

James: Putting Our Faith Into Action

Lesson 8 - Practicing Patience

Warm up –

1. What kind of attitude do you identify with most?
 - _ Frankenstein's Monster
 - _ Wicked Witch of the West
 - _ Wile E. Coyote
 - _ Pollyanna
 - _ other : _____

2. What did you wait a long time to get?
Was it worth the wait?
 - _ a room of your own
 - _ driver's license
 - _ an "A" in math
 - _ a trip to Disney World
 - _ other: _____

3. Which of these Bible characters had patience?
Did it pay off?
 - _ Joshua
 - _ Job
 - _ Thomas

Lesson –

What's your basic attitude in life? You can probably sign up for the Myers-Briggs or some other personality test in the guidance office at school to help you learn more about yourself. But even if you've never taken any of these tests, you should be able to figure it out. For instance, are you the laid-back type who takes life as it comes, always content to go along with your friends' plans? Or are you the volcanic type who goes tramping through life at breakneck speed, getting restless easily, and always looking ahead to what's coming next?

Whatever your personality, you'll inevitably bump up against situations that don't work out quite the way you want them to. Maybe you are waiting for something good to happen, and it doesn't. Or maybe something bad happened to you, and it's taking far longer than you think it should to get over it.

At times like that, says James, practice patience. Be like the farmers who patiently wait for the sun and rain to do their work before the harvest comes. Easy for them, you may be grumbling. I'm just not the patient type. But keep this in mind: one of the many great benefits of living in God's kingdom is that we get to let God worry about stuff that is out of our control. God's agenda may not always fit ours, but he does have one. Our job, then, is to learn the art of patience.

Does practicing mean doing nothing? No. Not in God's eyes. After all, God's kingdom is not a finished product on this earth. Christians are called to be salt and light in the world - that means standing up for what's right and serving others wherever we are. So take a deep breath, practice patience on what you can't control, and get to work on the rest.

Read James 5: 7-12

1. As you read this, find out why James calls those who practice patience "blessed."
2. When will everything ultimately be set right?
3. What are farmers doing while they are waiting for their crops?
4. How have you experienced God's "compassion and mercy" while practicing patience?
5. James reminds his readers of the prophets who put up with all kinds of hardship while all the time honoring God. What is the reward for people who persevere in patience?
6. Decide on an area in our life where you need to practice. Ask God to help you stand firm.

7. James tells us that we shouldn't complain about each other, or else we will be judged. What does this suggest about how we should treat our friends and family?

8. How do we avoid condemnation? How can our choice of language show that we trust God to care for our lives, down to the last detail?

9. One of your friends has been waiting patiently for years for his brother to be healed of cancer. He and his family and the whole community have been praying faithfully for healing. Now he's getting frustrated. He wonders if God really cares. What do you say to encourage your friend?