

Join us in being on mission with God!

OUR VISION

To continually mature and grow as a united body of Jesus-imitators who live out God's greatest commandment to "Love" by exalting God and serving one another, and His greatest commission to "Go" by reaching into and shaping our local, regional, and global communities.

"Picture of Patience"

James 3:7-12

Getting Started

After an introductory time, discuss the following questions in your group or class.

We live in an age where impatience is rewarded. Selfish people discover that if they crowd to the front of the line, pass on the curb, or annoy a store supervisor enough, they will usually get what they want. Even ordinary folk become upset when they have to wait for computers to start, doctors to make their appointments, or medicines to take effect.

Our culture makes us increasingly impatient with our government, our children, and our mates. We tend to demand that things happen in the *now* rather than a few moments from now. More Americans are abandoning books for short articles because books take too long to read. Critics pan movies for being too long. Aggressive parents rush children through high school so they can start taking college classes in their junior or senior year.

- Q: Identify some of the ways in which you see impatience reflected in the expectations of people around you.

Thinking about Patience

Patience can be easy when life is comfortable. When the pressure is on and difficulty comes, any tendency to be impatient will tend to be stronger.

1. James summons us to an attitude of patience in verse 7. What do you think might have been going on in the lives of his readers that might have tempted them to approach the Lord's return with a spirit of impatience?

2. One of the Old Testament kings paid a high price for his impatience. Look at 1 Samuel 13:7-14 and describe the pressures that make King Saul impatient in waiting for Samuel.

3. If you had been a spiritual advisor to Saul, what would you have advised him to do instead?



James 5:7-12

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! ¹⁰ Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider 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. ¹² Above all, my brothers, do not swear— not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

4. James puts an end point on our patience in verse 7. When will we no longer have to be patient?

James offers several illustrations to describe godly patience to us. Each is designed to help us see that waiting is part of God's plan for his people.

5. In verse 7 James sees the farmer as a model of patience. Most of us know farmers who are personally impatient. They may be the first ones in the field for both planting and harvest. Impatient farmers rush field work after heavy rains and waste a lot of time and energy getting their machinery unstuck from places where it should not have been. But *in general*, what is there about the realities of farming that demand patience from the farmer?

James seems to be emphasizing the principle that growth takes time. It does not happen quickly in a moment. Waiting for rain or for drying conditions can be taxing because these realities are largely beyond our control.

6. In what way is the second coming of Christ like a farmer waiting for rains on his crops?

7. In verse 8 James describes an additional attitude we are to have as we exercise patience. What do you think he means by "standing firm"? The literal call is to "strengthen your hearts." What would be some marks of a believer who was acting that way?

8. When patience is absent, ugly things can happen. What negative behavior does James warn against in verse 9?

9. James has already written about the challenge we have with our words. Identify some of the kinds of things we tend to grumble about as followers of Christ when we become impatient with God's timetable.

10. Why do you believe James reminds us that, "the Judge is standing at the door"? How does the attention of God impact the way we act between Christ's first and second coming?

Picture of Patience

11. Verse 10 changes the picture slightly. James speaks of patience under a certain kind of conditions. What seems to be going on while the people are called to patience?

12. James does not name any prophets or give details about how they displayed patience while suffering. Which prophets can you identify who suffered for their proclamations?

13. We don't know who James had in mind, but Jeremiah is a good example. Look at Jeremiah 1:1-3 and try to determine how long he spoke his message.

14. Jeremiah 1:17-19 hints at the resistance Jeremiah would face to his message. How does it describe the way many people will respond to him?

15. What happens to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 38:1-6?

16. James does identify one Old Testament figure to illustrate the importance of being patient when suffering. He points to Job. In what ways did Job reflect patience after the Lord afflicted him?

17. What does James want us to understand about the character of God in the illustration of the interaction between Job in his suffering and the Lord?

18. How did God demonstrate compassion and mercy to Job?



Reaching Up and
Reaching Out

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19. James seems to change the subject completely in verse 12 where he seems to return to his conversation about our speech. What does the taking of oaths have to do with impatience?

20. What are some of the greatest challenges you face for displaying patience in adversity? Why do you believe these circumstances are more difficult for you than others? How would greater patience here bring more glory to God?

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