

“THE POWER OF PATIENCE”
Building Great Relationships - Part 2 of 9
1 Corinthians 13:4
July 20, 2008

Genesis 2:18: *“It is not good for man to be alone.”* We were made to be in relationships, with God and with one another. Relationships are the source of our greatest pleasures and our greatest pains. They can make us feel miserable or magnificent. Psychologists tell us that most emotional problems are rooted in wrong relationships. Most suicides happen because of unhealthy relationships. Relationships determine our happiness. And they also determine our success. The *American Management Association* said that the number one skill that an executive should have is the ability to get along with people. And beyond happiness and success, relationships develop our character. Who we are a year from today will largely be determined by the things we allow to come into our mind, and the people who are in our life. 1 Corinthians 15: *“Bad company corrupts good character.”* Who we spend time with shapes us. And yet, relationships are fragmenting at an alarming rate. Very few people know how to relate to others. And there are very few good role models.

Now we know that Love is to be the basis of all our relationships. But if we don't understand Love, which we often don't, it doesn't help much. Fortunately the Apostle Paul gave a Love Primer in 1 Corinthians 13. It tells all about Love, and it begins with *“Love is Patient”*. Healthy, growing relationships need patience. Our Lord not only knows that, but He practices it. Think about how patient He has needed to be to deal with all of us. Our God is extremely patient, and since God is love, love is patient. In fact, patience is an act of love.

Why is Patience So Vital to Relationships? There are a couple of reasons.

1. Because Everybody Is Different.

1 Corinthians 12:6 *“God works through different people in different ways.”* No one here is a copy. We are all originals. Parents with more than one child know that. Even if we talk about twins and triplets, they're not the same. Even identical twins aren't identical. They may be very similar, but they are not the same. Each of us is unique. God made each of us with a unique shape so that we fit in a unique place. For what place has God prepared you? There are five factors that make you different from other people. This is how we know the place where we belong in mission and ministry.

- P Personality - We all have different personalities; different perceptions and values. There are shy people and outgoing people, people who like a set routine and those who like variety, introverts and extroverts...
- L Learn Your Spiritual Gift - Spiritual gifts are given to us to better serve God's purposes
- A Abilities - We all have different abilities, different natural talents and skills.
- C Connect Those to Your Passions - We're all motivated differently. We all have different interests. Things that motivate you don't motivate me and vice versa. We all have different passions burning within our hearts.
- E Experiences - We all have different backgrounds and different needs.

Through these five things, God has shaped us to fill a certain place in ministry. There is nobody else in the world like you. And because everyone is unique, because we see, feel, and understand things differently, we need to be patient with one another.

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2. We Need to Be Patient Because Our Differences Create Misunderstandings.

Because we're different, misunderstandings are created. Often we just can't figure each other out. We don't know where other people are coming from. 1 Corinthians 2:11 *“No one can really know what anyone else is thinking or what he is really like, except that person himself.”* Case in point: *“I don't understand why he acts the way he does. She doesn't understand me. He's on a different wave length. She doesn't make any sense. How can you think that way? My parents are from another time zone. My kid's from another planet. Why do I have to tell you 27 times before you do it? Why won't you talk to me? Why do you get so emotional?”* Can you relate to any of those? Nancy says, “I know you think you understand what you thought I said but I'm not sure that you're aware that what you heard is not what I meant.” It gets tough. Because we are different we have misunderstandings. So 1 Thessalonians 5:14 tells us *“Be patient with everyone.”* But how? By understanding why we are impatient. Impatience comes from misunderstandings which in turn come from four wrong assumptions:

1. That words mean the same thing to different people. They don't. There can be tremendous differences. In fact, the five hundred most used words in the English language have 14,000 different definitions. Some of those words have over 100 different meanings. When we say one thing and expect others to understand it in the same way we understand it, chances are that we are going to be dead wrong sometimes. That's why people tell us things that we said that we never remember saying. Words mean different things to different people.

2. There is only one right way to see things. That's not true, and deep down we know it.

3. That my way is the right way to see things. *“There wouldn't be any problem if you'd just get on my wavelength. My side of the argument is clear, your side is confusing. My side of the issue is logical, your side is irrational. My frustration is justified, your's is unwarranted. My side of the conversation makes perfect sense, but on your side, well, the lights are on but nobody's home. If you would get your act together, then we'd have no problems.”* Here's the problem, My research says that there are four different personality types, and each type thinks that everyone else needs to see life the way they do. But with four types, 75% of people disagree with us from the beginning. We see life differently.

4. That I can figure out your motives. No I can't. People are motivated differently. Sometimes I can't even figure out my own motives. I don't always know why I do what I do. And I am willing to bet that I am not alone in that. So if we can't always figure out ourselves, how can we assume that we can figure out someone else. We can't.

Though our assumptions often make us impatient, still we are instructed to *“Be patient with everyone”*. So how can we do it? **How can we be More Patient with People?**

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1. Remember How Patient God Is with Me.

We will never have to be more patient with anyone than God has been with us. 1 Timothy 1:16, *“I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst sinner, Christ might display his unlimited patience.”* God chose to redeem Paul and to use him even though he had made his reputation by persecuting and punishing the Church. And Jesus chose to redeem you and me in spite of how far from God we had journeyed. So the next time you say to your kids, “Grow up!” remember that God wants to say that to us. Or when we say, “Hurry up! What’s taking so long?” God wants to say that to us. Why aren’t we getting our act into gear? Why are we maturing so slowly? Why don’t we clean up our language and our attitudes. Remember how patient God has been with us.

Romans 15:7 *“Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you.”* The reason I am to accept others is because God has accepted me. The reason I am to be patient with others is because God is patient with me. The reason I am to try to get along with others is because God gets along with me. The starting point is to remember how patient God is with me.

2. Learn by listening.

Proverbs 19:11 *“A man’s wisdom gives him patience.”* And Proverbs 14:29 *“A patient man has great understanding.”* The key to patience is understanding. The more wisdom we have, the more understanding we have. The more we understand a person the more patient we’re going to be with them. That makes sense because when we don’t understand, we get very impatient. In fact, without understanding there can be no relationship because all relationships are based on understanding. For if we don’t understand one another, what kind of relationship can we have? That’s the foundation. No understanding, no relationship. In fact, misunderstandings can be relationship killers.

One of our deepest needs is to be understood. Paul Tournier, a Swiss psychiatrist said, “No one can fully develop in this world and find a full life without feeling understood by at least one person. No one comes to know himself through introspection or in the solitude of his personal diary. Rather, it is in dialogue with his meeting with other people.” In dealing with others, we figure out who we are and who God made us to be. That’s why we need relationships.

How can I better understand the people I’m impatient with? When I realize that the people who are hurting me are also hurting themselves, and I understand why they’re hurting, it helps me be more patient with them. Behind anger is pain. When someone gets angry at me, if I can look behind the anger to see the pain, then I can be more patient with them. And how can I see the pain behind the anger? By listening to them. Not just hearing them, but by listening to them. Proverbs 18:13 *“Listen before you answer. If you don’t you are being stupid and insulting.”* That’s pretty clear! Don’t evaluate what they do or what you hear until you’ve heard it all. God gave us two ears and one mouth. That means we need to listen twice as much as we talk.

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How would you rate yourself as a listener? How would those around you rate you? On a scale of 1 - 10 how do you rate as a listener. Most of us think we're pretty good listeners. We may be good hearers but that doesn't mean we're good listeners. Research has shown that only 7% of the meaning of what we say is communicated in words. 43% of that meaning comes from how we say it: vocal tone, pitch, volume, delivery. The remaining 50% of the meaning is contained in non verbal language, like facial expressions, hand gestures, body language. That's why when we're on the phone, it's only 50% effective. We can't see what the other person is communicating through their body. But that means that our eyes are as important to listening as our ears. Husbands, has your wife ever said to you, "Why don't you look at me when we talk. Come out from behind that newspaper." She's got a point. Your eyes are as important as your ears in communication because only 7% of communication is our words. We've got to learn to listen.

3. Make Allowances for Each Other.

Everybody's got bad days. We're all flaky from time to time. Time of day, week, month. Nancy knows that I'm grouchy most days that end with a "Y". But the point is that we all have bad days, it's just a fact of life. And because of that, we have to make allowances for one another. Sometimes you don't want to get near me with a 10 foot pole. And visa versa. The Bible says make allowances for each other. *"Be patient with each other, making allowances for each other's faults, because of your love."* Proverbs 12:16 in the Good News version says, *"Smart people will ignore an insult."* We all have bad days and we're all a little crazy.

4. Treat Others the Way You Want to Be Treated.

That's not new. That's the Golden Rule. *"Always treat others as you'd like them to treat you."* That single verse could save a lot of marriages. It is easy to understand but difficult to practice. We can learn to practice the golden rule by paying attention to Philippians 2:4-5 *"None of you should think only of his own affairs. Consider other's interests also. Let your attitude toward life be that of Jesus Christ."* Pay attention to the needs of other people. Look. Listen. Discover what they're interested in. Can you name the top four or five interests of every member of your family? Sometimes we get so preoccupied with ourselves, so caught up in our own little world that we end up ignoring or neglecting others. The Bible says, look out for other people's interests. If you care you'll be aware. Be considerate.

A study I read recently said most divorces occur because people lack the awareness or the skills to meet each other's needs. Sometimes they have the skills, they're just not aware. But it is not easy to think from the viewpoint of another. It takes effort, and it takes God's help. Normally we just see it from our perspective. Think about other people. That's the key to good relationships.

"Let your attitude toward life be that of Jesus Christ." This is the real secret of patience. It is not natural for us to be patient with everyone. It takes God's power in our life. This week, whether at home, work, playground or grocery store, you're going to meet some real jerks. God says be patient with everybody. How can we be patient with everybody? By having the

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attitude of Jesus Christ. Only with Jesus Christ in our life can we treat people the way He did. That's the secret of patience. And in your life, may it be so. Amen.