

## ***The Fruit of the Spirit***

# ***The Fruit of the Spirit Is Patience***

Lesson #5 for January 30, 2010

Scriptures: Genesis 6:3; Exodus 34:6; Mark 4:26-29; Romans 10:5; Ephesians 4:1,2; Colossians 3:12,13; James 1:2-4.

1. This lesson focuses on the challenge of being patient. Why are people impatient? Why is it so difficult to develop the Christian characteristic of patience?
2. Does anyone in heaven ever lose his temper? Do you know a lot of very patient people? Do you feel comfortable around impatient people? What actually happens when a person loses his temper and becomes impatient? Does he lose control? Why does that happen?
3. In the *Koine* Greek of the New Testament, there are two words used for patience. *Hupomone* is a word which means endurance, steadfastness, or even fortitude. It means bearing up under a heavy burden. The second word is *macrothumia* which means “long-tempered” as opposed to short-tempered. It means such people do not become easily upset. It means that when circumstances are frustrating, the person does not allow that to turn him away from his Christian duty.
4. But, the real test of patience is not the fact that we have to wait, but rather, how we behave while we are waiting! Often, we do not have any choice about the waiting!
5. Why do you think patience is an important characteristic for people who want to enter the kingdom of heaven? Will there be any aggravating situations there? Long lines?
6. Impatience is the mark of a selfish person. By contrast, patience is an attribute of God. (Exodus 34:6,7) Was the Holocaust fair? Do you know any groups of people who hold grudges for generations? The prophet Jonah is known for his “big fish” story. But, he also said something very important about God—recorded in Jonah 4:2. Although we do not know all the circumstances, Jonah claimed that he did not want to go to Nineveh because he knew God was abundant in lovingkindness, patient, gracious, and merciful! Is that any reason to get upset?
7. God has waited almost 2000 years to bring this great controversy to a close even after the life and death of His Son which answered the great questions and challenges that Satan had raised. Why is God still waiting? (2 Peter 3:8,9) Clearly, He would like to save everybody. He would love to be able to save the Devil! But that, of course, is not possible. Given a chance, the Devil would just start the great controversy all over again!
8. Does God ever get excited about anything? (Luke 15:7,10) Is He always completely even-tempered? The Bible often describes God’s wrath or anger. When God becomes “angry,” has He lost His patience? Why did He send the flood? Did He lose control? Why did He send fire on Sodom and Gomorrah? Try to imagine what was happening in heaven during those occasions. Were the angels surprised to see God’s behavior?
9. Why does James tell us to be joyful when we are tested and are forced to exercise patience? (James 1:2-4;12-15) Under such circumstances wouldn’t we want to be anything but joyful? Are you joyful when your patience is being tried? Is God in any way responsible for the temptations that Satan sends? Will God allow Satan to tempt us more than we are able to bear? (1 Corinthians 10:13)
10. When you observe someone exercise great patience in a very irritating situation, what do you think is happening? Are they exercising wisdom? Or, do they just not care about what

is happening?

11. How are we supposed to get patience? (Romans 15:5) Does looking at the life of Jesus increase your patience? Are there a lot of very patient people around that we can observe? Or do we need to look directly to God Himself? Consider the example of Jesus. Even in the times described in the Old Testament, Jesus was incredibly patient with the Jewish people. It is by beholding that we become changed. (*Great Controversy* 555) Could we develop patience without going through trials?
12. If a person has developed true patience, is he spiritually mature? If we had true *agape* love for all human beings, as God does, wouldn't it be easy for us to be patient with people? What is the relationship between humility, gentleness, and patience? (Ephesians 4:1,2) Think of all that Paul went through. Is that what gave him patience?
13. We live in a very diverse world. Modern transportation and communication mean that we must interact with people from all over the world who have varied cultural backgrounds, languages, and beliefs. Does that help us to develop patience? Or, does it make it more difficult? Why do we make jokes about people with different backgrounds?
14. Paul has some very clear instructions for Christians. (Romans 14:1; 15:1) Those who are spiritually mature are to welcome the weak in faith—not to argue with them but to help them. Is patience given to us by the Holy Spirit? If we are real Christians, shouldn't we be helping others to have patience? Do people choose what kind of jobs they apply for based on the amount of patience required?
15. Think about your own personal experiences. Where is it the hardest to exercise patience? At home? At work? At church? What would the world be like if everyone were like you? Would you like the Lord to treat you the same way you treat others?
16. It is almost always true that things of value or worth take time. Skilled craftsmen spend long periods of time doing their work very carefully. Developing a loving, peaceful, and patient Christian character also takes time. It does not happen by accident.
17. Read Galatians 5:16-26. Paul clearly spelled out the idea that the Spirit is in constant conflict with the "flesh." It is much easier for us to exercise our selfish, natural human natures instead of exercising our spiritually mature, patient characteristics. Do we have to "put to death" our human natures?
18. Many Christians have tried at one time or another to tell others about the Gospel. Why is it that Christian teachings that may seem so clear to us seem so hard for others to understand? When we go to great effort to try to spread the good news and people do not respond, is it easy to become impatient with them?
19. Read Mark 4:26-29. We must remember that whenever we speak to people about the Scriptures or about God, we are "planting seed." We cannot necessarily expect an immediate harvest. It is very important at that point to make sure that we do not by our emotional response or our overt actions become a hindrance to that person accepting the good news.
20. Read 1 Samuel 16:7. Once again, we are reminded that the outward appearance—the outward behavior—is not the best measure of the man.
21. If we are unusually patient with people who are hostile, provocative, even vengeful, does it teach them anything?
22. Child psychologists tell us that when dealing with children if we lose our patience and

become angry with them, it gives them permission to become angry and upset themselves. This is why it is so very important that we learn to practice patience at home. Without patience we cannot pretend to be Christians. (1 Corinthians 13:4; Colossians 3:12,13; 1 Thessalonians 5:14)

23. Sometimes, true patience and true Christlike love will lead us to do things which do not make any sense from a human perspective. When someone hits you on one cheek, why would you turn the other? (Matthew 5:39) Is God asking us to be “doormats”?
24. There are people in our world who believe that patience is a mark of weakness. They believe that people are patient simply because they do not have the ability to do anything about it! But the Bible clearly presents patience as a virtue. Contrast those two views.
25. Read Exodus 34:6,7. If God is long-suffering and patient, why did He send the flood? Why did He pour out fire on Sodom and Gomorrah? Did God lose His patience? Or did He see that allowing conditions to continue as they were would lead to terrible disasters? At the time of the flood, God might have lost contact with the human race completely!
26. In the stories of Sodom and Gomorrah, the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness, or the Babylonian captivity, can we find evidence that might help to explain why God did what He did? (Deuteronomy 31:27; Psalms 95:8; Jeremiah 17:23; Ezekiel 20 & 36) God had to do something from time to time for the sake of His own reputation.
27. Is there ever a time when God’s patience truly runs out? Does God become upset? Does He lose control of His emotions? Or were there other factors requiring God to do what He did?
28. Is there ever a point when we would be justified in losing our patience? If continuing to exercise so-called patience leads to more damaging results in the future, is it better to take some action? Are there times when it is legitimate to end your patience?
29. Is there a conflict between God’s justice and His patience?
30. Think of things which try your patience. Why are those things upsetting to you? Are we more likely to become upset at church? At work? Or in our homes?
31. Can you name people in the Bible who took long periods of time and apparently developed significant patience? Moses? David? Job? What do their examples teach us?
32. How can we develop better and more patience? Should we seek out irritating situations so that we can practice our patience? Should we even rejoice when we are faced with difficult circumstances that try our patience? (James 1:2-4) How well are you doing at developing patience?
33. There may be some confusion in the older versions of the New Testament about the word translated *testing* or *tempting*. The word is *peirazo*. It means “proving” or “testing.” The Devil loves to test us; he has the hope that we will fail. God may allow testing to come to us with the hope that we will develop stronger characters and more patience.
34. The trials of life are God's workmen, to remove the impurities and roughness from our character. Their hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their burnishing and polishing, is a painful process; it is hard to be pressed down to the grinding wheel. But the stone is brought forth prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple. Upon no useless material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work. Only His precious stones are polished after the

similitude of a palace.—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 10.

35. How many of the temptations that you face on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis do you think are the direct result of Satan's activity? How many are the result of God allowing you to be tested? How many of them are just a result of your own bad habits? (James 1:13-15)
36. Is there a difference between tolerance and patience? When we see a family member or friend making bad choices, should we just tolerate it without making any comments?
37. There is a lot of talk in psychological circles about setting boundaries. What do we mean by setting boundaries? Does that mean that we set limits on our patience? Or does it mean we set limits on activities that we will tolerate? Can we still be patient when people violate those boundaries? Even if we find it necessary to take some kind of action? Can we develop the ability to take action without becoming emotionally upset? When Christ cleared out the temple on two different occasions, He was not being impatient. He just would not allow those people to turn His Father's house into a thieves playground!
38. The patience and long-suffering of God, which should soften and subdue the soul, has an altogether different influence upon the careless and sinful. It leads them to cast off restraint, and strengthens them in resistance. They think that the God who has borne so much from them will not heed their perversity. If we lived in a dispensation of immediate retribution, offenses against God would not occur so often. But though delayed, the punishment is none the less certain. There are limits even to the forbearance of God. The boundary of His long-suffering may be reached, and then He will surely punish. And when He does take up the case of the presumptuous sinner, He will not cease till He has made a full end.—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1166.
39. Think over the last few years of your life. Have you seen times when you have been tested and your character has grown? Does that happen more often than the times that you have failed? Is the only way to become more patient by suffering through trials and irritating situations? Or, can we learn more patience just by studying God's character and His behavior when He was here on earth? Would doing that prepare us for future irritating situations?
40. What grade would you give yourself on patience? Have you recently become upset and then impatient with others around you? What could you do to repair those damages?
41. When studying Scripture it is very clear that God is incredibly patient. However, He does set certain boundaries. Perhaps the most important boundary is when His enemies began to destroy His reputation. On such occasions, God has found it necessary to speak out to protect His own reputation. (See Ezekiel 20 & 36) As friends of God, what are we doing to correctly represent God's character? Do we stand up for God's reputation? Do we correctly represent Him even to our children?

© 2009, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials, and we might even want to share good ideas with others. So, let us know. [Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)

Last Modified: January 11, 2010

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSSTG-Hart\Fruit-Spirit\SS-5-Fruit-Spirit-2010\_01\_30-2009\_121\_19-Fin+.wpd