

Contentment and Patience:

“Run with Patience the Race That Is Set before Us.”

John Stewart

Spring is the time of year that especially brings hope and brightness. After winter's shorter, darker days have faded, the transition to warmer, longer days with green bursting buds can move the heart to joy over the future. Easter is approaching!

Even before spring has fully arrived, many people's thoughts awaken to the joy of sowing flower and vegetable seeds in a home garden. Early spring with its damp, cool soil and milder air is also the best time of year to plant most berry bushes and saplings.

I vividly recall a feeling of special excitement and anticipation when we, for the first time, had planted seeds in a newly tilled garden plot at home. Raising fruits and vegetables was an exciting idea for our small, growing family. We worked the soil, raised small beds, added fertilizer, and covered the seeds with a dusting of soft dirt. We finally sprayed a gentle mist of water over the rows to ensure some moisture reached the seeds. Fairly early the next morning I hurried out to the garden, hoping – almost expecting – to see small sprigs of green growth pushing through the soil. Of course, even under close examination I could see that nothing had changed on the garden bed overnight. Each subsequent day I inspected the beds. The days turned into a week... then longer. I began to feel impatient and a little disappointed. Did the seeds fail? Had I done something wrong or forgotten something? Did the seeds need more water?

In terms of gardening, I learned to be patient. As a miracle in God's creation, seeds will gradually germinate and thrive under the right conditions. Planted seeds require moisture and good soil, the right blend of nutrients, suitable temperatures, and light.

Our life of faith can be seen in the image of the seeds and garden: the light is our Lord Jesus, the nutrients are as the gentle care of the wholesome Word of God, while the warmth can be seen as the love of God through our escorts on the way. The water is the life-giving gospel.

In our lives and journey of faith we experience many things that require patience and time. Family life in particular can pull on parents such that we often need to pause and pray for patience. Older travelers have reminded us that when events in life press us and impatience is near, it is good to consider the immediate situation in longer terms. The Old Testament poet wrote: “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit” (Eccl. 7:8). When we pause and consider how immense God’s patience and grace have been for each of us, it becomes easier to be patient not only with our children, but also with others we relate to in life.

Contentment is closely related to patience. Prayerful patience helps foster contentment. Apostle Paul reminded Timothy: “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). Apostle Peter exhorted the believers: “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:5–8).

Even in the face of our journey faults, the life-giving water of the gospel, the essence of which is the forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name and blood, remains our source of strength on the way. When we consider the travelers who, by the grace of God, have already passed from this life and reached the reward it is good to recall the encouragement of the writer to the Hebrews: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

Contentment and Patience in Life: Forgiveness, Pausing Social Media, and Soothing Music

Emily Pirness

Contentment is watching my little family happily play outside, read books or just be together.

Discontentment is comparing my life to other people's, an activity that causes me to forget my own blessings. As a mother, it's not always easy to be content. There are sleepless nights, crying children, possibly sick children. There are days that it seems like the only thing going on is fighting between siblings. There are days where I think of other moms, how they have the appearance of perfection, while here, my life feels like we're merely surviving. On the other hand, there are also days where life feels wonderful. The kids are happy, we have lots of togetherness and there's lots of love. These are days of contentment.

Patience can sometimes be hard to come by, especially when the kids will not listen and there's just too much noise, too much activity. I've always thought that I'm not a patient mother, but I have been surprising myself.

With time, it gets better. I find that I listen to my kids more, even if they've said mom's name repeatedly. And I have forgiveness, a healing and encouragement when those impatient times come. For me, it seems that forgiveness for impatience can also help grow patience.

Patience isn't only hard to come by as a mother. During this COVID-19 pandemic, it's been hard to be patient, especially as of late. Living in Canada, I'm far from my family. I've been very content living here, and I've been very blessed. The current times, though, have been tough when I can't see all my family. Still, I do try to remember that God has given me my spouse and children. For this I can be so thankful.

In seeking patience and contentment, I have looked for helpful strategies. I've recently quit using social media. I was becoming discontent when I spent time looking at others' lives. I saw how other

people live and their lives seemed so perfect. Of course, I know this isn't so. Still, removing social media from my life has been a positive and helpful move on my part. Now, I can just pay attention to my own little life and appreciate all God has given me.

Music has also been part of my self-care. Song number 411 from *Songs and Hymns of Zion* has spoken often to me. Verse three provides a prayer for personal patience: "Contentment I ask You to grant for today, the work that You gave me, make precious, I pray." This part of the song has always been close to me. When I was single I sang this song all the time, both aloud and in my mental soundtrack. Today, I turn to this song and find that it has a different meaning. These songs comfort us no matter our walk in life.

When we strive to stay close to God, He will provide contentment and patience.

What Has Brought Contentment?

Elida Holmstrom

Is everything okay with you? Are you feeling content and happy with things in your life? These are questions many have been asked at some time in their lives. It hasn't been any different for me.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, contentment is a state of happiness and satisfaction, drawn from being at ease with one's situation, body and mind.

What is patience? Oxford Dictionary defines this as the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset.

Both of these traits go hand in hand throughout life. If one is discontented in any aspect of his or her life, impatience isn't far behind. But how does one find contentment in his or her life, especially in the times we live today? For me, keeping things simple and not looking too far in the future has helped. I also try to not compare myself to friends, family members or others in my walk of life. It's not always an easy thing to do.

Living alone in a rural community, away from other believers has been difficult and lonely at times. I have often wondered, *Have I been forgotten? Why doesn't anyone come and visit?* Several years ago, I became quite unhappy and worried about the future. This combined with financial difficulties, caused me to start having minor anxiety attacks. With the help of medication, and by finding acceptance, peace of mind and happiness, I found contentment, joy and thankfulness with God's care and love towards me. Reaching out to friends in faith, visiting and relating my personal psalm was a great help as well.

One song of Zion that has been a comfort is song 411 "Have mercy, dear Jesus, for strait is the way," especially verse three. "Contentment I ask You to grant for today, the work that You gave me, make precious, I pray. Give strength to abandon all sinning and strife, and guide by Your mercy my journey of life." This song often comes to mind and is my humble prayer to my heavenly Father that He will guide and protect until journey's end.

God's Word gives loving comfort, reminding us that all we need for contentment is food and clothing. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

Then, with physical needs met, we can seek comfort for our souls by asking for the gospel. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1).

Keeping faith as most important in our life and putting sin away as it attaches is the easiest way to find true peace and contentment and patience to walk the narrow pathway that leads to heaven's home.

Discussion Points

1. What does patience look like? Think of a person you would say is patient and describe his or her patient behavior.
2. How does impatience impact our lives? How does impatience impact others?
3. Why is patience so important to faith?
4. After reading the articles in this section, list all of the strategies other believers use to practice and develop their patience. Which ones might you try?
5. How are patience and contentment related? To what extent are they the same thing?