



Helping people encounter God in His Word



For use on Sunday, November 23, 2003

Introduction

30

*Core Competencies
of a follower
of Christ*

10 Core Beliefs

TRINITY
SALVATION BY GRACE
AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE
PERSONAL GOD
IDENTITY IN CHRIST
CHURCH
HUMANITY
COMPASSION
ETERNITY
STEWARDSHIP

10 Core Practices

WORSHIP
PRAYER
BIBLE STUDY
SINGLE-MINDEDNESS
BIBLICAL COMMUNITY
SPIRITUAL GIFTS
GIVING AWAY MY TIME
GIVING AWAY MY MONEY
GIVING AWAY MY FAITH
GIVING AWAY MY LIFE

10 Core Virtues

LOVE
JOY
PEACE
PATIENCE
KINDNESS/GOODNESS
FAITHFULNESS
GENTLENESS
SELF-CONTROL
HOPE
HUMILITY

This week's Core Competency:

Patience

I am patient with others.

Reality Check: When Life Requires a Balance "Hurry Up and Wait . . . When You Feel You Won't Make It"

"Jack, I don't think I can take much more of this," said Wilson Plete shaking his head despondently, "I have their attorneys blaming me and calling me 'incompetent.' How can the company blame me for this? I didn't set up the scaffolding incorrectly; I had nothing to do with it. It's bad enough my leg is still injured from when it collapsed. I'm stuck here at home trying to recover. I can't work. My disability check was stolen; I have no money. And then the company wants me to pay back all the disability pay I received because they say I'm at 'fault' for my injury. My resolve is getting very thin. I feel like giving up."

Jack Stratman, Wilson's crew boss, shook his head in agreement then asked, "Has the union called you yet about getting you a lawyer?"

"Yes, but I haven't heard from him yet," replied Wilson, "It has been two weeks and things are getting desperate. The phone has been ringing non-stop from creditors. What can I tell them? 'Take everything! Only just to let you know, there is nothing to take!' I'm two months behind on my rent and will probably lose my home because of all this." Wilson swallowed hard and fought back the tears.

Jack said, "I'll call the union rep again and see if I can light a fire under someone's butt to get moving on this. I wish there was more I could do."

Wilson just nodded his head. He then sighed and exclaimed, "I just want this to be over, Jack. It's a nightmare. It's so hard to wait. Any resolution would be better than hanging like this in turmoil. I feel like I'm powerless to do anything."

"Hey, I hear you and know how you feel. I've been there, but remember you are not powerless. The union is there to help," stated Jack.

"I know. The union is there to help, but not so far," said Wilson, "Hey, you know who came through? Brent, the backhoe operator. He brought me a meal and said he was praying for me. That was a real encouragement. He even asked me if I wanted to go to church with him. What do you think, Jack?"

"Hey, I know God can help," said Jack, "I'm not saying that to be preachy, but he has pulled me through some tough times. He's given me patience to see uncertain things through. I can tell you about it sometime if you want."

"Yeah," said Wilson contemplatively and with curiosity, "I'll take you up on that."

Jack put his hand on Wilson's shoulder and said, "Hey, Wilson, I need to be going. I got to check out a new site. I feel for you Wilson; we all do. In fact, when you called me two weeks ago about this, the whole crew was upset. I know the union will help you out, but I asked the guys on the site to pitch in to help you out somehow. Here is the money. It's not much, but the guys wanted to help. We all feel like we're being blamed as well." Wilson looked at the cash in Jack's hand and again felt the tears welling up. He looked down trying to hide his eyes and said humbly, "Jack, I don't know what to say, but thanks! Tell the guys thank you. It means a lot."

Jack put the cash in Wilson's hand and as he was going out the door. Then as he was leaving he said, "If there is anything I can do, let me know. Hang in there, Wilson! I'm praying for you too. I believe God will see you through."

"Thanks, Jack. I think He already has," said Wilson with a half smile as he closed the door and looked at the crumpled dollar bills in his hand.

Observation

What do you see?

Job 29:2-6

² "How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, ³ when his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness! ⁴ Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house, ⁵ when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me, ⁶ when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil."

James 5:7-12 *Patience in Suffering*

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! ¹⁰ Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. ¹² Above all, my brothers, do not swear--not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

Record your first impressions from what you read.

Interact with the passages

- In James circle the term "patient." Underline the word "perseverance."
- Highlight what God does. Highlight "the Lord's coming," "the Judge is standing at the door," "the Lord is full of compassion and mercy."
- Put a square around the term referring to judgment and condemnation. Draw arrows back to what James indicates will be condemned.
- In Job 29 underline the things that Job misses from his previously easier life. Write in the margins blessings that you long for when you undergo trials.
- In Job 30 circle the words that describe how Job is feeling towards God. Write down James 5:11 "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy," next to Job 30.
- Next to Job 30 write down James 5:11 "what the Lord finally brought about." Highlight the word "finally," in the passage you wrote.

Interpretation

What does it mean?

Job 30:16-22

¹⁶ "And now my life ebbs away; days of suffering grip me. ¹⁷ Night pierces my bones; my gnawing pains never rest. ¹⁸ In his great power God becomes like clothing to me; he binds me like the neck of my garment. ¹⁹ He throws me into the

Suffering through difficult times tests our faith in God. As we endure the suffering patiently, yet expressing our dismay and discomfort openly with God, He transforms us through the blessed trial to be fully matured, as a field ready for fruitful harvest.

Insights

- James 5:7 starts with a command to "be patient," or to endure delay and suffering and to never give in.
- The term "coming" could be "presence," and in Greek is *parousia*. This term in the early church traditionally referred to Jesus' 2nd return to judge the wicked.
- The autumn rains in Palestine James speaks of are in October to begin germination of seeds that are sown. The spring rains, or late rains, come just before harvest and guarantee the final maturation of the grain.
- The term "grumble" could have two implications. One, it could mean not to grumble to others *about* one's difficulties. Two, it could mean not to blame others *for* one's difficulties. It could be that the passage has a both ideas involved. (Moo)
- In v. 10 the "suffering" mentioned that which occurred to the prophets while the "patience" describes how the prophets acted while suffering.
- The wording in James 5:11 parallels James 1:12.

mud, and I am reduced to dust and ashes.²⁰ I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me.²¹ You turn on me ruthlessly; with the might of your hand you attack me.²² You snatch me up and drive me before the wind; you toss me about in the storm.”

- V. 12 is strange in that it literally stands alone. It may refer to using the Lord’s name irreverently, but it could also be that in the context James wrote that people are to adhere to the promises they made. It closely resembles Jesus’ words in Matt. 5:34-37.
- Some argue that James’ use of Job is dependent upon some apocryphal writings that present Job in a more positive light than reality should. Yet Job in the Old Testament is a model of great steadfastness of faith even when bitterly complaining about God’s treatment of him. Job continued to hold his faith of God and waited hopefully for God to act on his behalf. Barclay wrote, “Job’s is no groveling, passive, unquestioning submission; Job struggled and questioned, and sometimes even defied, but the flame of faith was never extinguished in his heart.” Job continually asserted his pain to God as he endured the trial with faith, which in the end turned out favorably for Job.

Answering Questions of Interpretation

James refers to the readers as again “brother.” Why are the ‘brothers’ asked to wait for Christ’s return? Does this passage tie to the previous verses in that the “brothers” are the ones being oppressed by the rich? Does this view support that judgment is coming to the rich oppressor? Does James address this issue of patient waiting because as James 4:1-12 says there is rage about to become murder against the rich oppressor? Is there any other interpretation that could be understood from James’ audience shift?

How do we understand the term “grumble against each other?” Does this imply we are to keep quiet about our suffering to other people? If it does imply quietness, then what do we do when we know Job was very vocal about his suffering before God and others? Does Job’s example give us license to complain, or blame, others and God? If we can complain to God about everything, how do we do as James 1:2 says to “consider it pure joy, whenever you face trials of every kind,” or be an example of “patience?” Where is the balance to not overly complaining our distress to God and others and keeping patience and joy so we mature?

What do we do with v. 12? How does this verse tie to either the previous verses or the following verses? What is James referring to about oaths? Does Matthew 5:34-37 give us any additional light on how to understand James’ intent? If so, how?

Application

What do I do?

How well do I show patience when I am undergoing a difficulty? How do I react to my co-workers, family, and friends when things are overwhelming and demanding? Do I react with anger and volatility or patient grace and humility? What does my reaction say about my maturity? What are steps I need to take to allow the Spirit to begin to help me grow in this area of patience, a fruit of the Spirit?

Do I have the habit of being a hypochondriac Christian? Do I complain about everything as if it were a trial and expect people to notice me? Have I allowed my suffering “issues” to be what I am about? If James 5:9 really talks about not grumbling to one another, how can I begin to diminish my talking to others about my “issues,” and dominating conversations to grow in patience and perseverance?

Do I have the stoic “I don’t need anyone; I can handle it,” self-reliant mentality? Do I have difficulty telling people what my needs are? If so, why do you think that is? Do I have difficulty depending upon God to really respond to my needs? If so, why do you think that is? Have you lost faith in people and God because you sense they have let you down in the past? Does a loss of patience with God, or others, to respond always correlate to waning faith? Why or why not? How can Job be an example of faith with great patience and encourage you to not give up on God and others?

Correlation

How do we work this into our Home Group, Family, youth group, ministry, class, small group?

Core Competency: Patience

Creed: I am patient with others.

Commentary: Many of us have heard the prayer made jokingly, “God I want patience, now!” Patience it seems is needed immediately to deal with some daily issues and people we encounter. Whether it be in traffic gridlock, or some 800 service line, after two hours of waiting, saying your call will be answered by the next available service representative; patience is needed. Fortunately, we all realize that at times we have to “hurry up and wait.”

But when we wait patiently we expect there will be some sort of “timely” response. We don’t expect to be stuck in traffic or waiting in the phone queue forever. And during those times, the Spirit can give us the patience to not be ill mannered towards others.

But sometimes the situations we encounter have long periods of waiting without any indication of resolution. It is during these tenuous times that patience takes on a new perspective and our faith is challenged. In these longsuffering situations, one can lose hope and faith if they do not continually depend upon God. The Spirit is the one who gives us patience to wait through the uncertainty and pain for God’s resolution to come about.

The test of patience through trial is not easy; and it is not intended to be. God uses these situations to mature his children and continually show his “compassion and mercy.” Only when we continually see God as the only provision and depend upon Him to give us the longsuffering patience will we make it through. God is faithful; He can get us through day to day when we’re faced with long-term intolerable situations. Even if the resolution to the situation occurs after we die, God is still faithful to His children and has given us His Spirit whom grants us patience.

Question: Express a time that God gave you longsuffering patience. How did you sense that He helped you through? Is there a situation now that is intolerable and truly testing your patience? If so, what? How can the group pray for your faith to hold firm and your patience to continue?

Kid’s Corner – “Freeze!” (Items needed: candy or marshmallows, newspaper)

Say: Kids were going to play a game called, “Freeze!” It is a fun game that deals with patience. The game is similar to “Red Light, Green Light.” If I say, “Freeze,” then you all must stop moving immediately and freeze in place like a statue. If I say, “Thaw,” you can begin to move again. Okay, we’re going to practice “freezing,” and “thawing,” a few times just to see if you got it. (Let the kids practice a few times.)

Say: All kids need to stand on that side of the room. The object of this game is to get everyone across the room to the other side. But only one of you at a time can walk across the room. When everyone is on the other side of the room then you all get a treat. But remember when I say “Freeze,” the person in the middle of the floor must stop moving. The person can only start moving again when I say “Thaw.” Got it! Okay. Remember only one person will be “frozen” in the middle of the floor because you can only walk across the room one at a time.

Play: ‘Freeze’ some people for what seems like a long period of time. During those long periods, pick up the newspaper and begin reading or talk to people like you forgot you’re playing the game. The kids should begin trying to get your attention to “thaw” the person.

Ask: How did it feel to be “frozen” in the middle of the floor? (Uncomfortable, didn’t like it) How did it feel to be there a really long time? Did you become impatient with me when I began to read the newspaper? Why? (Wanted our treat)

Say: God wants us to have patience even in times when it seems things are “frozen,” or hard and unchanging. God can give us patience when we ask Him, and trust Him to help us through. Sometimes it is very hard to be patient and wait for God to do what we hope that He will do for us. But one thing is always true; God is faithful to help us and will always give us patience when we ask for it, even in tough times.



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