How To Develop Patience
MESSAGES FOR THE NEW YEAR

There are so many things in life that test our patience: freeways, supermarket lines, doctor’s offices, irritating people. It’s hard to be patient. We hate to wait—especially when we’ve been confronted with difficult people or circumstances over any length of time. Our tendency is to either seek retaliation or to despair.

The book of James provides some practical instruction on developing patience. Patience literally means “long before it gets heated,” and is the opposite of being “short-tempered.” As followers of Christ, we’re encouraged to “strengthen” or “prop up” our hearts by setting our attention on the larger picture, rather than merely reacting to our immediate circumstances.

WELCOME
A word or phrase that describes what had been happening with me since our last meeting is…

WORSHIP
Psalm 130 captures the heart of one who, hemmed in with troubles, waits expectantly for God to act. For what are you waiting from God? Possible songs: “Teach Me Lord to Wait” (764), “Unto Thee, O Lord” (794), “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (57).

WORD
Read James 5:7-12
1. Where do you need patience most at the moment? Perhaps it’s a situation beyond your control, an unexplainable problem, or someone in your life who refuses to change. These are three specific occasions when everyone needs an extra dose of patience! How do you typically respond to these situations—with anger or despair? Explain.
2. What reasons does James give for being patient (vss 7-11)? [Because God is in control—vss 7-9. God rewards patience—vs 11; Matt. 5:13-14. Because God is working things out—vs 11.] Share a specific way that you’ve experienced one of these truths in your own life.
3. James mentions several ways in which we are to wait on God—like the farmer, we are to wait expectantly (vs 7), quietly (vs 9), and confidently (vs 11). What enables the farmer to wait patiently for rain? How are these factors relevant to your situation?
4. Why is it so easy to grumble against each other when we find ourselves in difficult situations (vs 9)? Do you struggle with grumbling? What are some practical ways you could deal with this problem?
5. Do you sometimes struggle with making rash promises or commitments when you find yourself under pressure (vs 12)? Instead, how should you respond? What principles could you draw from this passage that would be useful to you?

WORKS
Something may be out of your control, but never God’s. There is nothing beyond God’s power. His purpose for your life is far greater than any problem you’re facing right now. Spend time in prayer specifically asking for God’s help in one of these areas—“God, please help me wait expectantly…. quietly…. confidently.”