

Love is Patient

Ephesians 4:2-3

...Be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

How does patience feel? Most of us probably don't take much time to think about patience, but not thinking about it allows impatience to rear its ugly head in our lives:

- a young mother who is impatient and frustrated with a slowpoke toddler
- a husband impatient with his wife's indecision (or vice versa)
- a boss impatient with his/her employees and their productivity

The truth is, being the recipient of another's impatience never feels good, and certainly not loving. It leaves us feeling guilty, ashamed, flustered, and aggravated. However, when we're shown patience, we feel love... and grace. The experience of patience from another person makes us feel loved, cared for, and respected. How sad that we often choose the path of impatience, when so much love and grace are waiting to be experienced.

God is the ultimate master of patience. He can help us learn to turn frustrated moments of impatience into beautiful moments of love-filled patience. When confronted with the chance to be impatient, choose love instead; choose patience.

Love is Kind

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another...

One of my favorite movies is "Pay it Forward" with Haley Joel Osment. It's about a little boy who tries to change the world because of a challenge from a respected teacher. It's a beautiful film about random acts of kindness, which spread like dominos through his community, as each person "pays forward" a kindness.

Kindness has tremendous, life-changing possibilities. A kind word or gesture can dramatically alter lives in ways we can't possibly imagine. Wouldn't it be revolutionary to "pay it forward" at home, and see where it could go from there? Do something nice for your spouse and ask him/her to pay it forward. Show kindness to your children, your siblings, your friends, your co-workers, and total strangers. By simply trying to think of kind things you can do for others, your own heart will begin to be transformed. What better way to proclaim the gospel, than by showing kindness in every word and deed?

Love is Content

Philippians 4:12-13

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

What being content really comes down to is the ability to trust God and His love and provision. I often find myself doubting God and His “big plan” for my life. Does He really have my best interest at heart, and if he does, why am I suffering so much? Doubting God only brings misery into my life, and misery is a real joy-sucker.

God loves me, and I love Him. When I focus on being content with nothing else but God’s love, I am filled with unspeakable joy, no matter what my life circumstances may be. I wish that I could say I am always flying high on God-love, but life is a little more complicated than that. Trials can suck me down and have me wallowing in despair more often than I care to admit. Like most things on my journey with Christ, I feel like I am taking two steps forward and one step back. Regardless of how many times I struggle with being content, I know the answer is in God’s love. Putting my trust in Him always brings me back to a place of joy, and allows me to release my burdens and find rest. Trust God. Dwell in relationship with Him and in His love. Let the contentment of the Lord fill your soul.

Love is Gentle

Philippians 4:4-5

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

We inhabit a hostile, violent world. However, as Christians we are called upon to take a different approach. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” If we are to display a different pattern than the world, which is constantly embracing a path of hostility, then our path must be one of gentleness. In fact, I can think of no greater example of gentle behavior than that of Jesus. His every word, thought, and deed was filled with gentle love, kindness, and compassion for fellow human beings.

Gentle thoughts breed gentle words, and gentle words lead to gentle actions. The world wants us react in anger, in impatience, and in hostility to those around us. Defy the norms of this world and do something truly radical – embrace a gentle way of living. Being gentle does not mean being a push-over or a weakling, in fact, having a gentle spirit requires a great deal of strength and courage. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you on a path of gentle and loving thoughts, words, and deeds. Jesus was a gentle radical, and we can be too.

Love is Humble

Philippians 2:3

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

If we all worked harder to put others ahead of ourselves, many of the problems of this world would end. If we placed the needs of our spouse before our own, we could drive down the divorce rate. If we placed the needs of the poor before the needs of the wealthy, we could end poverty and hunger. If we could walk a mile in our neighbor's shoes, we could have world peace.

Putting someone else before you is an act of love. Jesus was God's ultimate act of love. He willingly chose to become human, come to earth, and die for us. My mind can't even fathom that sacrifice, or the humility of God, that he would be willing to endure such a thing. The almighty God did that for you and me! He put Himself last so that we might enter the kingdom, forgiven and reconciled. How amazing!

Take some time today to ponder the gift that God has offered to you. Contemplate what it means to consider others before yourself. Ask God to help you have a humble spirit, filled with His love for others.

God is Love

I John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

"God is love" is a remarkable statement. Love is the very nature of God; a divine love we cannot possibly fathom, and it is a truly unconditional love. I know I am often lacking in the love department. While it's easy to love my family and friends (at least most of the time), I find it very difficult to love people who are not my nearest and dearest. People can be really annoying! It's hard to love people who are difficult and rude, and almost impossible to love those who lie, cheat, steal, kill, and destroy. However, if we are the body of Christ, we need to ask for a vision of God's love for humanity. Eternity and souls are at stake, and loving one another is what is required; even when it is the most difficult thing we must do. Ask God to reveal his love for humanity to you, and ask to be used by Him to bring the gospel to others.

Journal

Use your journal to write down your perceptions of what love is. How do they compare with what the Bible tells us about love? Do you love people the way God intended, or has the world's view of love taken over? Prayerfully ask for God's love to be the ideal in your life, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in next steps to loving others.