

Lesson 10 | May 5, 2024

The Spirit Produces Patience, Kindness, Goodness

Study Text: Proverbs 15:1; Luke 10:30–37; Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 4:1–3,21–32; 5:8–10; Philippians 3:12–17; James 5:7–11; 2 Timothy 2:23–26; Titus 3:1–5

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit produces patience, kindness, and goodness in the believer.

Key Verse: Ephesians 4:32

Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (KJV).

Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you (NLT).

Learning Objectives:

- Students will understand the two directions of patience and endurance: with difficult people and with difficult circumstances.
- Students will recognize that bearing the fruit of the Spirit requires humility.
- Students will choose to put off old, sinful behaviors and put on new, Christlike behaviors.

Introducing the Study

Say: Being confident in God's love fills us with supernatural love, joy, and peace. Since He loved us first, we can share His love, rejoice in His love, and rest in His love. Humbly walking in the Spirit day by day also produces qualities that help us love people like Jesus does—showing patience, kindness, and goodness.

Opening Activity—A Loving Interaction

Ask: When have you experienced someone being patient with you, kind toward you, or good to you? What impressed you most about that experience? Try to get responses from as many people as you can.

Say: Recall that the fruit produced by the Spirit are attitudes in a disciple that match the attitudes of Jesus. All the attitudes are grounded in love. This lesson focuses on Christlike ways of thinking, speaking, and interacting with others. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Sometimes it seems that it would be much easier to live the Christian life alone, like a hermit in a desert cave. After all, many of the challenges of Christlike behavior happen when we're rubbing shoulders with other people.

There are all kinds of people in this world—including evil people, mean people, irresponsible people, dishonest people, and abusive people. Even in our churches and families, there are people who make bad decisions, who hold values that differ from

ours, who don't think like us, or who have personalities that grate against ours. If we're honest, even people who love Jesus can be hard to get along with sometimes.

Part 1—Patience by the Spirit

A Long Fuse

Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 4:1–3

Say: Two similar Greek words get translated into English as either *patience* or *endurance*. There is significant meaning behind each word. In our English Bible translations the two meanings overlap, so let's take a look at both of them to better understand patience. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The first Greek word is *makrothumia*. Paul used this word in Ephesians 4:2 and Galatians 5:22 to mean “longsuffering” (KJV) or “patience” (NLT). It is built from two other words:

- *Makros*—meaning “long, far, distant.” We use a form of *makros* in our English word *macrocosm*, which refers to the distant reaches of the universe.
- *Thumos*—meaning “violent display of anger.” This is more than a feeling of anger; it is a passionate expression or destructive effect of the emotion of anger. We could call it “wrath” or “rage.”

Patience, therefore, is the holy disposition of being “distant from rage.” Instead of having an explosive temper or being easily set off by others, a Spirit-controlled believer bearing the fruit of patience is far from blowing up. Just as parents train their children to control their tempers by counting to ten, patience is the Holy Spirit telling us, “Count to a trillion. Don't lose your temper.”

Patience means “suffering long” with people—even people who are unbalanced, misshapen, abnormal, and broken. It means keeping your cool when you think someone else is wrong, someone else is the problem, someone else is just sooooo . . . [You can fill in the blank.] If rage is a stick of dynamite, patience is a hundred-mile fuse.

The holy disposition of patience requires humility, gentleness, and putting up with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2). Our marriages, families, and churches depend on it. The unity of the Spirit demands it.

Discuss

? In Ephesians 4:1, how does Paul describe this humble, gentle, and patient life?

? Think of a challenging person who you need to have more patience with. Don't say their name; simply reflect on how you can demonstrate patience. Ask the Holy Spirit to produce that fruit in you as you follow Christ.

Resource Packet Item 1: How Long Is My Fuse?

Distribute the worksheet and give students a few minutes to prayerfully consider the questions. Then discuss their responses without causing embarrassment.

Hanging Tight in Tough Situations

James 5:7–11

Say: Not only does the Holy Spirit produce in us the patience to deal with all kinds of people, but He also helps us endure difficult circumstances. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The second Greek word sometimes translated as “patience” or “endurance” is *hypomone*. Along with other New Testament writers, James used this word to describe endurance needed to deal with situations, as in James 5:11—“endure under suffering” and “Job, a man of great endurance” (NLT). (See also Romans 5:3–4; Hebrews 10:36; Revelation 1:9.) It is also built from two words:

- *Hypo*—meaning “under or below.” An example of this prefix appearing in English is *hypoglycemia*, which refers to an abnormal decrease in blood sugar.
- *Meno*—meaning “remain.”

Therefore, this kind of patience carries the idea of “remaining under” or persevering. Whereas *makrothumia* can refer to patience with people or situations, *hypomone* refers exclusively to endurance of circumstances. Picture yourself bent over under a heavy load, perhaps a heavy backpack. Imagine carrying that burden God has entrusted to you—like completing your education, praying for a wayward child, being faithful to a ministry assignment, or paying a debt. After carrying that load for a while, maybe you consider sliding out from under its weight. After all, it’s so heavy! Should you keep carrying it? Then the Holy Spirit encourages you to remain under the burden, faithfully completing your commitment even though it’s not easy. That is *hypomone*.

James, the half brother of Jesus, encourages patience while we wait for the Lord’s return (James 5:7–11). He gave three examples to inspire us to patiently endure, using both *makrothumia* (verses 7–10) and *hypomone* (verse 11).

1. James describes farmers who are waiting for rain to cause their crops to produce a harvest. Just as they have faith the rain will come, we should have faith that the Lord will return soon (verses 7–8).
2. He reminds us of the prophets, who patiently endured suffering (verse 10).
3. He mentions “the patience of Job” (verse 11, KJV), who suffered greatly before experiencing the Lord’s “tenderness and mercy” (NLT).

Our greatest example of both kinds of patience is Jesus himself. In Hebrews 12:1–12, the author describes how Jesus’ *hypomone* should inspire our own. When we recall all the suffering and hostility He endured “because of the joy awaiting him” (verse 2, NLT), we “won’t become weary and give up” (verse 3, NLT). And as Peter explains, Jesus’ *makrothumia* is related to the timing of His return: “The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent” (2 Peter 3:9, NLT).

Discuss

- ? Ask God for the grace to carry whatever burden He has given you.
- ? Which do you find more challenging: patience with people or patience with circumstances?

Part 2—Kindness¹ by the Spirit

Avoid Disputes

Proverbs 15:1; 2 Timothy 2:23–26

Say: Conversation is one of the major ways people interact with each other. When believers recognize each person’s God-given value and refuse to engage in wars of words, we are demonstrating the holy disposition of kindness. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The wisdom of Proverbs 15:1 has changed many lives and relationships: “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (KJV). Even if outbursts of anger have become a habit, the Holy Spirit urges us to remember these words. As we submit to His gentle nudges, grievous words are removed from our conversation and soft answers become our sanctified style. Instead of throwing hurtful words into an argument like gasoline on a fire, our kind answers can turn conversations around.

Besides steering clear of angry outbursts, the disposition of kindness in conversation keeps us from engaging in verbal battles. As Paul advised, “Don’t get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone” (2 Timothy 2:23–24, NLT). It may be tempting to boldly declare your theological or political opinion in public, but think about this: You may end up in an ugly argument with someone you could have led to Christ. Beware: Engaging in arguments does not equal sharing the gospel! Imagine what it would be like to speak so kindly on a topic of disagreement that you could teach those who oppose you and win them to Jesus (verses 25–26).

Discuss

- ? When have you seen a soft answer turn a conversation—and perhaps a heart—totally around?
- ? Synonyms for *kind* include *mild*, *peaceful*, *quiet*, *tolerant*, and *composed*. Which of these characteristics do you need the Spirit to produce in your life?

Resource Packet Item 2: Memory Verse—Proverbs 15:1

Distribute the worksheet or prepare the memory verses (one per person) before class. Encourage students to post the verse in a prominent location where they can see it often and memorize it.

Refuse to Slander

1. Although KJV translates the Greek word *chrestotes* in Galatians 5:22 as “gentleness,” this lesson uses the NLT rendering of “kindness,” which better captures the word’s meaning.

Titus 3:1–5

Say: We know we shouldn't misuse the Lord's name, but Paul says in Titus 3:2 that believers must honor other people's names too—by refusing to engage in slander. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Our culture excels at slander. Media interviews become shouting matches, full of vile words and escalating interruptions. Athletes and politicians mercilessly trash-talk their opponents. Muckraking is fashionable; civility is not. Online search engines are designed to connect us with sources we agree with. Instead of learning new perspectives, we consume only what fuels our biases. As our bandwagons get bigger and the people on them get angrier, we can get caught up in the frenzy.

People sometimes defend such character assassination by saying, "It's a free country—I can say whatever I want to!" But Scripture says, "Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone" (Titus 3:1–2, NLT).

"But they don't deserve it!" the unrepentant person might retort. Paul goes on to say in verse 3 that we weren't deserving either. We used to be foolish, disobedient, deceived, and addicted to carnal pleasures and evil attitudes. Our lives were characterized by hate. But God! In kindness and love, our Savior appeared and rescued us. He delivered us from our sinful condition and hateful tradition. Did we deserve the salvation He brought? Absolutely not. It wasn't because of anything good we had done. It was only "because of his mercy" (verse 5, NLT).

The Holy Spirit invites us to share in God's way of thinking and behaving: dispensing kindness and declaring life-giving words to everyone—even the people we consider undeserving.

Discuss

? How can Christ-followers practice kindness in their conversations without compromising their convictions?

? It's been said that people who think they don't need grace don't believe others deserve it. Do you think that is true? Explain.

Part 3—Goodness by the Spirit Practicing Being a Neighbor

Luke 10:30–37

Say: Goodness is an attitude of compassion and generosity. But in the New Testament context, it goes beyond good intentions; this kind of goodness takes action. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

There is no better example of this holy disposition than the Good Samaritan. Samaritans were despised by the Jews, but this man in Jesus' story represented God far better than the Jewish religious leaders! Look at the active nature of the Samaritan's goodness after he saw a complete stranger in distress: He felt compassion, went over to the injured man, soothed and bandaged his wounds, set him on his own donkey, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, he paid the innkeeper to care for the traveler and promised to pay for anything else the man needed. That's more than one or two action words. The Samaritan man was generous in every way—with his time, energy, possessions, and money. His selfless actions (beneficence) arose from a loving heart (benevolence). Remember, the primary fruit of the Spirit and the source of them all is love. The Samaritan's compassion and love prompted his generous actions.

The word *neighbor* refers to someone who is nearby. In Jesus' story, only the Samaritan was willing to go near the one in need. The priest and the Levite may have been respected religious leaders, but when they saw the injured man—and even paused to look closer—they chose to do nothing. In fact, they got as far away from the injured man as they could. How easy it is for us who are religious to look for ways to justify ourselves like the man whose question prompted Jesus' story (Luke 10:27–29). Sometimes, we look for any reason to avoid getting near those in need.

By the end of the story, the religious expert understood who the man's neighbor truly was: “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same” (verse 37, NLT). And so must we.

Discuss

? What practical steps can you take to get near those who are in need? Is that your desire?

? Goodness is the action of doing good or giving generously. Which of those two actions is easier for you? Ask God to grow you in the other.

Putting Off and Putting On

Ephesians 4:21–32; 5:8–10

Say: New life in Christ is often described in the New Testament as walking in the light. In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul described what this light produces in believers: “only what is good and right and true” (Ephesians 5:9, NLT). (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In Ephesians 4, Paul explained how to grow in goodness: “Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life” (verse 22, NLT) as happily as you would get rid of dirty clothes when offered a brand-new wardrobe. So, what's been in your closet far too long? Maybe it's a life corrupted by lust and deception. Throw it away and put on a new nature—one that is truly righteous and holy. Let the Spirit give you new thoughts and holy attitudes. Trash the lies you've been telling. Toss away that sinful anger. Put off that foul, abusive language. Those clothes never looked good on you anyway—so get rid of them! Instead, “put on your new nature, created to be like God” (verse 24, NLT).

What have you been accessorizing with? Take off the worthless jewelry of bitterness, rage, anger, and slander along with every kind of evil behavior. Instead, be adorned with the real thing—precious gems of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. With the Spirit’s help, you can put on the rarest jewel of all: love.

Maybe your old clothes sound different from the ones in Paul’s list. Mature believers’ temptations are usually subtle. We may have been drawn to something we thought was stunning, but now we’ve found out it’s not attractive at all. It looks like the world, and it grieves the Spirit. As we continually learn the truth that comes from Jesus, we continually take off the things that don’t please the Spirit, allowing Him to replace them with new thoughts and attitudes (verses 21–23).

Resource Packet Item 3: Put Off . . . Put On

Distribute the worksheet and divide the class into small groups. After a few minutes, ask one group to read their list. Encourage students to reflect on their lists throughout the week.

Paul specifically mentions the quality of goodness in 5:9—which literally reads, “The fruit of light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.” Just as the rays of the sun help cause plants and flowers to grow, so the “light from the Lord” (verse 8, NLT) should bring goodness to life in the believer. Because God is inherently good, as we grow closer to Him, His goodness will be reflected in us.

Discuss

- ? What is one “garment” in your spiritual closet that needs to go?
- ? What aspect of Christlike character would you like to wear more often?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Confidence in God’s love for us coupled with the work of the Holy Spirit in us causes us to bear the Christlike fruit of love, joy, and peace. We also become the conduit of God’s love to others, showing patience, kindness, and goodness.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you bear the fruit of patience—with people and with situations.
- Memorize Proverbs 15:1 and count the number of times this week you intentionally put it into action.
- Choose to be kind in a conversation instead of swerving into conflict. (Specifically, refrain from disputes and refuse to engage in slander.) Ask the Lord to build a bridge that may bring others to Him through you.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Patience Rewarded.
Genesis 26:16–26

Tuesday:
Our Longsuffering God.
Nehemiah 9:26–31

Wednesday:
Our Gentle Shepherd.
Psalm 23:1–6

Thursday:
Lead Gently.
2 Timothy 2:23–26

Friday:
A Kind Neighbor.
Acts 9:36–43

Saturday:
Choose Kindness.
Ephesians 4:29 through 5:2