

The Fruit of the Spirit is Patience

(Galatians 5:22-23)

Pre-Session Warm Up

[Teacher, hold up a picture of a rabbit.] If you could put a jackrabbit on a leash and take it for a walk, what would it be like? How tired would you be after the walk?

[Hold up a picture of a turtle.] What would it be like to take a turtle for a walk? How would you feel after walking the turtle? Turtles are famous for being slow. If you had to wait for a turtle to walk anywhere, you would need a lot of patience, wouldn't you?

We've been learning about the fruit of the Spirit, and today we'll learn about patience.

Opening Prayer

Father, sometimes we get impatient with other people. We get mad when people don't do things our way or if they're not fast enough. Sometimes we even get impatient with ourselves. Please help us learn how to be patient. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Memory Verse

*Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and **patience**. (Colossians 3:12 NLT)*

Lesson

We have been learning about the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The first fruit is **love**. Love is not just a feeling, it's an action word. And, if we truly have the fruit of the Spirit, we choose to love people with God's kind of love, even when they don't deserve it or even when it's inconvenient to us.

The second fruit is **joy**. True joy comes from having Jesus in your life and knowing that you will live forever with him in heaven. True joy comes from the inside out; not from something that happens *to* us.

The third fruit is **peace**. Because Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, we have peace with God. Now it is our responsibility to do all we can to live in peace with everyone; we're to be peacemakers.

Now we're going to learn about **patience**. Let's look at our verse:

Colossians 3:12

*Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and **patience**. (NLT)*

What's the first thing you do in the morning after you get up to get ready for the day? I don't know about you, but I put on my clothes! Our verse for today tells us that God wants us to "clothe" ourselves with something else besides clothes.

What do you think it means to "*clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience*"? God wants us to cover ourselves from head to toe with the fruit of the Spirit so that other people can get to know Him. But we've been learning that love, joy, and peace are not just feelings. They are action words. We have to purposely "put them on."

Ephesians 4:24

Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

We all get impatient sometimes, don't we? Can you think of some real-life examples of situations in which you need lots of patience? It's hard to wait on people for things to happen. Sometimes people do things that bother us. Have you ever had someone do the same rotten thing to you again and again? How did you feel about that person?

What do you do when someone "bugs" you? Some people pout or get haughty. They generally let you know about it either by grumbling and griping or blowing up. It's easy to get grouchy with other people when we feel impatient. But God wants us to treat other people well, even when they do things that bug us. That's why we need this fruit of the Spirit.

Going Bananas

(Activity to demonstrate need for patience.)

[Divide the children into two teams, boys against girls. Have each team stand in a row and pass a banana up and down the line without using their hands.] Let's see how fast we can pass a banana up and back down the line using only your chin to hold the banana. If someone drops the banana, you must start over.

[Allow children to express frustration, but redirect unkind words. If children have an especially difficult time, modify the rules so kids can restart the game with the same partner who dropped the banana. When kids have finished, gather them around you in a circle and discuss the activity.]

Was this game easy or difficult for you? How did you feel when someone dropped the banana? If you dropped the banana, how did you feel when you heard the group's reaction?

It's easy to feel impatient when things don't go your way. Sometimes people do things that make it hard for you to get what you want. When we get impatient, we're tempted to say things that aren't nice. We can make others feel bad. But the Bible tells us that God wants us to be patient with everyone. (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

Let's read God's description of what true love is:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud (5) or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. (6) It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. (7) Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Notice that the very first way God describes true love is that it is patient!

Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 18. We're going to learn that it's important for us to be patient with others in the same way God is patient with us.

Many times Jesus told parables to teach lessons to His disciples. A parable is a life-like story, using examples from every day experiences. This one is the *Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor*. A debtor is someone that owes money.

It all started when Peter asked Jesus how many times he needed to show patience and forgiveness to someone who kept sinning against him. Let's read the passage all the way through, then I'll explain it.

Read Matthew 18:21-35.

Jesus was using this story to teach His disciples a lesson. The story goes like this:

One day the king was looking at his money books. He realized that one of his servants had borrowed millions of dollars from him and had never paid it back. [Teacher, show the kids \$2 worth of pennies.] Let's pretend that each of these pennies is worth \$10,000. These pennies represent two million dollars. If you had borrowed millions of dollars from someone, how long do you think you would have to work to earn that much money to pay the person back? It probably couldn't happen in your life time!

So, since the servant couldn't pay his debt to the king, he ordered that the servant and his whole family be sold into slavery to pay off the debt. The king also ordered that everything the servant owned be sold.

How do you think the servant felt? What would you do if you were the servant?

The servant begged the king to have mercy on him.

Matthew 18:26

But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.'"

Then, it says in the next verse, the king was filled with pity for him, had mercy on him and forgave his debt. He was freed!

How do you think the servant felt to be forgiven? What would you have done if you had been forgiven such a lot of debt?

But, what did this servant do? It says, he went out and found someone that owed *him* some money—only a few thousand dollars. [Teacher, pick up one penny.] If one penny is worth \$10,000 then this man owed him less than ½ of cent. Now remember, he had just been forgiven for a debt that he could have never been able to repay in his whole lifetime. What did he say to the guy that owed him this relatively small amount of money?

Matthew 18:28

But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment."

The second servant begged the first servant to be patient with him and to just give him a little more time. This was a debt the second servant should have been able to repay if he just had a few months to work. But the first servant refused to have patience. He grabbed the servant and threw him in jail.

What is surprising about the way the first servant treated the second servant?

Then what did the king do when he found out about this?

Matthew 18:32-33

Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant!' I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with

me. (33) Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?'"

Then what did the king do?

Matthew 18:34

Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

Do you think that the king's reaction was fair? How is the king like God? How is the king different from God?

Matthew 18:35

"That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

Why do you think that Jesus added verse 35 to this story? This Bible story is teaching us that when we do something wrong to someone, it's like owing that person money. If someone is mean to you, he at least owes you an apology, right? Who do we owe more to than anyone else? (God!)

Do you think God has to be patient with you? He is patient with us when we sin. He is patient with us when we are slow to do the things we know would make Him happy. All of these things add up every day, making us like that first servant. We owe God more that we could ever repay.

Why do you think the Lord is patient with us?

2 Peter 3:15a

The Lord's patience gives people time to be saved.

The Lord is patient with us because He wants us to patient with others.

If God struck out at people every time they did something wrong, just as we are so prone to do, no one would be alive today.

God expects us to imitate His patience by forgiving others when they bug us, or sin against us, or make us wait. We should be patient with others in the same way God is patient with us.

Sometimes it's easy to be patient. But, if someone is mean to us, it's hard to be forgiving, isn't it?

If you're in a hurry to get somewhere and someone is slowing you down, it's hard to be understanding.

Why is it so hard to be patient? Sometimes we forget how much God has forgiven us. Then we're like the Unforgiving Debtor in Jesus' story and we stop being patient with others.

How can we remind ourselves to be patient when we don't feel like it? Stop, calm down, and remember that to pay the penalty for our sins, it cost Jesus His life. The least we can do is be patient with others. We need to be quick to be understanding and forgiving of others, just as God is with us.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for being so patient with us. We owe you more than we could ever repay. Help us to remember how much it cost you to save us from our sins so that we remain patient with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Snack

Bananas

Let the children create their own snack mix from these ingredients:

- Peanuts
- Banana chips
- M & M's
- Cashews
- Raisins
- Almonds

Give each child something to add to the bowl. Then mix it up. Give each child a zip lock bag. Then let each child put a scoopful in to each of the other kid's bags as well as his own until it is all dished out. They have to have patience while the process takes place.

Game Center

Patience Pantomimes

[Teacher, have children form pairs or small groups to perform the following scenes. Allow kids time to plan how they will perform and then to practice.]

We need patience so many times every day! We're going to act out how to be patient with others in the same way God is patient with us.

Pick a "Patience Pantomime" card, and first act out how you would react in this situation if you did not have the fruit of the Spirit. Then show us how you would react if you were "clothed" in patience.

<p>It's time for your softball game. You need to be there in fifteen minutes. Your mother is on the phone and doesn't seem to be in a big hurry to get you there on time. The team needs you.</p>	<p>Your baby brother wandered into your room and ripped up your favorite book.</p>
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<p>Your best friend told an embarrassing story about you again. She had promised she would never do it again. Now she says she's really sorry and will never do it again.</p>	<p>Bobby is on your soccer team. He isn't very good. He keeps messing up. You keep losing games because of him. You hate losing.</p>
<p>You have to walk your little sister to school. She is such a slowpoke. You want to get to school early so you have time to talk to your friends.</p>	<p>Your dad promised he would take you fishing after he fixed the car. That was hours ago. Dad is still in the garage, and if you wait too much longer, the fish will not be biting anymore.</p>
<p>You agreed to tutor a younger child at school. You're trying to explain to Bobby how to do a simple math problem. But Bobby doesn't get it. It doesn't seem like he's even trying. You're getting frustrated.</p>	<p>You're trying to learn a difficult song on the piano. You keep messing up. You've been practicing and practicing. You just can't seem to get it.</p>

to be patient with someone who repeatedly does things to hurt you? Why? What would showing patience to that person look like?

Or, discuss the following questions:

1. Why do you think patience is so important?
2. Why is it sometimes hard to have patience?
3. Why is it important to be patient?
4. Have you ever had someone do the same rotten thing to you again and again? How did you feel about that person? Is it easy or hard




PATIENCE

Use the International Morse Code to decipher a Bible verse about patience.

a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l
m	n	o	p	q	r
s	t	u	v	w	x
y	z				

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1 Thess. 5:14

Can you make this design look like a stack of boxes? Color all the  shapes blue, all the  shapes red and all the  shapes yellow. It will take a long time. Be patient!

