

# “Being Attractive Without Having to Look Good - Patience”

God’s Extreme Makeover - Part 5

Philippians 4:4-9 August 9, 2009

We continue to look at God’s Extreme Makeover, *“When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”* God changes us from the inside out, allowing us to be more attractive without having anything to do with our physical appearance. For real beauty is of the heart, not the body. One of the characteristics that our Lord wants to develop within us is patience. The Bible tells us that the Lord has a two fold definition of patience - AHave a Long Fuse”, and AHang in There”. Last week we looked at some of the things that trigger our impatience, as well as some of the obstacles that keep us impatient, things like overloading our life schedule, placing expectations on ourselves and on others, and a pride that leads to egotism. Those roadblocks to patience are not part of God’s plan. But the good news is, God does have a plan. And it begins with ...

## THE PLAN

### 1. Reflect Before You Respond.

Reflection gives us a new perspective, a better perspective that can help to fuel patience. But before the patience is the reflection. And this is not like a breathing technique. This is deeper than counting to 10. After all, I was a math major so I can count to 10 pretty fast. This needs to be more than that. We need to reflect. For as I look at my life, it is easy to see often my impatience has been a knee jerk reaction that has not allowed the time to really consider what is going on. What is happening here? That requires time to reflect.

Case in point: Normally I am pretty calm when I’m driving. And over the years I have seen and heard drivers do foolish things and make some very rude comments, verbally and physically. And I have come to the conclusion that one, all drivers are idiots at some time. All drivers. And two, I am a driver. Therefore three, I will be an idiot at some time. Nobody can disagree with that. That is truthful. We all make mistakes when we drive. So why is it that I would get mad and go nuts at that guy for what he did today when I might have done the same thing two days ago, or will two days from now. That’s perspective that come from reflection. Now when somebody honks at me or shows me the international symbol of displeasure, I can smile and wave with my whole hand, not just a part of it. And I can think, “What an angry soul who mistakenly believes that he is a perfect driver. That is a soul who needs to be pitied, or at least, needs to reflect.”

Now I understand that you might hear me saying that we are not allowed to get angry. No. In truth there are occasions when anger is an appropriate response. In and of itself, there is nothing wrong with anger. Questions arise over how we handle and deal with anger. And when our impatience leads us to where we are demeaning and threatening others, that a problem. When we reflect before reacting, that reflection comes back upon us. Many times we over react, we show our impatience because something was said or done that made us feel disrespected and unloved. But understand that feeling unloved or disrespected is an assumption that we put on ourselves. That message that we received may have

nothing to do with what they said or did. It could have just been an innocent coincidence rather than a hostile action. But we cannot come to that understanding unless we reflect before we respond. For when we reflect, we delay our natural, knee jerk reaction so we can respond with a more spiritual understanding.

Proverbs 14 *“Those who control their anger have great understanding.”* We don’t need lessons in etiquette. To allow patience to grow, we need understanding. So we need to reflect not only on the situation, but also my impatient reaction to it. Ask yourself, “Why is this making me impatient? Is my life overloaded? Is it pride? My expectations of myself or of them?” If we don’t reflect on both the event and our reaction, we will continue to react with impatience the next time that situation comes our way, and it will come our way.

Meanwhile you’re thinking, “So I’m to reflect before responding, but I still need to respond. How am I to respond?” That’s a good question and it leads to number 2 -

## 2. Respond with Prayer

Well wouldn’t you know that a pastor would come up with prayer. Some of you might see that, write it down and at the same time, write me off. Not so quick. Be careful what you pray for. If you simply pray for patience, God is going to give you situation where patience is the only choice. Like the fellow in the video who prayed for patience and ended up with 2 hyperactive kids. Not a wise choice. So how do I pray?

What’s the real problem? The real problem is that there is still a roadblock to patience standing in my way. And I have already proven that there is not enough patience in me to deal with this roadblock. So I need to invite God into the process right here and right now. Pray a simple prayer, something like, “Lord, I need a long fuse right now. Because I don’t want to hurt those around me, and I certainly don’t want to hurt myself. I need your help. Help me to connect with Your strength, Your insights, and Your patience. I know that through the Holy Spirit You are trying to help me grow in patience. So Lord, would You take this situation, and use it as an operating table, that Your heart might be planted in me...” We pray to invite God into the process.

Often in my prayers I ask, “Lord, be not far from me. Come close.” Why? Because I know that it is only by relying on His presence continually that I’m to be able to live as Jesus would have me live. It is only through His presence that I can find the patience I need to deal with all that is going on around me. Responding with Prayer is not an easy answer. It is an essential answer.

How would you grade your prayer life? Go ahead and grade your prayer life from A to F. Where do you stand? Now I want you to raise your hand, and notice that mine is raised already because I know the question that is coming, lift your hand if you gave yourself less than an A. The thing is, many of us say that we are just not very good at prayer, and so we forget about praying and we don’t even try. But what if I ask, “Would you like to have a better relationship with God? Would you like to live your life feeling like you were completely, continually, connected to God at all times? That the Spirit of God

might reside in you? Re-creating you in the image of God.? Offering instant access to Jesus?” Most of us would say, “Yes, most definitely. But how can I when my prayer life is a C at best...?”

I had my guitar out. There was a time when I was pretty good. Not so much any more, but there was a time. I got my first guitar when I was 14. I had a guitar and a Bob Dylan book. I was going to be a rock star. And I would go through that book, looking at the chords and getting my fingers in place. And over time, I got better, because I wanted to get better. I practiced. Now when I was getting ready for the picnic, I had to take the time and effort to practice so I could get my fingers in shape, so I could make music again. It took time, commitment, desire, and effort.

The same is true with prayer. God hears our prayers with joy even though we may not think it is all that good. For God sees the commitment, the desire, the time that we put into it. And through all that, He sees our passion. Our Lord never says, “Boy, do your prayers stink. They are short and uncreative. You just amble and babble. Why would I respond to that?” But we need to know that our words, our effort, our prayers are like music to God’s ears. The only way I could ever become a good guitar player was to keep playing and keep practicing. The only way prayer is going to become natural and influential is by practicing, and by entering the presence of God.

Daily I pray, “Thank You God for standing by me so far this day. With Your help I have not been impatient, judgmental or lost my temper. But I will be getting out of bed soon and I need Your help even more.” Start in bed. Throughout the day just bring God into that situation and say, “God change me. Help me. Help me have a long fuse, to persevere.” Philippians says, “*Don’t worry about anything. Instead pray about everything.*” So reflect before responding. And when you respond, respond with prayer. And in your prayers,

### 3. Pray for God’s Kingdom to Replace Yours.

In my kingdom I see irritations and interruptions. But when I look at the world through God’s kingdom, I see anticipations and appointments where God wants to use me. “But Chuck, what’s your kingdom? You’re not royalty.” Not true. I am royalty; I am king over the things that I can control. There are all sorts of commercials about identity theft. When someone steals our identity, they are messing with our kingdom because we control our identity, who we are. We all have a kingdom, because we all have some area, small as it may be, that we control.

Did you ever consider that the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that a Christian at some point in his or her life has come face to face with Jesus and said, “Not my kingdom but Yours. I sign ownership of my kingdom over to You, so that You, Jesus, might be the Lord of my life. I invite You into my life.” Then God promises that His Spirit and His presence will come into our life and begin to mold us and shape us and make His kingdom more attractive in us and through us. His kingdom principles come alive in us, and that’s so attractive.

What are the principles in God’s kingdom? They are found all over the gospels because Jesus taught a bunch about the kingdom of God. But when we carefully and seriously read those principles, we find all sorts of wild, crazy, radical things. He said, “When people tick you off the natural thing is to

respond with anger or hostility. My kingdom principles are different. For instance, when someone smacks your face, turn and offer them the other cheek. When somebody asks for your coat, give them your shirt as well. If someone forces you to walk a mile I want you to walk a second mile voluntarily. And when it comes to your enemies, I want you to love them, and to pray for those who persecute you.” When Jesus laid out the principles of His kingdom He wasn’t making laws and telling people that they could beat us up. That’s not what He was talking about. He was simply contrasting the kingdom of God with conventional human wisdom, with the principles we often find in our kingdoms.

What do we pray for? We pray for the kingdom of God to be alive in our life, to overcome and overwhelm conventional human wisdom. Because human wisdom says, If someone hurts you, attack them. Jesus says, *ANo, have patience.*” In fact, in Matthew 6, Jesus said we should *APray like this: ‘Our Father in heaven may Your name be honored. May Your kingdom come soon. May Your will be done here on earth just as it is in heaven.’*”

If I follow the principles in Chuck’s kingdom, when my impatience is triggered, I’m going to hurt somebody. I’m going to say some nasty things. People will be hurt and one of them might be me. In short, I’m just going to get myself in an awkward situation. But if I am wise I will say, “God, may Your kingdom come here on earth in me as it is in heaven. That I might make God my primary concern.” Look at the translation of Matthew 6 from the New Living Translation: *AHe’ll give you all you need from day to day if you live for Him and make the kingdom of God your primary concern.*”

When I make the kingdom of God my primary concern I not only experience peace, which we talked about before, but I express patience, and that makes one attractive; an attractiveness that an external makeover just can’t touch. Again according to the New Living Translation, Jesus said, *“You will become so attractive when you live like this that you’ll be like a light in the midst of darkness. That light can’t be hidden and people will be drawn to that light. By them being drawn to that light they will also be drawn to Me.”*

God wants to help us become patient people. And He can because he’s had a whole lot of practice with patience. We’ve experienced so much of God’s patience that is beyond our understanding. And it is for us. 2 Peter 3 *“The Lord is patient for your sake.”* Some of you may never have transferred ownership of your kingdom to God. He is waiting patiently for all of us to do that. He wants us to trade our kingdom for His. That’s what He does best. He’s the King of kings. And those who have already done that, God is patiently waiting for us to change and grow. He says, “I’ve invaded your life with My Spirit. I want you to become more patient. I don’t want you to struggle with impatience. I want My patience to be yours.” It’s the fruit of His Spirit.

Over last week and this, that’s a whole lot of sermon. But it comes down to this: We’ve got a choice. We always have a choice with God. We know that someone or something will trigger our impatience. When that happens, we can react with impatience and cause pain, hurting others and ourselves, or we can respond with patience and cause change; change in us, and positive change in all the world around

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us. God’s Spirit will change us, bringing forth those attractive fruits of the Spirit alive in us. That is the promise before us. How great that would be. And in your life, may it be so. Amen.