

# Character Helps

To help encourage each other to practice good character monthly so that we, and all those whose lives we touch, may experience its valuable benefits.

October 2001

Thoughts ⇨ Actions ⇨ Habits ⇨ Character ⇨ Destiny

## P a t i e n c e

### I W I L L . . .

Change the things I can change and accept the things I can't.

Patience is first realizing God loves you, has a good plan for your life, and has everything under control, and then it is being able to rest in these facts. Set your eyes upon things you can change. Give your energy to positive thoughts and actions. Focusing on things you can't change leads to worry. Worry is sin and displeases God. You can daily give all your concerns over to God. He can equip and empower you to change what you can in your life and in the world around you. He can also change things you can't, and He can give you the strength to endure the rest without complaining or losing your self-control. He is a safe, loving, and powerful Person on Whom to cast all your concerns.

Keep trying until I succeed.

"I think I can. I think I can." Success is reached one goal at a time. Every person can be successful. Success is accomplished by people who don't quit, but keep trying. Ecclesiastes defines success or "...the whole duty of man..." as a person who fears God and keeps His commandments. Similarly, God instructs us through Joshua to meditate on His Word and be careful to do all it says, and then we will be successful. (Joshua 1:8) Are you succeeding? You can. If not, ask God for help and keep trying. It matters in both this life and

the life to come.

Make the most of my spare time.

Patience will give new perspective to "idle" time. God provides us, as a gift, every minute of every day. We have the choice of wasting it or investing it in good things that will matter on that day in eternity when each of us gives account for what we did with what He entrusted to us. (2 Corinthians 5:20.) Keep track of a day in your life and see how you spend your time. Do you have idle time? Now list "good things" you never have time to do. Look and see if some of your idle time could be used to accomplish some of those good things you "never have time to do!" A wise person once said, "God gives us enough time in every day to accomplish His purposes."

Not interrupt.

A major patience-builder is waiting your turn to say what you want to say. Waiting until another finishes their thought - without losing one's calm manner and self-control - requires patience. Practicing patience benefits not only our own life and the Lord, but blesses the lives of others by our actions, our example and our witness to the power of God. Patience isn't only waiting to speak until another is finished, but it is also being attentive to what is being said rather than thinking what you will say

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"Accepting a difficult situation without giving a deadline to remove it."

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials for we know that they are good for us - they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more..."

Romans 5: 3- 4

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when given the chance. Be patient to listen and you will learn patience and more.

### Not complain if I don't get my way.

Complaining is a word expressing discontent. God's term for discontentment is murmuring. He says we are to do all things without murmuring, because murmuring de-energizes others and displays lack of trust in God. Being patient when you encounter adversity does not mean being passive in that you are not to look

for and pursue solutions. But it does mean no complaining or losing self-control. It's so easy to (try to )"justify" complaining when you encounter adversity, especially when you are wronged. But the victory for you and blessings for all come when you can endure and work through wrong done to you with patience. Trust God at all times - both when good and adversity comes your way. God wastes no situation or circumstance on those who love Him. For them, all things have a purpose in His plan.

## P a t i e n c e i n N a t u r e

The monarch butterfly is a wonderful example of patience. Often we admire the butterfly without realizing what it took to become a butterfly. Hatched from a tiny egg, a string-like caterpillar is born. Doubling in size everyday, the caterpillar must patiently adjust to its increasing size. Every couple of days it becomes trapped inside its skin and must shed it or perish, a feat requiring extensive patience since it has no hands to help. Shedding occurs many times until finally it is trapped inside of a tight clear sack. A transformation begins. The once stubby legs become long and slender. The mouth that chewed now becomes something similar to a coiled straw. Everything about the caterpillar is forced into a change. Change is difficult and requires patience,

but beautiful things can come from change. Beautiful orange wings begin to form. Then the time comes for the butterfly to emerge. This is not an easy task. If the butterfly chose not to face the "change" it would die. Instead, it slowly begins to free itself from the cocoon. Time allows the wings to dry and finally a beautiful butterfly takes to the sky. Sometimes we look at someone and say, "My, how I'd love to be able to do that or be like that." It all starts with a decision. "Am I willing to go through what it took to accomplish that in their life?" Often we are willing to do whatever it takes, except what it takes. Life requires the type of patience that moves us forward to the ultimate destination He desires for us.

## P a t i e n c e i n H i s t o r y

George Washington Carver (1861-1943) was a slave set free as a boy in Missouri during the Civil War. Parentless, he had little schooling in his formative years, but he hungered to learn. He had a passion for learning, and kept persisting with his questions until he found answers. Patiently supporting himself through odd jobs, he saw every waking moment as an opportunity to learn. Common, every day situations and conversation were for his instruction. Eventually he succeeded in earning a high school diploma and was accepted at college. However, on arriving on campus he was rejected for being black. Accepting this which he could not change, he changed what he could and gained admission to Iowa State Agricultural College where he eventually received bachelor's and master's degrees. Carver was then invited (1896) to direct the newly organized department of agriculture at Tuskegee Institute. His mission was to try to improve the lot of black

Americans through education and skills. For the remaining 47 years of his life Carver patiently carried out soil management, crop production and product research projects aimed at helping Southern agriculture. Through research he found southern soil good for growing peanuts and sweet potatoes, but farmers found no commercial market for them. So Carver went on through patient and ingenious laboratory research to develop some 300 derivative, commercial products from peanuts (e.g. cheese, flour, ink, dyes, soap, cosmetics) and 118 from sweet potatoes (e.g. molasses, rubber, postage stamp glue.) Through his patience, George Washington Carver helped liberate the South agriculturally. The peanut, for example, not even recognized as a crop in 1896, became in his lifetime one of the six leading crops throughout the United States. George Washington Carver made every moment count.

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# P a t i e n c e   i n D a i l y   L i f e

## At Home

Difficulties and adversities are a normal part of home life. There is no shortage of opportunities to practice and grow in patience: people we depend on let us down, things we depend on break down, we and others get sick, projects don't go as planned, and unexpected circumstances happen. But trials are a great friend. Trials help you grow. You can never become more patient without the trials that try you. And practicing and growing in patience brings rich blessings to family members - peace in difficulties (rather than rudeness, complaining or loss of self-control), thoughtful and constructive unemotional attention to solutions, encouragement through your witness to the power of God in your life, and vision for what they can experience and be.

## At Work

The workplace needs people of patience on the team. Everyone will benefit greatly by teammates who accept and address adversity without complaining or losing a calm temper. By individuals - Who change the things they can and accept with self-control the things they can't. Who keep trying until they succeed. Who make the most of their time and aren't known for idleness. Who listen attentively to others and don't interrupt. Who, through their practice of good character, bless their teammates tangibly, demonstrate the power of God in their midst, give them vision of what they can experience and become, and encourage them by demonstrating that they too can change and grow. Will you choose to practice patience and be a blessing at work?

## At Church

Love among Christians is vitally important because God gives the world the right to judge

whether Jesus Christ has come on the basis of seeing our observable love for each other. (John 17:21) And He stresses that patience is a key means of loving each other. Sometimes as Christians we are tempted to be impatient with others who appear less mature - less faithful, less committed, less loving, etc. Perhaps remembering who we were a year ago, or maybe even a month ago, will help remind us to be more patient and loving. And if one should stumble, we are to remember: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in misconduct or sin of any sort, you who are spiritual should set him right and restore and reinstate him, ..." (Galatians 6:1) Let us strive to practice patience - to bless our fellow Christians by building them up, by demonstrating the power and love of God to them, and by encouraging them in what they too can experience and be like. In so doing we will also bring hope to a desperate and watching world.

## In the Community

Beep!! Beep!! "Hey man, it's green, go! What are you waiting for?" The world desperately needs the blessings of patience and the other character qualities of Jesus Christ! Will you commit to trying to practice patience with each citizen in your community - to accept and address adversities without complaining and losing your temper, to listen carefully and politely without interrupting, and to change the things you can and accept the things you can't? Ask God to strengthen you. You are being watched! Will you practice patience and demonstrate what the power of God can do in an ordinary life? Will you practice patience and give them vision for what they can experience and become? Will you practice patience and give them hope by demonstrating they too can change and grow?

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# P a t i e n c e   i n t h e   H e a r t

Patience is enduring and working through adversities without complaining or losing one's temper and self-control. Since adversities are part of everyday life, we have plenty of opportunities to develop and demonstrate patience: people we depend on let us down, others fail to meet our expectations, things we depend on break down, we and others get sick, loved ones die, activities and projects don't work out as planned, unexpected circumstances happen, and God sometimes seems silent when we call on Him. Our degree of suffering with adversities varies from short-lived minor annoyances such as when someone cuts in line ahead of us, to great and extended suffering such as in caring for a loved one through an extended illness, or in waiting on the Lord for His response to a pressing prayer request. Being patient does not automatically mean being passive or powerless. It means, first, recognizing reality for what it is.

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*"Our growing also brings us closer to His perfect design for humanity..."*

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Then, for those things we can change, it means actively taking steps to change them. If there is an appropriate way of obtaining relief, then pursue it; we will have many other opportunities to develop and demonstrate patience. For those things we cannot change, it means actively with all our strength endeavoring to bear and endure with patience - without complaining or losing self-control. And then, it means placing this adversity in proper perspective with life's other activities and responsibilities, and proceeding forward wisely with life.

## The Importance of Patience

Patience is an important character quality. Most importantly, patience is a quality of God Himself (Romans 15:5, Galatians 5:22). For this we can be extremely grateful, for He patiently bears and endures the pain we cause Him through our indifference, disobedience and ungratefulness. He is even waiting patiently before bringing history (as we know it) to a close, so that more people may be saved (2 Peter 3:9).

In addition, God directs each of us Christians to be patient (2 Peter 1:6, Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:12, James 5:7). Our patience is important to God in and of itself, but it is also important as one of the qualities of the overall character of Jesus Christ, which He directs us to develop: "be holy as I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Our growing in Christlike character brings pleasure to the Father in seeing His children grow up and mature into His own likeness. In addition, our commitment to growing in patience (and other qualities) brings pleasure to Him in that it demonstrates our love for Him through our obedience (John 14:21)

Our growing also brings us closer to His perfect design for humanity and thereby enables us to be and experience more closely all He intends us to be and do. Being like Him is important to Him. For example, here on earth we are his ambassadors - His personal representatives - His exhibits of Himself - for carrying out His purposes (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are to be His models of patience on earth, demonstrating first-hand in human form His power and love. He stresses that we are to be patient as a means of loving and not afflicting others (1 Corinthians 13:4, Romans 12:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, James 5:7). Also, by our patience we will be peacemakers in calming quarrels (Proverbs 15:18), and be more effective through our improved persuasiveness (Proverbs 25:15). And by comforting others with the comfort we have received in patiently enduring our sufferings, we encourage enduring patience in others (2 Corinthians 1:6).

In addition to being important to God and others, developing and practicing patience is important to me. Because Jesus Christ is perfect humanity (Genesis 1:27, Colossians 1:15) and humanity at its best, growing in patience helps me become more like Jesus and therefore more maximally human, more capable of being and doing all He intended for me. Since God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life (Jeremiah 29:11), and since this adversity is allowed in His plan, my patiently enduring and persevering will result in the end in more mature character, hope and perhaps other bene-

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fits (James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-5). In addition, in my steadfast patience, I will experience the blessings of his compassion and mercy (James 5:10-11). Being more patient will also benefit me in immediate and practical ways. For example, by remaining calm and steady-minded, I will be able to respond to adversities more thoughtfully and effectively. And by trusting the Lord more fully with this adversity and others, I will experience more peace in my life.

### Growing In Patience

Growing in character qualities is, for the Christian, a matter that centers in the heart. Growth for the Christian is a joint process with the Holy Spirit. As Christians we are commanded to grow and to take responsibility for our part in the process. At the same time, we are

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***“And by trusting the Lord more fully with this adversity and others, I will experience more peace in my life.”***

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to ask the Holy Spirit for His power and assistance, and submit control of our life to Him, Who brings about the growth. (1 Timothy 4:7-8, 1 Peter 1:16, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Philippians 4:13.)

To grow in patience, the top and on-going priority is to make sure in your heart-to-heart relationship with the Lord, that there is nothing in your heart displeasing Him, and that you are totally submitted to the Holy Spirit's control of your life. This entails confession, asking the Holy Spirit to fill you, and on an on-going basis, maintaining this intimacy through "Spiritual Breathing". (See [Character Helps - Enthusiasm](#) for further discussion.) Then, focusing on patience, ask Him: to apply His unlimited patience to you (1 Timothy 1:16); to break down and remove old patterns of impatience (e.g. complaining, inattentiveness, self-

ishness, insensitivity, lack of forbearance and forgiveness and self-control, lack of trust in Him to use adversity productively); to strengthen you with His great power so you develop and practice great patience and endurance (Colossians 1:11), and to remind you to thank Him when you experience victory and to breathe spiritually when you blow it.

Then take responsibility for your part. Make every effort to put off the old patterns of impatience, and put on new patterns of patience. Devise "projects" to help yourself. For example, practice counting to 10 before responding to an adversity to give time for the surge of adrenaline to pass and emotions to subside; then think through the situation before speaking. Ask others to pray for you. Ask others to help you replace the old patterns with new. For example, ask individuals to bring it to your attention when you complain, lose your temper, and do not show forbearance or forgiveness. Study God's Word, let it dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16), and receive it and let it transform you (James 1:21-22). And if your trust in God is not strong, take steps to increase your confidence in Him - that He is Who He says He is, that what He says is true, and that He keeps His promises. (See [Character Helps - Joyfulness](#).)

And finally, after appealing to the Lord for His help and doing everything you can do humanly, wait patiently on the Lord - keep steadfastly entrusted to Him to strengthen you (Isaiah 40:31) and deliver you (Psalm 34:19).

The Lord, Who knows all, counsels us that developing and practicing good character is important in every way both in this life and the life to come! (1 Timothy 4:7-8) And He offers to help us develop it! Let us give thanks to Him, and go forth gratefully, enthusiastically and expectantly with Him to intentionally develop it!

# Patience

# Benefits a Christian Creates When Practicing the Monthly Character Qualities

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## Benefits To God:

Brings God **honor** by demonstrating to Him our love, trust, and obedience in trying to develop the character qualities of Jesus Christ as He directed us to do.

Brings God pleasure as Father in seeing us grow up into the likeness of His Son Jesus (Who was perfect humanity and His design for us) so that we can become and do all He created us to be and do, both in this life and the life to come.

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Brings God love as we come into a more intimate, personal relationship with Jesus.

## Benefits To Others:

PLEASURE By Enabling Them To Experience Life-Enhancing Effects of Good Character.

VISION By Showing Them What They Can Experience And Become.

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ENCOURAGEMENT By Demonstrating They Too Can Change And Grow.

## Benefits To Self

PLEASURE In Blessing God, Family, Friends, Co-Workers, Community.

EXCITEMENT In Growing More Like Jesus Christ (Perfect Humanity) In Character.

FULFILLMENT In Living And Contributing More Effectively.

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## Character Helps

Published monthly by the Faith Committee of the Character Council of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky

The Faith Committee gratefully acknowledges the contributions of text by Bob and Trisha Hicks, "In the Heart" by John Pierce, design by Emily Steffens and nature graphics by The Character Training Institute.



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