

PATIENCE

Often when I'm asked, "Pastor, why doesn't God just give us what we want when we need it?" My response is the same as James', "Learn how to wait so you will be strong and mature and in need of nothing" (James 1:4 - literal translation). Learning to wait is the manner by which you reach maturity and perfect your character. Being impatient, on the other hand, is the way you remain a child. The Bible commends many child-like attitudes but not this one. Impatience is a sign of selfishness, and selfishness is rooted in pride. And we all know what God thinks about pride!

I love the quote Nicky Gumbel tweeted this week, "A river cuts through rock, not because of its power, but because of its persistence." The Greek word for patience is often translated endurance, and it literally means, "to stand up under pressure." We can see that patience is not a passive attitude because it grows under pressure (Romans 12:12). Therefore, patience (like persistence) has a focus and that is on enduring the trial – cutting through the rock! Why? Because when you have endured you will receive a reward (1 Corinthians 3:14). Galatians 6:9 says, "***Let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.***" Too many people give up simply because they are impatient with God.

You must be patient with God and with yourself. As you grow to spiritual maturity, there are three ways to cooperate with God in the process:

- **Believe God is working in your circumstances** - even when you don't feel it. Spiritual growth is sometimes tedious work, one small step at a time. Expect gradual improvement. The Bible says, "*Everything on earth has its own time and its own season.*" (Ecclesiastes 3:1)
- **Acknowledge that there are seasons in your spiritual life.** Sometimes you will have a short, intense burst of growth (springtime) followed by a period of stabilizing and testing (fall and winter). What about those problems you would like miraculously removed? It's fine to pray for a miracle, but don't be disappointed if the answer comes through a gradual change. Over time, a slow, steady stream of water will erode the hardest rock. Over time, a little sprout can turn into a giant redwood tree towering 350-feet tall.
- **Don't be in a hurry - God isn't.** One of life's frustrations is that God's timetable is rarely the same as ours. We are often in a hurry when God isn't. You may feel frustrated with the seemingly slow progress you're making in life, but remember that God is never in a hurry yet He is always on time. He will use your entire lifetime to prepare you for the fulfillment of your destiny.

Consider this, patience is an act of your own free will. God wants you to be patient with Him, but He will never force it upon you.