

**HOW TO DEVELOP PATIENCE**  
**Developing A Faith That works - Part 14 of 15**  
**James 5:7-12**  
**Rick Warren**

JAMES 5:7-12

Learning to wait is a hard lesson to learn in life. James shows us when, why, and how to develop patience.

**I. WHEN TO BE PATIENT**

\* WHEN \_\_\_\_\_

*"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 ..." (vs. 7)*

\* WHEN \_\_\_\_\_

*"As an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord." (vs 10)*

\* WHEN \_\_\_\_\_

*"You have heard of Job's perseverance ..." (vs. 11b)*

**II. WHY BE PATIENT?**

1. BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

*"Be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near." (vs. 8)*  
*"... resting your hearts on the ultimate certainty ..." (Ph)*

2. BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

*"As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered." (vs. 11a)*

*"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven ..." Matt. 5:13-14*

3. BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

*"You have heard of Job's perseverance, and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy." (vs. 11b)*

### **III. HOW TO BE PATIENT**

(What to do while you're waiting on God)

1. WAIT \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 7)

*"... I wait expectantly, trusting God to help, for He has promised." Ps. 130:5 (LB)*

*"The Lord says... No one who waits for my help will be disappointed." Isa. 49:23 (GN)*

2. WAIT \_\_\_\_\_ (vs.9)

*"It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." Lam. 3:26*

*"These things won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, do not despair, for these things will surely come to pass. Just be patient! They will not be overdue a single day!" Hab 2:3 (LB)*

3. WAIT \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 11b)

*"I will wait confidently for God ..." Micah 7:7*

*"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him to act." Ps. 37:7*

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A lot of your life you spend waiting. As a little kid, I waited all my life to start school, then I couldn't wait until I got out of school, then I couldn't wait to fall in love, then I couldn't wait to get married, then I couldn't wait to have kids, ... we spend a lot of our lives waiting. There are many things in life that test our patience: freeways, supermarket lines, doctor's offices, irritating people. We hate to wait. We are the Now Generation. We do not like to wait. I am a very patient except when I'm hungry. Then I lose my character. Have you noticed that the more expensive the restaurant the longer you wait? There are actually five different waits when you go to a restaurant. You wait to get a seat, then you wait to get the menu, then you wait to order, then you wait to get the food back, then you wait for the bill. And they have the audacity to call that guy the waiter!

Today we're going to look at what James has to say on "How to Develop Patience." You need patience in every area of your life. In this passage, James uses the word "patience" or "perseverance" six times. He uses three different illustrations to teach us when to be patient, why to be patient, and how to be patient.

**WHEN SHOULD I BE PATIENT?**

James isn't saying we have to be patient all the time but there are three special times when you need that extra dose of patience:

**1. When circumstances are uncontrollable**

Have you figured out that a lot of life is beyond your control? You cannot keep your thumb on everything. James uses a farmer as an example of when circumstances are uncontrollable. v. 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 ...*" Don't go into farming unless you've got patience. Part of the job description of being a farmer is you do a lot of waiting: waiting to till, waiting to plant, waiting to prune... there are a lot of factors in waiting. Yet more than the factors of waiting on things to do are the factors that the farmer has no control over -- weather, rain, heat, the economy, labor practices... If you have a lot of faith you can be a farmer but if you don't have a lot of faith don't be a farmer, because it takes patience. You deal with a lot of uncontrollable factors -- circumstances -- in life. Even in Palestine, where James is talking about, it wasn't the best of farming land, so they needed extra patience.

Have you noticed that even when we realize a situation is beyond our control, we still try to control it? How do we do that? By worrying. We think that worry will control a situation. To worry about something you can change is dumb, to worry about something you can't change is useless. Either way you shouldn't worry. We need to have patience in uncontrollable circumstances.

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#### 2. When people are unchangeable

When people won't change. When they won't make a difference. He gives an example of the prophets. *"As an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord."* What was the duty of prophets? To help people change, bring them back to God, to be different in their behavior. Have you noticed that people resist change? When you make any little tiny suggestion, they resist you!

Do you have anybody in your life right now who refuses to change? Do you know how difficult it is to live with that kind of person? We need patience with people. Joyce Lander calls these "irregular people" -- they are people who only see their own way. They may never change. What are you going to do about it? James says to have patience.

The word "patience" in the Greek is the word "macrothumos" -- "macro" meaning "long" and "thumos" (from which we get the word "thermometer") meaning "heat". It literally means "it takes a long time for you to get hot". You've got a long fuse, you don't blow up, you don't get overheated with people. If you're going to be a success with people, you have to learn patience. If you're going to be successful parents, you have to have a long fuse. You don't get overheated.

James says you need to be patient when circumstances are uncontrollable and when people are unchangeable and won't cooperate with us.

#### 3. When problems are unexplainable

The classic example he gives is in verse 11, *"You have heard of Job's perseverance ..."* Job played in the Super Bowl of suffering. He won the championship. He was the wealthiest man that ever lived. He had everything going for him. In a two-day period, everything fell apart. He went bankrupt, his children were murdered, he got an incurable, deadly disease that was very painful. You think you've got problems, had a rough day! He lost his family, his friends, his finances. He was suffering materially, physically, socially -- every kind of way. One day his wife comes to him and says, "Curse God and die!" Now that's a support system! God allowed the devil to take away everything in his life except a nagging wife. The worst part of Job's suffering was that he had absolutely no idea why it was happening. For 37 chapters in the book of Job, God doesn't even talk to him and tell him why it's happening. There was no apparent reason for his misfortune. Of all people, Job had the privilege to say, "Why me?"

Life is not fair! That is true. God never said it would be fair. A lot of things in life just don't make sense. Maybe we'll never understand on this side of heaven. Job didn't understand. In all of those unexplained problems, Job maintained his faith. Sometimes we just can't figure out our problems.

When circumstances are uncontrollable, when people are unchangeable, and when problems are unexplainable you really need patience. Why?

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#### WHY BE PATIENT?

##### 1. Because God is in control

*"Be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near."* v. 8. Three times in this passage, James says, "The Lord's coming is near, Jesus is coming back. That is the ultimate proof that God is in control. Nothing can stop it. The Bible talks more about Jesus' second coming -- when He comes back to judge the world -- than it does about His first coming." God is in control of history -- "his story". He's got it all planned out, everything is on schedule, nothing is late, it's all moving toward a climax. God is in control. God's purpose for your life is greater than any problem you're facing right now. God is in control.

Phillips translation, *"... resting your hearts on the ultimate certainty..."* Though a situation may be out of my control, no circumstance is out of God's control. Although I can't control everything that happens in my life, God can so I ought to trust Him. Because God is in control and everything is working out, be patient.

Job persevered. God's timing is perfect, He's never late. Some of you are experiencing a real delay right now but God's delays never thwart His purpose.

##### 2. God rewards patience.

v. 11a *"As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered."* Circle "blessed". The second half of Job's life was more blessed than the first half. God doubled everything he had. It pays to be patient. There are all kinds of rewards. Your character grows, you get along with people better, you're more happy, you reach your goals. There are lots of benefits of being patient. God rewards it. You'll be honored by others. They'll say, "He's a patient person."

But not just on this side of eternity, but on the other side you're going to be rewarded. Matthew 5:13-14 *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."* When people put you down, when they criticize you, be patient, because there's going to be a reward in heaven.

It is our natural tendency -- one of the strongest desires in life -- that when you're hurt, you want to get even. You want to retaliate, get revenge, take matters into your own hands. When you get criticized, you want to criticize back. If you get insulted, you want to insult back. Revenge, retaliation are the natural thing -- but that's the opposite of patience. James says that the next time someone criticizes you, before you strike back, think about this, is it worth giving up the reward I'm going to have in heaven? I'm going to enjoy that a whole lot longer than the temporary pleasure of revenge.

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You need to be patient because God is in control and He's going to reward patience.

#### 3. Because God is working things out

Often behind the scenes, things we don't even see, He's at work but we don't see Him at work. v. 11b *"You have heard of Job's perseverance, and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."* God was working, all the time that Job was not knowing what was going on, what was happening. God was working. A delay does not mean a denial. If you've been praying for an answer to prayer and you haven't gotten it, you think God doesn't want to give it to you. No. A delay is not a denial. We have to learn the difference between "no" and "not yet". Big difference. We want and we want it now. But we have to be patient. God is at work, even when we don't see what's going on. God was at work in Job's life, even when he didn't know, "Why is this happening to me?"

Story of Phillip Brooks, a famous pastor of the last century. One day he was in his office, pacing the floor, frustrated. Somebody walked in and saw him and asked, "What's the matter, pastor?" He said, "I'm in a hurry and God isn't!"

God says, "Be patient because I'm working things out." While I am waiting, God is working. You need to remember that! Your hands may be tied and the situation may be uncontrollable but it is not uncontrollable in God's viewpoint.

In advance, thank God because He's working things out. He gives the illustration of the farmer. When the farmer plants the seed, he's waiting for that seed. While he's waiting, God is working behind the scenes to cause that plant to sprout. He's creating the conditions so at the right time, in the right way there will be a harvest. The farmer waits, God works.

Philippians 2:13 *"God is at work within you."* Maybe you can't see it, but He is. Romans 8:28 *"And we know that in all things, God is working."* In every circumstance in your life, God is working. Be patient. I don't know what kind of problem you have this week, but regardless of the problem you're going through (financial, relational, health) God is working in that problem. Be patient and trust Him.

#### WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO BE DOING WHILE I'M WAITING ON GOD?

James says consider these three illustrations: look at them and realize what they did and do what they did while you're waiting on God.

First the farmer. What did the farmer do?

##### 1. Wait expectantly

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I must expect a harvest. I must believe that it is inevitable, that I've done the right thing. What does a farmer do while he's waiting on God? Just sit and watch reruns on television all day? While he's waiting on the harvest, the farmer is preparing for the answer. He's getting ready. Waiting is a time for preparation which shows your expectation. We demonstrate our expectation by our preparation. We get ready for the answer in advance.

Psalm 130:5 (LB) "... *I wait expectantly, trusting God to help, for He has promised.*" Circle "expectantly". What are you waiting for from God? Maybe to heal a long-term illness, or to transform your marriage, or to reverse your financial problems or for God to reach your teenagers for Christ? Do you really expect Him to do that? The Bible says, "*According to your faith it will be done unto you.*" If you do expect God to do it eventually, prove it! How can you prove that you're expecting God to do something? Simple. What are you doing to get ready for it? Are you preparing for the answer? If the answer came today, would you be ready? How can I prepare? The way you get ready for something is by preparing in advance. While you're waiting you're preparing. Preparing demonstrates expectation.

A lot of times when I'm waiting on God, He's really waiting on me. He was ready to give the answer a long time ago but I wasn't ready to receive it. He's saying, "Grow up! Get some spiritual depth in your life. I want to bless your life but you can't handle the blessing I want to pour on you. It's so great and you're such a puny pip-squeak spiritually, you're not ready to handle this blessing. When you've got some spiritual muscle in your life, I'll bless you beyond what you can imagine." Waiting is a time to get ready. Prepare.

Jesus waited thirty years before he began his ministry. Thirty years of preparation and he accomplished more in three years than we would in a lifetime.

Isaiah 49:23 "*The Lord says ... No one who waits for my help will be disappointed.*"

## 2. Wait quietly

James points out the fact that we have a tendency to run off at the mouth when we're irritated, when we're tense, when we're under pressure, when things aren't going our way and things aren't under our control. James warns us of two things to avoid.

1. "*Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged.*" Why does he talk about grumbling right in the middle of patience? It's hard to be quiet when you're frustrated. When you're frustrated, you want everybody to know about it. You want to grumble, mumble, moan, complain. We don't mind waiting if we can complain about it. I'll wait if I can gripe while I'm doing it. James says, "Don't grumble". The New English Bible says, "*Don't blame your troubles on one another.*"

When you get up in the morning, do you rise and whine? Hit the ground griping? Everything is bad! If you come home at night dog-tired, it's because you growled all day!

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I heard about a lady who griped at her husband all the time. Constantly. The guy died and she put on his tombstone, "Rest in Peace". Then they went and read the will. He willed \$5 to his wife and everything else to his secretary. She went back and changed the tombstone to "... till we meet again."

v. 12 *"Above all, my brothers, don't swear."* Does waiting ever tempt you to swear? Sometimes when I get frustrated I feel like cussing. I have a lot of patience with people but I don't have a lot of patience with mechanical things.

What happens when you get uptight? When you're frustrated and things aren't going your way and things are beyond your control? How do you normally respond? Typically, we take it out on those closest to us. We unload on our husbands, our wives, our children, and it's not even their fault. But we're frustrated and impatient. We displace our anger and focus it on those we love the most. James says don't do that.

Lamentations 3:26 *"It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."* Circle "quietly". Hab. 2:3 *"These things won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, do not despair, for these things will surely come to pass. Just be patient! They will not be overdue a single day!"* Do you have a dream, a goal in life, a vision that God's given you? God says it will be right on target, at the right time, in the right way.

You wait expectantly and you wait quietly.

### 3. Wait confidently

Job never lost his confidence in all that he did. When the outlook is bad, you look up. Micah 7:7 *"I will wait confidently for God."* How do you do that? You have hope. Hope is Holding On Praying Expectantly -- HOPE.

When you've got a problem that's unexplainable, a person who is unchangeable, a circumstance that is uncontrollable then wait confidently. God is working.

How do you wait confidently? Sit still. Don't get nervous, anxious. You don't take matters into your own hands and work things out. Ps. 37:7 *"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him to act."*

Where do you need to have patience this morning? Do you have an uncontrollable circumstance in your life right now? Maybe you're in a job situation and your boss has told you to do something that's beyond your control and you don't want to do it. Maybe you've had a financial reversal that was beyond your control. Maybe you have a long term illness. Maybe you've got an unchangeable person in your life. It's frustrating when you tell your kids something to do over and over and they don't do it. It's frustrating when you want to make the marriage work and you're willing to change but your partner is not willing to change. It's frustrating when you have a parent who's growing old; their idiosyncracies are coming out and they're dependent upon you. There's that cantankerous relative that, every time they are

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around, they cause problems. They're never going to change. You need patience with an unchangeable person. You need patience with unexplainable problems.

What do you do when you have these kinds of things? Remember what God has said in James. God is in control. It may be out of my control, but it's not out of God's control. Nothing is beyond His power and His purpose for my life is greater than the problem I'm experiencing right now. God will reward your patience, if not in this life, He will in eternity. God is working behind the scenes for a purpose.

Prayer:

Would you say, "Jesus Christ, I need patience. Help me to wait expectantly, to prepare for the answer while I'm waiting, get ready for it, act as if it's going to happen. Help me to wait quietly and not to grumble and complain about my frustrations. Help me not to take it out on those around me, those I love and displace my anger. Help me to wait confidently, to be still and trust that You're working behind the scenes. Help me not to get nervous and anxious and worried. Like the farmer, help me to plant good seeds and expect a harvest. Help me with that unchangeable person. Help me with that uncontrollable circumstance. Help me to be patient with that unexplainable problem."

Three times in this passage it says, "The Lord is coming back". Someday He's going to come back, just as certainly as He came at Christmas 2000 years ago. Why hasn't He come already you say? 2 Peter 3:9 says God is waiting to come back in order to give you a chance to receive Him first. He wants you to know Him. He wants you to commit yourself to Him. If He came back today, would you be ready to meet him? If not, today's your day. Open your heart up to Christ and say, "I don't understand it all, Lord, but I realize I need You in my life. Please forgive me for being impatient and all the other things I know are wrong in my life." The Bible says, whenever we confess to Him, He forgives us. "Come into my life. Give me patience." If He's the manager of your life, the Fruit of the Spirit is patience. God puts it in your life when He's in your life, when He's in charge. "Lord, I want You to be in charge of my life. I ask You to save me."

Father, I thank You for Your word. Help us to be patient people. I believe that today many are opening their hearts to you, some for the very first time, some saying even right now, "Come into my life, Lord Jesus Christ." I believe that You are coming into their lives. You're putting Your spirit within them. You're giving them a new start, a new approach to life. Others are saying, "Lord, I want to recommit myself to You. I've taken matters into my own hands. I've tried to solve the problem rather than by trusting You. I've tried to work it out on my own strength rather than waiting quietly and expectantly, confidently. Today, again, I turn the controls of my life over to You. I believe that You are in control. I believe that You're working behind the scenes and You'll reward my patience if not here then in eternity." In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.