



A publication of **THE DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1 What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?  
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

2 Pastor Doug noted that "complaining, resentment and negativity are manifestations of impatience" (see **I.** in the **Sermon Summary**). Where do you currently find yourself on the following scale?



Volcanic



Serene

3 Where on that scale would your spouse and children place you? Your neighbors and co-workers?

4 Read James 5:7-9 and then review item **II.** in the **Sermon Summary**. Pastor Doug noted that **"Every day we face a battle for our souls. Our hearts are not neutral. They naturally go in the direction of self-pity and will take us to a dark place. Every time something bad happens we can either trust God or trust ourselves."**

How have you seen that to be true in your own life experience? Tell us about it.

5 Read Jeremiah 17. Two "life orientations" are contrasted in v. 5 & 7. What are they?

6 How does Jeremiah 17 correlate to Pastor Doug's statement that **"Every time something bad happens, we can either trust God or trust ourselves"**?

7 Now read Jeremiah 17:6 & 8 for the outcomes of each of those life-orientations. What do you learn?

8 Jeremiah 17 says that God **blesses** the person described in v. 7-8 and **curses** the person in v. 5-6. Look back at where you and those who know you placed you on the "volcanic/serene" scale. Are you encouraged or discouraged by that evaluation of you?

9 James 5:8 tells us to become patient by "strengthening our hearts". How do you think one does that?

10 What light do the following passages shed on "strengthening our hearts":

- Psalm 28:7-9 \_\_\_\_\_
- Psalm 73:26-28 \_\_\_\_\_
- Psalm 84:5-7 \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 This is a basic, “soft ball” starter question—probably little chance of a **curve** ball with this sermon. Keep the discussion on this one brief; the real meat comes later and you’ll want plenty of time for it.
- 2 Now you may very well get some push-back on the assertion that “complaining, resentment and negativity are manifestations of impatience”! We often justify it with: “If I don’t get on the kids, they’ll never get their homework done!” If you get such comments, go ahead and explore them a bit. Then, even if folks “have to agree to disagree”, have them mark where they are on this scale.
- 3 Make sure each group member marks all three locations. Why? Because we not only want to compare and contrast self-perception with that of others, it is important for folks to observe the fact that we typically project a much more self-controlled persona to neighbors and co-workers (especially to bosses!) than we do to family. Suggest that they mark the these three responses “1”, “2” and “3” so that you can meaningfully discuss them.
- 4 You likely will need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!) Make sure your answer is honest and vulnerable. Then, even if others did volunteer their answers, if their stories stayed superficial or self-justifying, go ahead and add your example.
- 5
  - v. 5 is the person “who trusts in mankind, who makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from Yahweh”.
  - v. 7 is the person “who trusts in Yahweh, whose trust is Yahweh”.
- 6 v. 5 talks about the person’s “heart” turning away from Yahweh. In biblical thought, “heart” equals your true inner self, your whole inner self, in fact, it equals “you”. Proverbs 23:7 says that as a person thinks in his heart, so he is. So, we either trust God or ourselves; our hearts are oriented either toward God or toward us. There is no neutrality. (And, the unredeemed and unsanctified human heart is invariably oriented away from God, toward ourselves, no matter how things appear. See Romans 3:10-18).
- 7 The difference is nothing less than the difference between having a cursed life or a blessed life! Wow! Notice that both sorts of people experience “heat” (in v. 6 it is obvious—a “stony, uninhabited, saltland”, but in v. 8—the blessed life— “heat” ie, difficulties still come— “a year of drought”—yet they remain fruitful. So, it is not the presence or absence or degree of difficulties that determines fruitfulness and life, but it is the orientation of our hearts—towards God or towards self. This is determinative!
- 8 Be ready with your own answer—and be honest and authentic!
- 9 Explore this with folks. If answers are vague, make this point: We cannot directly produce the inner transformation of sanctification, we use the means God has provided. We are powerless to produce holiness in our hearts, yet only a foolish person waits passively for his heart to spring forth in righteousness. “Let go and let God.” is not biblical. We use the following “means of grace”:
  - [1] Reading and meditating on the Word of God
  - [2] Prayer
  - [3] Fellowship with other saints in the context of the local church
  - [4] Interpreting the experience of God’s providence according to Scripture
  - [5] Keeping the commandments of GodSanctifying grace flows through all these channels, and thus it is the responsibility of believers to put ourselves in the way of these blessings. Those five “means of grace” accomplish their work by enabling us to behold the glory of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18), and that’s what transforms us.
- 10 Have all group members open to the passage, one group member reads it aloud, then make observations. Repeat this process with all three passages.

# Sermon Summary (Key Text: James 5:7-12)

The Holy Spirit produces patience in us as we yield to him and draw upon his transforming power. We live in a culture that doesn't value patience. It's almost a culture of impatience. Impatient people are rude. They tend to make impulsive, reckless choices that bring pain to others.

**I. What is patience?** Farmers show patience because they plant a crop without expecting a harvest right away (v. 7). They know that reaping follows sowing and so farmers are great examples of patience. The Greek word used in v. 7-8 literally means long-suffering, and v. 9 gives us an example of the **opposite** of long-suffering. Complaining, resentment and negativity are manifestations of impatience! **A. Patience with difficult people.** When you complain, you demonstrate that you have given up on people. Instead, you want to show that you are continuing to love them. Most of us recognize when we are angry or holding a grudge, but complaining is more subtle, and consequently, more dangerous. Complaining flows out of a cynical spirit that sees others as being unworthy of love and compassion. Is there anyone who, when you see them coming, with a sigh you say to yourself, "Oh no, here they come"? That's not believing the best about them. All of us are still very much a work in progress, so that is why impatience is so wrong. We need to forgive and show grace. But in v. 11 we see another aspect of patience: **B. Patience with difficult circumstances.** Job's problems were not so much the result of being mistreated by difficult people, as much as they were the result of how he was being treated by life and by God. Job lost his wealth, his children, and his health. Job needed endurance. A different Greek word is used which literally means to "hyper-stand in place". Like when a commanding officer tells a soldier: "Stand right here and occupy this position. No matter how fierce the attack, you must not retreat, you must not give ground." We are to be patient with difficult people by responding to them with forgiveness and grace and patient with difficult circumstances by responding with courage and trust in the will of God.

But James doesn't treat impatience as something impractical; he depicts it as a terrible evil and sin (v. 9). He says that on Judgment Day we will be condemned for our impatient complaining. When difficulties and disappointments come you either can trust God and his timing, schedule, and wisdom, or you can trust yourself and what you think should happen. When bad stuff happens, you have to talk to yourself about God. Tell yourself: "God knows what is going on in my life. He is wise and good. And while I never would have chosen this for myself, God in his goodness and love has." God knows what he's doing and is worthy of our trust and obedience. We will find rest nowhere but in His holy will. When you think about it, impatience is really a huge lack of humility. We need to humble ourselves.

**II. Why is having patience so critical?** James tells us to "strengthen our hearts" (v. 8)—our inner grumbling may or may not show on our faces because cynicism, self-absorption, and self-pity are centered in our hearts! The conversation that we have in our hearts about God is pushing us either towards trust and peace and calm, or towards self-absorption, unhappiness, and self-centeredness. Every day we face a battle for our souls. Our hearts are not neutral. They naturally go in the direction of self-pity and will take us to a dark place. Every time something bad happens we can either trust God or trust ourselves.

**III. How can you develop more patience?** We find three hints in this text about how to develop patience: **A. We develop patience by looking at what God has done in the past.** Job learned perseverance and patience through suffering. You don't learn patience just by being stoic, by saying, "I'm not going to let this get to me." That's not learning patience. That's just hardening your heart. If you want to learn patience, look at Job, but also look at "the ultimate Job"—Jesus. Relatively speaking, Job was an innocent sufferer. Job was living a better-than-average moral life, but he was experiencing a worse-than-average circumstantial life. But Jesus was the ultimate Job—he lived a perfect life. He was totally innocent. So if anyone deserved a great life, Jesus did. But what he got was a terrible life: betrayed, tortured and killed! **B. We develop patience by remembering what our Redeemer has done for us.** In Jesus we see both patience and honesty. He didn't want to suffer, but he said: "Not my will, but yours be done, Father." Church, that's patience. That's endurance. Jesus willingly stood his ground. Job grumbled, but by the end of the book learned patience, and the Lord was full of compassion and mercy toward him (v. 11). Job found forgiveness because Jesus went to the cross, atoning for our impatience. Meditate on that profound Biblical truth. When troubles come and you are tempted to be impatient, think about how Jesus was perfectly patient as he withstood tremendous undeserved suffering. That's what forgiving difficult people looks like. **C. We develop patience by looking at what God is going to do in the future.** Sometimes when I'm reading a novel, and I'm not liking the way the story line is developing, I'll skip to the end of the book. When I know how things are going to work out I can better handle the ups and the downs of the novel! If you want to grow in patience, look back on what Jesus has done for you on the cross, and look forward to his return. Meditate on those biblical truths.

So—do you want to grow in patience? Then humble yourself before God, your Creator, remember what God has done for you as your Redeemer, and then look forward to Christ's return and thereby galvanize your hope! And consider memorizing William Cowper's wonderful hymn entitled: **"God Moves in Mysterious Ways."**

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**Monday**—Read Galatians 5:16-26.

- Name the two lists here. What is the source of the things in the first list? The second?
- In which list do you find patience? How do we experience what's in the second list (v. 24-25)?

**Tuesday**—Read Romans 5:1-5 and James 1:2-8.

- How is endurance (perseverance) developed in our lives?
- What is the God-honoring way to respond (see Romans 5:3 and James 2:2, 4)?
- How have you experienced this?

**Wednesday**—Read Job 1:1-2:10.

- What's going on behind the scenes? How much of that did Job know?
- What did Job do that displayed patience and endurance? Describe his attitude toward God.
- How do you think you would react?

**Thursday**—Read Philippians 2:3-11.

- How can doing what Paul says in v. 3-4 be a cure for our impatience?
- List in detail all that Jesus did in v. 5-11.
- How can this help us be patient with others?

**Friday**—Read Matthew 26:36—27:56 and Hebrews 12:1-3.

- Think carefully about what the Son of God endured.
- What was He looking forward to that helped Him endure (12:2)?
- What are Christians looking forward to that helps us endure what we suffer?

**Saturday**—In preparation for Sunday's worship, read Micah 6:6-8.

- What offerings are really pleasing to the Lord?



Gather the following items: a disposable cup full of soil and a seed of any sort (it doesn't need to be a viable seed—you're not going to wait for it to sprout!).

Tonight, after dinner, let your children bury the seeds in the dirt. Then, feign impatience: "Come on seed—sprout!" Really play it up—aim for an Oscar! Then, let your kids instruct you on the need for patience.

Next, read **James 5:7-8** to them:

**"Be patient until the Lord comes again. A farmer patiently waits for his valuable crop to grow from the earth and for it to receive the autumn and spring rains. You, too, must be patient. Don't give up hope, because the Lord is coming soon."**

Explore with your kids the various elements of James' teaching, namely:

- That farmers are happy when the harvest comes in—that's what they've been waiting for! We Christians will be fully happy when Christ returns for us.
- That farmers cannot make a crop grow any faster than God wills it to. We too must be patient; Jesus will return at exactly the right time.

***God Moves in Mysterious Ways***  
**William Cowper**

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, the clouds ye so much dread;  
Are big with mercy and shall break, in blessings on your head.