

## Patience

- On a scale of 1-10, how good are you at waiting? What is your patience level?
- 1 “Give it to me now!” to 10 “Take your time, I can wait.”
- When you are a child, Christmas is an exercise in forced patience.
- We begin to see commercials for all the things we would love to have. We can hardly wait until Christmas morning when we get to open those gifts.
- Our parents put up the Christmas tree and we decorate it.
- We start to hear our teachers tell stories about Santa.
- At church we spend the entire month hearing about that first Christmas and Jesus.
- We are practicing the Christmas program at school.
- Then, to make matters worse, our parents wrap some presents and put them under the tree but tell us, those aren’t for you, they’re for Grandma . . .
- They might even do some type of advent calendar that reminds us every day that Christmas is not quite here yet.
- Then we wake up on Christmas morning. It’s 4:30am and we know we can’t get up yet. Mom and dad said we can’t get up before 6:30 but we are too excited to go back to sleep.
- So we wait, and the second the clock strikes 6:30 we are up. Mom and dad, get up, get up.
- Then they slowly get up, get some coffee, maybe breakfast until . . .
- Finally, finally it is time to open some presents.
- It’s all fun!
  
- But most of the time patience does not look like this.
- I was turning left into a parking lot for a meeting – the lady behind me who was furious because she wanted to go straight. It cost her about 10 seconds and she was so angry. Had to go around me into traffic to save those 10 seconds.
- There are many things that seem to come naturally for us, but patience is not one of them.
- Our culture promotes impatience. Get it faster. Buy now and pay later. Instant food. Same day delivery. Overnight weight loss.
- What happens when we are waiting for something that really matters? When in the time of waiting, we deal with uncertainty, problems and pain?
- When we are waiting to get pregnant.
- Waiting for marriage.
- Waiting for a new job. For the job to get better.
- When we are being treated unfairly and are waiting for it to get solved or get better.
- Waiting for our kids to begin speaking to us again.
- Waiting for your something to change.
- Waiting to change yourself.
- When this happens, how many of us act like the lady in the car? We get angry. Furious. They yell and scream. We abandon our normal routines to make something happen.
- Yet you’ve met people whose lives were a mess. They were waiting for that diagnosis. For a cure. For something to come along. And you watched them and were amazed at their attitude, their approach to life and even at their relationship with God.
- How does that happen? How do we become people who **WAIT WELL?**

- It helps us to remember today that this is a letter that James wrote to the church, composed primarily of Jewish Christ-followers.
- We have chapters and verses and we break it down that way, but James' thoughts are connected. The part we are looking at today begins:

*Be patient, then, brothers and sisters . . .*

- The command is to "be patient" but it is not just a random command. They were to be patient "then." Because of what he had just said. He is instructing them how to respond.
- So let's back up. Last week we saw that James was addressing rich people. People with money who were selfishly using it for themselves and in doing so, were actually persecuting people and preventing justice from occurring.
- They had been wronged. Life was not turning out the way they wanted.
- Circumstances were difficult and justice seemed hard to come by. Many things were not fair and they had numerous unmet expectations.
- What were they to do?
- What do we do when things aren't going like we expect? When the sickness or illness has not gone? When our kids are still not speaking to us? When we are still in financial trouble? When what we think SHOULD BE does not match what IS?
- Be patient. **WAIT WELL.**
- James counsels patience. But so that they understood what this looks like, he goes on to use three examples that connect to patience. They show different aspects of waiting and taken together, they give us a great picture of what it looks like to **WAIT WELL.**
- All three illustrations would have been quite familiar to them to help them understand how to **WAIT WELL.**

## **I. Waiting well means taking action without taking control.**

*7 See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*

- The first example is a farmer.
- We may not be farmers, but most of us can picture this to some degree.
- There were two sets of rains (Mid Oct to mid Nov, and Mar-Apr) with two sets of harvest and planting seasons.
- During the planting time, the farmer would be busy getting the ground ready, then putting the seed in the soil.
- Then what? He has to be patient because he is reliant on rain that he can't control.
- There is nothing the farmer can do to MAKE their crop grow.
- A drought could destroy the crop before it came up or even when it was partially grown. Floods could wash it away. Bad seeds might not germinate the way they wanted.
- Here's the thing though, the farmers did not do nothing in between the two harvest times.
- They would still tend the ground. They would weed. They might fertilize. They would mend equipment. They still worked hard.
- Do you catch the picture. The farmer is waiting for the expected crop. The seeds are a promise of what is to come. But he does not try to control it. He doesn't dig up the seeds to check on their progress. He doesn't harvest them before they are ripe. But he does everything in his power to cooperate with the weather and is prepared to do whatever he needs to be ready for the harvest when it comes.
- James says they are to stand firm. Waiting well is not some lame, passive, just "try to endure until things get better" kind of patience.

- Yet it's often how we wait. We sit. We are frustrated, but instead of cooperating with God during the waiting, we try to gain control, force things to happen, overrun God's plan and we are utterly unprepared for the harvest God is trying to produce in us.
- Waiting well is seeking God. It is making wise decisions and not rushing ahead. It is practicing anything that might strengthen our relationship with God. It means not ignoring him. We are not to be fatalistic or passive.
- Remember that God's purposes are worked out over long periods of time. No farmer plants seeds and goes out a week later expecting a mature crop.
- Waiting well means taking action, being engaged, but to do so without trying to wrestle the control of our situation away from God and relying on myself alone.
- But hear me . . .

## II. Waiting well requires submission but not resigned silence.

- James uses two other examples of patience.
- The first are the prophets.

*10 Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

- This generally does not have the impact on us the way that it would for James' readers.
- In the history of Israel, prophets played a major role, but it was rarely an easy one.
- The role of a prophet was typically to speak messages that God gave them. Many of those messages were deeply unpopular because they called the people to follow God when they did not want to. As a result, they were criticized, ostracized, hunted, chased, persecuted and even killed for that message.
- To make matters worse, they often did not see what they prophesied. They waited and waited and God would fulfill their words even after their deaths.
- Yet even while they waited, they spoke. They did the right things. They were often fiery.
- Even as the prophets suffered, they still sought the glory of God in what they said and did.
- When James uses the word example, it means "to show" and represents a need to imitate.
- The second example James uses is Job.

*11 You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about.*

- They were totally familiar with Job's story. Job, through no fault of his own, lost everything. He was sick. He was in agony. He was waiting to see what God would do and it seemed like God was not coming through.
- His response? He got angry. He complained to God. But in the end, he submitted to God's will. He did not abandon God in the midst of his waiting.
- And while God restored his family and riches in the end, while he was waiting, he did not know this.
- In both cases, these examples show people who engaged emotionally and passionately in their waiting. They took their pain and unmet expectations to God. They got angry. They yelled. They got frustrated.
- My friends, waiting well does not mean being a simpering, wimpy person. It does mean say "Well, whatever God wants . . ." in some masochistic way.
- We are allowed to question. To push. To ask. To cry. To vent.
- BUT, and this is huge, we still submit our desires to God. We are not to turn our backs on God. Job's wife told him to curse God and die. Job's friends said he was totally wrong and should change his life to gain control of the situation. The prophets had people constantly asking them to compromise and ignore what they knew to be true.
- Waiting well means being honest with God and others, but trusting God.

### III. Waiting well is having confidence in God's character.

- Why? Because God cares and is involved.
- James make a very interesting statement at the end of v11.  
*11 As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*
- The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.
- His life was a mess and in the end, God restored him.
- The key to Job's perseverance was not that God would keep him whole. It was not that God was going to make everything turn out exactly the way he thought God should make it work out.
- What allowed Job to wait well was his view of who God is.
- Our ability to **WAIT WELL**, is rooted in the character of God.
- He is full of compassion – he sees our suffering. He is not indifferent. God never looks on our unmet expectations and suffering with a yawn. He does not ignore. He feels what you feel. He loves you deeply. He is right there with you in your anger, tears or worries.
- He is full of mercy – mercy is not giving us the negative we deserve. Mercy says I will do for you what I know is best and I will work this out in you with compassion.
- God is always with us in the midst of our waiting. He works for his glory and for our best. We can believe in that no matter what, even in the midst of our waiting.
- This ties us to the last thing.
- One of the reasons waiting at Christmas is so fun as children is because of our trust in the character of our parents. We know that what will be under the tree will be good. They did not wrap a rock and put it under the tree.
- What makes patience so difficult is two things. One, we want out of whatever pain we are in. Sooner is better. Two, we have a specific picture of what the solution is. It is obvious to us.
- So when nothing seems to be happening, or certainly not according to our expectations, it is easy to descend into bad places.

### IV. Waiting well is having confidence in God's plan.

- James tells his friends that the reason they can be patient is because of what they know is coming.  
*7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, **until the Lord's coming**.*  
*8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because **the Lord's coming is near**.*  
*9 Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. **The Judge is standing at the door!***
- There is one who has a larger perspective and who understands and sees everything and he is going to make it right.
- You might not be seeing justice from the rich people now, but God is not ignorant. You want justice now. You want what is fair. You desire what is right. It's not happening.
- But God's plan ALWAYS works out the way he wants and nothing will be left unaddressed.
- What's interesting is that James tied the Lord's return with our attitude and actions. While life is not like you want, do not take it out on others. Don't let it turn you against each other. Don't let your frustration wreck your attitude towards others.
- The biggest indictment against Israel, way back when they were traveling to the Promised Land, and everything they were waiting for was not happening, was to grumble. God was not delivering on his promises and they turned on leadership. On each other.
- There is an odd statement that seems out of place at the end of this.

*12 Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear – not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.*

- What does this have to do with waiting well?
  - This statement is a summation of not just this section, but many feel a summation of everything we have looked at the last several weeks.
  - Perhaps they were tempted to use oaths to fend off creditors or obtain credit for needs even knowing they could not pay them off.
  - James wants them to be people of integrity in the midst of all their difficulties and waiting.
  - Simply do what is in front of you that you have chosen or committed to do. Live with an integrity that should characterize a Christ-follower. If you walk away from God or try to take control from God, it leads to condemnation.
  
  - God is working out his story and your story within that. It is an amazing story. A story where he gets glory and we are changed.
  - When there are certain pieces of your life that are shattered. When it looks like life is not turning out like you expected. When you are unsure of the future. When it is taking forever for God to come through.
  - Then take action. Respond. Sweep up the pieces. But don't try to take control from God.
  - You can talk about it, get frustrated, get others to pray, express your disappointment, but submit to God.
  - Because you can have confidence in God's character.
  - And you can have confidence in God's plan.
  
  - So what if it seems like nothing will ever change? Things will not get better?
  - Many times God brings about blessing that we see in this lifetime. In fact, I would contend that even if this is not true in our circumstances, it is true in us if we cooperate with him.
  - He is always at work and it is always good.
- 7 *See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop*
- Wait on God's timing because the crop is worth waiting for. The phrase “valuable crop” means “costly and esteemed.”
  - The fruit that God is producing is amazing.
  - Keep trusting when God's timing seems questionable.
  - Keep hoping when the delay seems interminable.
  - Keep working for righteousness when the results seem meager.
  - Don't give up on God. Don't give up on his people. Don't check out. **WAIT WELL.**

- Ruth Bell Graham, wife of evangelist Billy Graham, once was driving and saw a sign that made her smile.
- It was a sign that so caught her attention that she decided that it is what she wanted on her gravestone.
- Her wish was honored and when she died 4 days after her 87th birthday, they put this saying on her headstone. It simply said this:
- “End of Construction – Thank you for your patience.”
- Jesus loves you desperately. He is returning some day.
- All injustices will face justice. All wrongs will be made right. And in the meantime, he is producing wonderful, amazing fruit in your life during the waiting. If you let him. If we **WAIT WELL.**