

Pathway

PERSONAL CHRISTIAN GROWTH SERIES

Set aside a special time each day to go through a *Pathway* study. Even if you miss a day or two, don't skip those studies. Begin again where you left off! Each daily study is designed to take only 10-12 minutes, or longer ... it's up to you! Be honest with yourself. This is a private time just between you and God.

Introduction — *Patience*

On a scale of 1-10, how patient are you? Throughout the New Testament, patience is shown to be an essential characteristic of a Christian in fellowship with the Lord. Yet for many Christian teens, it slides by the way - probably because it's so hard. But patience is a great thing to have! It makes life easier and more enjoyable. It's commanded by God! This *Pathway* study offers you the "how-to's" and great benefits of patience!

Why?

Why is this happening?

Why can't I stop it?

Why can't I change this terrible situation?

Why me and not someone else?

Why does this have to happen now?

Why can't I get rid of these feelings?

Why, Lord, why?

Slow me down, Lord. Help me to stop being so concerned about tomorrow, instead of trusting You.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself... (Matt. 6:34).

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

— High-school junior

DAY ONE — Patience

TODAY'S PRAYER: Some teens find it more difficult than others to be patient. You may be one of them. Talk to the Lord about your own feelings concerning patience. Ask Him to help you cultivate this important quality in your day-to-day living.

TODAY'S VERSE: ... *the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit (Ecc. 7:8).*

Stretch or Snap?

With heart pounding and fists clenched, Kevin fell to the turf in the end zone of the football field. That dumb coach! he screamed inside. I hate him!

For anything (or nothing at all, it seemed), the coach would bellow “50 push-ups, Johnson,” or “3 laps, Johnson.”

Kevin Johnson, a junior on the Varsity football team, is an excellent defensive player. He gives each practice session and each game 100 percent. But the coach seems to have it in for Kevin. He obviously favors the seniors and constantly punishes younger players like Johnson for whatever reason he sees fit.

Kevin rolled over on his stomach and began the push-ups. His body felt so sore that he wondered how he'd make it through the rest of practice.

Patience ... patience ... patience. It won't be easy for Kevin to be patient with his coach this football season. “And why should I?” Kevin demands of his mother that night. “The man is wrong — he's totally unfair. I don't have to stand for it.”

As Kevin's mom points out, however, Kevin really does have to stand for it. If he wants to play on the team, the answer is simple. KEVIN MUST LEARN PATIENCE.

What about you? Do you play football (or another sport) and understand Kevin's frustration? Or maybe you experience similar exasperation in band, orchestra, cheer leading, drama club, or English class. **What situation do you encounter at school (or home) each day that really drives your patience to the limit?**

A Look in the Book: This week, you'll find that the Bible has a lot to say about patience. But God doesn't simply command “Be ye patient.” Rather, in many passage, He demonstrates His loving understanding of how difficult being patient can be. Then, He encourages us by sharing the many benefits and results of a patient attitude.

Read James 1:2-4 to catch an introductory glimpse of the subject. (Note that divers temptations can mean “many different kinds of trials.”) *My brethren, count it all joy when*

ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

1. Verse 2 begins the passage by saying you should consider it a blessing when various trials come into your life. (See, the Lord DOES understand that you have problems!)
2. Why should you be grateful for problems and hard situations? As verse 3 points out, you can begin learning patience (or endurance) during trials. **How do you think this happens?**

3. Then, the end result of learning patience (verse 4) is that you'll become perfect and entire (meaning mature and complete). You'll study this idea more later in the week.

Are you beginning to understand?

- Yes
 Sort of
 No

There's much more to being patient than just “putting up with” something or someone you don't like. It's not a simple concept to learn. Yet, as you saw from Kevin's football situation, it's certainly necessary and worthwhile. Think for a moment about how Kevin's life could change if he learned to be patient with his coach.

Now, look back to your own problem that you wrote about earlier. How might you enjoy each day more if you learned to be patient?

Rate yourself:

In a tough situation, I'm ...

- always patient.
 patient most of the time.
 seldom patient.

DAY TWO — Patience

TODAY'S PRAYER: Talk to the Lord about hard times which require patience. Ask Him to help you learn how to put patience to work in your own life.

TODAY'S VERSE: *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (James 5:7-8).*

Stretched Out of Shape?

Yesterday you read about a real-life patience problem that Kevin had. Within only a couple afternoons of practice, Kevin realized that his game was suffering. He knew it resulted from his impatient and grumbling attitude. The day before the first big game of the season, Kevin told himself over and over that he wouldn't get angry at practice. Everything went all right until ... "Johnson, you FOOL!" the coach roared. "Can't you even catch an easy pass? Three laps, NOW!"

Kevin took a deep breath. But no matter how he tried, his attitude hadn't changed. He felt as furious as ever with the coach.

So what IS patience, anyhow? How was Kevin supposed to react?

Write your own definition (2 sentences or less) of patience.

Now take a look at dictionary definitions of patience:

1. Bearing pains or trials without complaint
2. Showing forbearance under strain
3. Steadfast despite opposition or difficulty (meaning you don't "go crazy" when problems arise)

Looks pretty hard, doesn't it? Actually, though, for you as a Christian, the formula for patience needn't be so tough.

Here's Part 1 of a Christian's definition of patience:

**PATIENCE IS A CALM ACCEPTANCE OF WHATEVER THE LORD
ALLOWS IN MY LIFE TODAY.**

A Look in the Book: Read Romans 8:28. (This is a promise only for those who love God.) *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.*

How does knowing that all things work together for good help you patiently face whatever happens?

A Christian teen who loves God can experience calmness and patience throughout the hardest of times. Why? Because God works through those stresses to help you grow more like Him! He's going to make of you something wonderful! The Bible says, ... *tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope (Rom. 5:3-4).*

Read Philippians 1:6. *Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* God won't let mere circumstances (like an unfair coach, a nasty brother, or financial trouble) get in the way of His plans for your life. Therefore, you can patiently endure hard situations because you know God will work in you through them.

You've begun to learn what patience means for a Christian. (Remember, it's a calm acceptance of whatever the Lord allows in your life today.) Suppose Kevin asks you for help. He really needs advice about how to be patient at football practice. Kevin's a good friend. He isn't looking for "trite answers." **What would you tell him?**

Perhaps you need to apply this advice to your own life. What situation do you need to begin facing patiently, or with calm acceptance?

Don't forget, God is working everything together for your good. Relax, be patient, and let Him work!

On a scale of 1-10, how patient are you?

Are you patient when your little sister takes too long in the bathroom, and you're in a hurry to take a shower?

- Always
 Sometimes
 Never

Are you patient when your history teacher tells you to rewrite a 20-page paper that you've already rewritten twice?

- Always
 Sometimes
 Never

DAY THREE — Patience

Hiding It in My Heart: *Memorize this Bible verse today.* It can be an encouragement to you for the rest of your life. *Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord (Psalm 27:14).*

TODAY'S PRAYER: Trusting and waiting don't always come naturally. Ask God to always remind you that His way is perfect.

Who's Doing the Stretching?

Kevin Johnson's football coach wasn't his only problem. Julie, an attractive, smart, and popular girl, introduced a whole new volume of frustration into Kevin's life. Julie and her parents had been attending Kevin's church for a few months. Kevin recognized Julie from school and talked with her that first week at church. She seemed to like him. A couple days later, Kevin called and asked her to a party. Julie gave him a flat "No."

Two weeks later, he called once more. This time he asked if she'd like to attend a college football game with him. Again, Julie declined. Both curious and a bit offended, Kevin asked her why. Julie finally confided, after a long hesitation, that Dad wouldn't allow her to date until she turned 17. Her birthday was still five months down the road.

"But can't we just spend time together?" Kevin asked.

"Sorry," Julie replied. "My dad is awfully strict. If he thinks I'm interested in you, life at home will be miserable. He's had this rule for my three older sisters, too. Just be patient. Wait a few months ... please."

Sometimes, demands for patience hit you from every angle. And often, the situation won't improve for a long while. If Kevin wants to date Julie, he must wait until her birthday. (And even waiting, Kevin knows, doesn't guarantee that she'll still like him by then.) ***What stressful situation are you experiencing right now that will probably require patience for a long time to come?***

Yesterday, you learned Part 1 of a Christian's definition of the word patience:

PATIENCE IS A CALM ACCEPTANCE OF WHATEVER THE LORD ALLOWS IN MY LIFE TODAY.

Now, let's look at the second half. Notice the different slant in Part 2:

PATIENCE IS CALMLY WAITING FOR THOSE THINGS THE LORD DOES NOT ALLOW IN MY LIFE TODAY.

A Look in the Book: *Read the first part of Psalm 37:7. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him ...*

What is the command in this verse? _____

Now read Psalm 18:30. *As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him.*

How does this directly apply to long-term waiting?

Finally, read Proverbs 3:5-6. Let these verses sink in. Pay special attention to the last few words of verse 6. They're a great promise and encouragement to us as we wait for God's timing. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.*

For Kevin, patiently waiting may bring a wonderful relationship with Julie in the future. Or, it might mean getting to know another girl in the meantime and realizing that Julie isn't right for him. Or, trusting in the Lord's timing may simply tell Kevin that he doesn't need a girlfriend right now.

Waiting for things to happen can be horrible and frustrating. Or, it can be a special time of leaning on the Lord and trusting in His wisdom. Which do you choose?



DAY FOUR — Patience

TODAY'S VERSE: *But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isa. 40:31).*

How Not to Snap (or Break)

- Fall and football
- Homework and TV
- Telephones and friends
- Summer and sleeping in
- Peanut butter and jelly

Think of a few on your own:

For a Christian, certain things naturally go hand in hand (although they're on a different level of importance than those listed above). These are characteristics that become evident in the life of a Christian walking close to the Lord. And yes, you guessed it. Patience is one of them.

A Look in the Book: *Grab your Bible and read Galatians 5:22-23.* The fruit of the Spirit includes nine wonderful qualities which the Holy Spirit produces in a Christian. (Note that "longsuffering" means patience.) **Write them below.**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Look up and read Ephesians 4:1-2. Here the Apostle Paul is writing to Christians in the city of Ephesus. **What four qualities (verse 2) does he desire for them to demonstrate?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Now take a look at one more verse, 1 Thessalonians 5:14. What four instructions to Christians are given here? (Note that "unruly" means "idle"; "feeble-minded" means "weak in heart and spirit.")

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Throughout the New Testament, patience is shown to be an essential characteristic of a Christian in fellowship with the Lord. It goes along with loving, showing kindness, being humble, and demonstrating faith. Yet many Christian teens don't view it with such value. Patience slides by the way — probably because it's so hard.

But God's Word couldn't be clearer. *But thou, O man of God ... follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Tim. 6:11).*

God puts patience high on His list of priorities for us - right up there with godliness. Does knowing the importance God places on patience give you a different perspective?

If so, how has your attitude changed?

Many Christian teens do their best to be kind, good, and gentle. Many even want to be humble and godly. But what about patience? Patience doesn't magically happen all at once. It requires a willing, humbled attitude before God. If you think you can do it on your own, you're wrong (as you'll discover as this study continues).

On My Own: *Write a prayer to the Lord expressing your personal feelings and needs concerning patience.* Perhaps you need to pour out your heart about someone or something that is especially difficult for you. Or, maybe God has given you a great day today, and you want to thank Him. Whatever is going on, share it with the Lord.



DAY FIVE — Patience

Hiding It in My Heart: *Memorize this Bible verse today.* Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus (Rom. 15:5).

TODAY'S PRAYER: Thank the Lord for understanding how you feel. He knows that patience isn't easy! Thank Him for being the perfect, sinless Son of God. Ask for help to follow His example in patience.

Snapping Back Into Shape!

Elizabeth's nine-year-old sister seems impossible! As is typical with little sisters, Cindy wants to hang around Elizabeth all the time. Elizabeth, of course, doesn't like this too much.

As Elizabeth and her friend, Dawn, come in the front door one Saturday afternoon, their laughter fills the house. They've been shopping at the mall and can't wait to try on their new clothes. They go into Liz's bedroom, switch on the light, close the door ... and there sits Cindy. She's just waiting to get in on the fun.

"OUT," Elizabeth commands Cindy. "Get out, NOW!"

"Come on, let me stay, just this once!"

"OUT, I said. And that's final ..."

But then Dawn interrupts, "Oh come on, Liz, it'll be okay to let her stay. I understand. Hey ... don't forget I've got a pesty sister too!" Slowly Elizabeth's impatience fades. If Dawn can take it, so can she.

Dawn set the example for Liz. She demonstrated patience that helped Elizabeth to be patient in return. Who do you know that always seems to be patient? List the one or two most patient people you know. (It may be hard to think of any!)

1. _____
2. _____

Regardless of just how patient someone may appear, he or she usually blows it at one time or another. That's human. That's natural. But it's not true for the Lord Jesus. Even in the hardest situation of all, facing death, Jesus patiently endured.

A Look in the Book: *Look up and read John 18:1-11, 19-23.* As you read, notice how patiently Jesus answers and reacts to His accusers.

How would you have felt if you were wrongly accused?

The questions and accusations went on and on for Jesus. But the perfect Son of God didn't lose His temper, become sarcastic, or act rude. He was calm, unruffled, and patient. Jesus set the supreme example for us in patience. If He calmly looked to an undeserved death, surely Elizabeth can show patience instead of irritation with her sister, Cindy. Surely you can wait patiently for your first date, for the flu to pass, or for the semester to end.

Check which statement applies to you after almost a week of studying patience.

- I understand what's been presented, but as for me ... there's no way I can do it!
- I'm going to try my best to be patient from now on, but I'm not quite sure how I'll manage.
- I know it won't be easy, but with the example and help Jesus gives, I think it's possible!

If you checked either of the first two, then tomorrow's lesson may give you hope. If you marked the last statement, you're already on the right tract. Tomorrow's study will encourage you to keep going!

DAY SIX — Patience

TODAY'S VERSE: *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, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).*

Am I Stretchable?

The biggest concern of many sophomores and juniors is when Dad will finally let them take the car out alone. "What good is being 16 and having a license," these guys and girls impatiently ask, "if I'm not allowed to drive?"

Most seniors, however, are past that stage. Now their problems include wondering where to attend college and the big "what to do" in life. They want to know NOW!

Other teens' impatience stems from home life. Parents are old-fashioned and embarrassing. Brothers and sisters are a nuisance (and the dog never stops barking).

For many of these situations, Christian adults wisely advise, "The Lord will give you patience." But if you're like most teens, you wonder what that statement really means.

On My Own: *Talk to your youth pastor or another Christian adult you respect.* Ask him or her the simple question, "How can I learn to live each day patiently?" Tell him or her that you want practical help, not an abstract answer. **Record your findings here.**

There's certainly no easy formula for patience, as you might follow a recipe for pizza. But like making pizza, there are specific ingredients essential to the outcome. (Note: we're talking about patience for a Christian. Unsaved teens can't even attempt to follow such guidelines.)

1. First, get the facts. Write one personal patience problem that you've realized during this week. Be specific.

Is this situation ...

- something God is allowing in your life right now?
- something God is not allowing in your life now?
- a combination of both?

Is the situation ...

- temporary?
- long-term?

By evaluating the facts of the problem, you're heading in the right direction. (This is like taking inventory of your kitchen cupboards. What pizza ingredients do you have? What must you buy?)

2. Next comes the basic foundation of patience — a humbled heart. Pride says, "I run my life," and that, therefore, leads to impatience when things don't go your way. Humility realizes that as a Christian, your life belongs to the Lord. You don't control your life, He does. (Compare this to the pizza crust. Without a crust, you can't have pizza. Without humility, you can't have patience.) **Read James 4:6, 10.**

3. Next comes prayer. Although prayer is usually a secret time between you and the Lord, others see the results! Spend time asking the Lord for a patient and humbled heart. He'll give it to you if you ask! (On a pizza, this is like the sauce - mostly hidden, but absolutely necessary!) **Look at Jeremiah 33:3, a promise for when you call upon God.**

4. Last on a pizza comes all the various ingredients. This is what really makes the pizza and personalizes it for YOU. What's your liking - Italian sausage, pepperoni, olives, mushrooms, extra cheese?

For a Christian teen who humbly asks the Lord for patience, the Lord will personalize it in your life. He'll give you unique opportunities to test it out. If you pray for patience, don't be surprised if the Lord allows you extra situations in which to practice. Remember those wise words, ... *tribulation worketh patience (Rom. 5:3).*

When something comes up for which you really need patience, remember the "recipe." Review the four steps for patience by summarizing them below. Why not begin making them real in your life right now?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

As a pizza takes time to cook, so patience requires time to develop.

