

**LIFEGROUP LESSON
IN THE WAITING
WHAT IS PATIENCE?
20201206**

LEADER NOTES

OVERVIEW:

Welcome to our LifeGroup series, “In the Waiting”. This three week series is designed to help us reflect on the value of waiting as we wait for and anticipate celebrating the birth of Jesus this Christmas season. For this first week, we’re asking the question, “What is patience?” To explore this question, we’ll dig into several Scripture verses that describe patience. Then we’ll explore how patience gets lived out in the Old Testament character, Joseph. The goal of this study is that we would understand God’s perspective of patience and would desire to grow this key character trait in our lives.

ICEBREAKER: That Was a Long Wait – But Worth It!

In 2018 my family enjoyed a vacation at Disney World. One of our favourite rides there is *Soaring* – a simulated hand glider experience that takes you “around the world”, complete with gentle motion, scents and wind effects to make you think you really are there! We loved that ride, and so did hundreds of other people who waited in line with us. Looking back on that experience now, I think my family would all say, “That was a long wait – but it was worth it!” What have you waited for a long time that was well worth the wait? Share your story with the group.

STUDY:

- What was a key highlight for you from Pete’s teaching?

PATIENCE – THE BIBLE

What does the Bible say about patience? As a group, take some time to explore the following verses about patience. Based on these verses, see if you can come up with a one or two sentence description of biblical patience. What do these passages teach you about biblical patience?

1. READ: Galatians 5:22-23 – The Fruit of the Spirit
- Why do you think patience is listed as evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in us?

LEADER NOTE: Patience is a fruit of the Spirit because we need God's **power** to live it out. Patience in the Bible often carries with it the idea of *tolerance* or *long-suffering* in the way we respond to difficulties or disagreeable circumstances or relationships. We are not naturally wired this way. When our will is blocked or challenged, our sinful nature says, "Fight this! I want my way and I want it now!" God gives us His Spirit to empower us to respond in a different way, with tolerance and long-suffering.

2. READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:14 "Be patient with everyone." NLT

- How does being patient impact our relationships with others?

LEADER NOTE: Instead of being irritable, followers of Jesus should be patient in their relationships with others, even when our relationships seem to be blocking the best outcomes for our life.

3. READ: Hebrews 12:1 "Therefore since we also are surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us set aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." NKJV

- How is being patient more like running a race than sitting on the sidelines?

LEADER NOTE: Patience is not passivity, but an **active** response. Like running a race, patience requires focused effort and intentionality. Patience shows our **trust** in God's timing, control and good purpose in our lives

4. READ: Romans 2:4 "Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant and patient God is with you?" NLT

- What does God's example teach us about patience?

LEADER NOTE: The story of the Bible is the account of God's kindness, tolerance and **patience** with sinful people. Although God could have responded to our sin by destroying us all and starting over, He instead decided to roll out His salvation plan culminating in giving His Son, Jesus. God's patience is seen in the way He has shown us grace and mercy, instead of the wrath and judgement we deserve.

PATIENCE – THE DICTIONARY

5. READ: Dictionary definition of patience. www.dictionary.org

"Patience - the quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like. An ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay. Quiet, steady perseverance; even-tempered care; diligence."

- In what ways might this definition align with a biblical understanding of patience? How might it differ?

LEADER NOTE: There are many similarities with the dictionary definition of patience and the way it is described in the Bible. A key difference is willpower vs. God's power. The dictionary definition implies a reliance on self-discipline whereas the Bible's definition emphasizes a reliance on God's power and trust in His sovereignty.

JOSEPH – A LIFE OF PATIENCE

- As a group, read the following accounts of the life of the Old Testament character, Joseph. How does his life speak to us about what it means to be patient in our circumstances?

Joseph's Difficulties

6. READ Genesis 37:18-38 – Joseph Sold Into Slavery

LEADERS NOTE: At age 17, Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers. This passage gives us a graphic example of how Joseph was treated by his brothers and the suffering he endured at their hand. Did Joseph know how his life would turn out or what God was up to when he was sold into slavery? No! Joseph demonstrated patience by maintaining his faith and integrity even when he was sold into slavery.

7. READ Genesis 39:6-20 – Joseph Serving in Potiphar's House

LEADER NOTE: For about 11 years, Joseph served in the house of Potiphar, captain of the guard for Pharaoh. For some of this time, Joseph is harassed by Potiphar's wife, who continually tries to seduce Joseph to go to bed with her. Did Joseph know how his life would turn out or what God was up to when he was serving in Potiphar's house? No! Joseph showed patience by holding onto integrity in the face of sexual temptation.

8. READ: Genesis 40:14-15, 23 – Joseph in Prison

LEADER NOTE: After being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, Joseph is put in prison where he spent at least two years. Although Joseph asks Pharaoh's cupbearer to remember him to Pharaoh, he is forgotten and continues to languish in prison. Did Joseph know how his life would turn out or what God was up to when he was in prison? No! Joseph had to endure this a long time. Think back to what you were doing two years ago. Think about the events of your life that have transpired since. Two years is a long time! Joseph showed patience by continuing to serve others and hold onto his faith in God's sovereignty, even in prison.

Joseph's Response

Now let's skip ahead to a key statement from Joseph that summarizes his example of patience. How does this statement show Joseph's perspective on God's sovereign control in his life? What does this teach us about patience?

9. READ – Genesis 50:20 - the words Joseph said to his brothers after his father died and they were afraid he would exact revenge.

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people." NLT

- What does Joseph's response teach us about patience?

LEADER NOTE: Joseph's response shows us what he learned by patiently enduring his trials. Joseph learned that God is faithful and his good plan will work out in our lives. Joseph saw how his life served God's purpose. See Romans 8:28

Alternate responses: Here are a few examples of other ways Joseph could have responded in his situation, ways that would have eroded his patience. What do these alternative responses tell us about the importance of patience?

Rather than saying, "You intended to harm me ... but God" Joseph could have said - "You intended to harm me ... so now I'll harm you!" Joseph showed patience by **choosing** not to exact revenge on his brothers, but instead to treat them kindly.

Rather than "... but God ..." he could have said, "but things turned out in my favour." Joseph showed patience by **acknowledging God's plan** for his life, rather than simply looking at his circumstances.

Rather than - "He brought me to this position ..." Joseph could have said. "I worked hard and now look where I am. At the top of the heap!" Joseph showed patience by **acknowledging God's sovereign control** in his life rather than attributing his success to his own efforts.

10. What is a key takeaway for you from this study?

PRAYER:

Creekside supports the C family currently in Athens Greece with Avant Ministries.

- Please pray for their son Zach who is now attending University online in BC.

- Please pray for the rest of the family as they, along with all of Athens, endure a stringent lockdown that prohibits anyone from leaving their house without a government-issued bar code.
- Pray for them as they continue to seek the Lord's leading for their next place of service and ministry.
- Pray for the other children as they integrate into schooling and sports activities.
- Pray for them all as they also serve in local church contexts there as well.
- Several young African men who we have had spiritual conversations with over the last number of months. Pray as we continue our relationships, online, that the Holy Spirit would keep working in their hearts and minds. In particular, pray for the salvation of Bora and his girlfriend Artemeis.
- Pray for Pastor David Papanagis, his wife Sarah and their two children Nathaniel and Nora. He is the only full-time worship pastor in Greece. He needs to raise support for his role.
- Pray for Pastor Stefanos and his wife Manon as they lead Kypseli Church. Pray they would find a good rhythm to their lives; and that God would give them everything they need.