

## Topic 15: Patience, Kindness, & Goodness



### Enjoying Radical Relationships

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

—Galatians 5:22–23, NASB

It was former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson who famously said, “Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face.” That wry observation isn’t just true of boxing. We could also apply it to our relationships.

“This is the whole of Christianity. There is nothing else. . . . It is easy to think that the Church has a lot of different objects—education, building, missions, holding services. . . . The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If [we] are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose.”—C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

How easy it is for disciples of Christ to study and discuss great biblical concepts like love. How *hard* it is to be loving when we step into the arena of marriage or work! According to Galatians 5:22–23, our lives—and our interactions with others—can and should be marked by supernatural patience, kindness, and goodness. How does this happen? What’s involved in receiving such graces from God, cultivating them, and then sharing them with others around us?

We’re examining the qualities that mark a follower of Jesus.

It’s worth repeating: discipleship isn’t just studying the Bible and engaging in religious activities. Rather, it involves a slow, steady transformation into Christ-likeness. In other words, it isn’t simply knowing and doing new things; it’s becoming the new people God created us to be.

Before we look at how the Bible describes patience, kindness, and goodness, take a shot at defining them yourself.



**Patience:**

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**Kindness:**

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**Goodness:**

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In our study today, we'll examine how the Bible uses these terms.

## Bible Study

### Patience

The most common Old Testament Hebrew word translated "patience" comes from a verb that means "to be long." The idea is that one with this virtue takes a long time to get riled up. In other words, he or she is "slow to anger."

In the New Testament two primary Greek words convey the idea of patience. The first, *hypomené*, means to "remain under"—to remain steady during tests and trials. It is often translated "endure" or "persevere" without grumbling or complaining.

The other word, *makrothumia*, refers to patience as the ability to bear, tolerate, or put up with others without becoming provoked. The word suggests restraint, being slow to speak and slow to become angry (James 1:19).

1. Check out Nehemiah 9:17. This verse discusses divine patience:

"They [the ancient people of Israel] refused to listen, and did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them; so they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness; and You did not forsake them." (Nehemiah 9:17, NASB)

What stands out to you most about this description of God?

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The Bible tells us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8) and that “Love is patient” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Logically, it follows then that *God is patient*.

The apostle Paul wrote: “But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life” (1 Timothy 1:16, NLT).

It wasn’t just Paul. God is infinitely patient with all of us! He does not treat us as our sins deserve (Psalm 103:10). He is restrained, slow to become angry. He waits and delays judgment because he is merciful (2 Peter 3:9).

Can you believe such good news? Because God is essentially patient, he is always patient *with us*. Not only this, but because the perfectly patient One now *indwells us by his Spirit*—we have what it takes to be patient with others. Look at what God’s Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to command:

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:12–13)

2. How would you rate yourself 1–5 in the area of patience?

- ▶ 1 = I can’t help expressing disgust when things don’t go right. I get angry, yell at people and threaten their job.
- ▶ 2 = I don’t express disgust openly but I think incompetent people are worthless.
- ▶ 3 = I accept that there are delays, misunderstandings, malfunctions, and situations in life that go wrong. I can tolerate some problems.
- ▶ 4 = I realize there may be reasons for problems that aren’t evident and accept that most people are doing the best they can.
- ▶ 5 = I do my best to keep a positive attitude and keep going. I don’t lose my temper. I know God has a purpose for delays, frustrations, and problems.

Why would you rate yourself that way?

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Patience is a wonderful virtue. We admire it when we see it in others. We’d all agree it’s a behavior we’d like to exhibit more often. So we study it, and ask God to help us have it. And do our best to have patience the next time life punches us in the face!

## Kindness

In the New Testament, a number of Greek words express the idea of kindness.

- ▶ One New Testament Greek word translated “kindness” is the word *philanthropia* from which we get our English word philanthropy. It means “love for mankind” and suggests providing generously to others. This is the word found in Acts 28:2.
- ▶ Another word is the word *philadelphia*, which refers to “brotherly affection that results in acts of kindness” (Romans 12:10; 2 Peter 1:7).
- ▶ A third is the Greek word translated simply “kindness” in Galatians 5:22, *chrestotes* (see also Ephesians 2:7), which can also be translated “good” (as in Romans 3:12).
- ▶ In “Topic 13: Love,” we saw one of the words translated “love” is also translated “kindness.” This word, *chesed*, is often translated “loving kindness” or “steadfast love” when referring to God’s faithful, covenant love for his people (Psalm 17:7; 63:3). When used of people, *chesed* is often translated “kindness” or “loyalty” (Genesis 24:49; 2 Samuel 2:5).

Put all this together and the idea behind the concept of biblical kindness is a kind of benevolent friendliness and sympathy that gets richly expressed in words and deeds. In other words, kindness isn’t just a warm feeling, it is action on behalf of another.

Look at this verse that speaks of an unusually kind woman: “Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did” (Acts 9:36, NASB).

3. Who in your life would you say “abounds in kindness”?

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As with patience, kindness finds its ultimate expression in God’s actions toward us:

- ▶ “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4).
- ▶ “But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of



the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4–7, NLT).

4. List some of the specific ways God has shown kindness to you.

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Given God’s immense kindness to us (Colossians 1–2), Paul discusses how followers of Jesus ought to respond (Colossians 3–4). In Colossians 3:12–13, he writes:

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

“Be kind. Everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.”—Author unknown (variously attributed to Plato, Philo of Alexandria, Ian Maclaren, John Watson)

5. What does to “clothe yourself with . . . kindness” mean to you?

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## Goodness

Consider the following passages that discuss *goodness*:

- ▶ “The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation” (Psalm 145:9, NLT).
- ▶ “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14, NASB).



- ▶ “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith” (Galatians 6:10, NASB).
- ▶ “So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do” (2 Thessalonians 1:11, NLT).
- ▶ “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

6. What do these verses say about the Lord’s character, the way he relates to people, and the new nature of a child of God?

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As we follow Jesus and experience his patience with us and his kindness and goodness toward us, we learn to treat others in those same ways. As we become more and more secure in his love and confident that our lives are in his gentle, wise hands, we experience great and greater freedom in our dealings with people. We aren’t “needy” when we rub

The fruit of the Spirit aren’t just graces to receive or virtues to study, but qualities to practice.

shoulders with others. This liberates us to be generous, to help, and to bless. Suddenly we can overlook faults and let go of slights—both real and perceived. We can put up with the quirks and flaws of others. Rather than seeking to get even, we can resolve to bless.

Such relationships are possible only as we allow the Holy Spirit to control us (Galatians 5:22–23). Apart from such power, they are impossible.



# Take-Home Reflections

## Relational Role Play

Good intentions aren't enough in hard situations. *Planning* to be patient, kind, and good in your dealings with others is fine. But when others are harsh and situations are tense, the best plans can disappear like your breath on a cold morning. Don't just plan—practice. By yourself or with a friend, think through, talk through, or better yet, role play how you could respond in a Christ-like way in each of the everyday scenarios below.

Real-life Situation	My instinctive, natural reaction	A better response
A family member is about to make you late for an event that's very important to you.		
A coworker, obviously upset about something else, is taking it out on you.		
One rainy day after work, you see your supervisor—not a nice person—in the parking lot with the hood of his car up.		
You find out your "ex" made a really nasty comment about you on Facebook.		
You are still sitting and waiting in the doctor's lobby an hour and a half past your appointment time.		
A single mom has asked if you would watch her children for a couple of hours—but you really don't enjoy kids.		
The neighbors blare loud music all hours of the night, even after you politely asked them to tone it down due to your new baby.		



## Life Application

An important part of discipleship is learning how to apply God's truths to your life. Below are just a few ways you can start thinking about what you've learned and apply it to your daily life.

1. Memorize our memory verse Galatians 5:22–23, NASB.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

2. Wrestle with one or two of these questions:

- ▶ It's been suggested that in the same way we only get better at a thing—running, weight lifting, etc.—by training to do that thing, the only way we'll ever get better at patience is by purposely putting ourselves in situations that will force us to slow down and/or deal with frustrating people. Advocates of this approach suggest picking the longest line at the bank drive-thru window, or resisting the urge to avoid that annoying person at work. What are the pros and cons of taking such a direct approach to learning patience?
- ▶ Two common proverbs champion the idea of patience: “Good things take time” and “Good things come to those who wait.” When have you seen these proverbs prove to be true in your own life?
- ▶ This week, what's a specific act of kindness you could show to someone in your life who maybe doesn't “deserve” it? Write it down in the space below.