religions are attractive to many for this one reason. Slowing down enough to “smell the roses” is so different. Many Christians are in the fast-lane. Sometimes God puts a few speed bumps in our way- but we just get a bigger SUV and keep going. “Tribulations worketh patience” (Rom. 5:3). We often laugh at those sitting in the lotus position of “cross-legged-meditation,” and scoff at eastern religions. The truth is they are not

focusing so much on the navel as the “now.” Now is a gift to everyone. Christian faith is rooted in the past and looks for the second coming, but God is working on us now. The now is not always “nice.” When our now lands us in Egypt, we must be patient. God will tell us when it is time to leave. No matter how bad it is, we should remember that “this too shall pass,” Each Passover will come in its time. Chains will become gains. The Hebrews came out of Egypt richer than when they went in.

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to be born—Stop right there—There is a gestation period for everything- while a mother looks forward to the birth of her child – she would not want it to be born too soon- She realizes that hurry is not in anyone’s best interest. Then there is the farmer. He knows that patience is as much vital as it is virtue. He sows in hope, but then he waits patiently. Pulling the thing up to look at the roots will not make his farming any faster. Some things take time, and God is always on time. What's the rush?

Just in Time

Jesus knew what time it was
For He made the earth and sun
No one knows, more than He does
What a minute’s worth, just one

And yet He never hurried
Or rushed through a frenzied day
Nor was He ever worried
As He took time to pause and pray

We run ever, ever faster
We phone, we fax, we mail
We’re the slave, the thing the master
And in being first we often fail

At least once a day God gives us a "Pop Quiz" on patience. It is impossible to study for these exams. The truth is I do not do well on most. But by the grace of God I am getting better, especially when I remember that NOW is all I have and that there is something, some special precious thing hidden in the moment.

Impatience is attached to a nearly imperceptible trip-wire that sets off little or large explosions spoiling our day or disposition. We need to learn to defuse impatience- we find these bombs everywhere. We get into the wrong line at the check out counter. The person in front has too many items (The sign says "12 Item limit".- It seems they can neither read nor count). You count, thirteen, no, fourteen, then they pull out their coupons after the clerk has already rung up the total- and now has to deduct them from her bill, but not before the clerk pulls out a magnifying glass to read the fine print on one of the coupons and tries to explain to the woman (who is hard of hearing) that the coupon is not valid. After that and a final total is finally agreed upon, the woman opens one of those little change purses with the little clip and starts looking deep into its darkness for three pennies- that she is sure she has- then after an eternity, decides that she did not have three pennies after all- but wait- the boy did not "double bag" the groceries as she had requested.

As land mines in Cambodia, impatience can explode and damage our walk, our work and our witness. How do we defuse impatience- Is there some way to disarm it? - do I cut the red wire or is it the black? Careful!

Anger- is the blast. Anger is often a reflex and reaction to disappointment. We were expecting better. I know that there are Spiritual bomb suits that

many wear- But what about the rest of us? True, they don't give Purple Hearts for patience, but I think we can get points.

1) Try a little laughter. Sometimes certain situations are hilarious if we could only see that God has a sense of humor. Imagine, allowing me to get into a line with a little old lady with a coin purse. It is hysterical. God has to have a sense of humor.

2) Turn it into prayer time. If it is not God trying to bring a little humor into your life, and you attribute this "land mine" situation to the Devil, you can defuse it by running through your prayer list. First pray for your friends (those you promised you would), pray for your local Assembly, pray for your enemies. Ask God to bless them real good. Pray for those caught in the same line, or for the check out girl who has to stay there all day, and for her family (are they still back in Mexico, or in Kenya?). If the Devil senses you are having a good time, the line will suddenly speed up.

3) Do your memory work. Recite the memory verses you have been working on. This chapter, and that. Glance at the memory cards you carry with you at all times. Make the most of it.

4) Sing, hum, or praise God. Run down a list of all the blessings this past week, or this past day.

Patience looks for the pearls. Sometimes they are fully grown and already strung-out on strings, like blessings. Sometimes they are being formed in some oyster right before our eyes. Sometimes they look like a grain of sand or some other irritant, but that's how God makes pearls. He starts with a little irritation. When we attack the thing that has intruded the

soft part of the mullusk we are likely to just cause more pain. If we are patient, and allow God to work, we shall have a pearl. What is God doing now? God is the God of NOW. That is why the Bible says- "Now is the accepted time, (2Cor. 6:2b). It also says "I am **now** ready.... (2Tim 4:6); "**Now** the Just shall live by faith" (Heb 10:38); Beloved **now** are we Children of God(1Jn. 3:2). Thank God for "Now," right now.

Patients Wanted

"The Servant of the Lord must not strive:but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient: " (2Tim 2:24). An elder, a teacher, a servant of the Lord must have supernatural powers. This is called grace. Patience is a powerful thing that is not easily moved off its mark, and yet is so quiet and so gentle that we hardly know its there, like the steady hand of the surgeon in the middle of an operation. Impatience however, has a heavy hand, and is more likely to make mistakes, cut vital arteries, and kill the patient. Be patient.

Rush Hour

They say that Patience is a virtue
And I think they must be right
You also know that it is true
Just pause at the traffic light

The horns you will start hearing
And even bankers curse
But worse, behind me blaring
Is the horn of a big black hearse.



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