

## Patience is one of the most powerful of the Christian virtues

In the Scriptures, to be “patient” means to “endure.” The patient person is one who can hold up under a heavy load of hardship and still keep moving forward, making the choice to continue rather than give up. In a world where our goals are not always easy to reach, the quality of patience is obviously important. But in our spiritual lives, it is even more important. Without patience, we will not make it to heaven. “And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hb. 6:11,12).

In the Old Testament, Job is probably the individual who comes to mind when we think of patience. He steadfastly endured more suffering than most of us will ever experience, and his faith in God never faltered. James mentions Job as an example of patience when he says, “As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful” (Jas. 5:10,11).

In a sense, patience is the most important of the virtues because if we give up, nothing else will have mattered. This week, let’s think about the fact that *patience is one of the most powerful of the Christian virtues*. Being able to endure is not only a virtuous thing to do; it is an extremely high-leverage trait. In other words, it is a trait that energizes us and imparts a strength that empowers all the other characteristics we are to add to our faith. Consider love, for example. Is not love a more powerful thing if it is steadfast, having the strength of endurance and patience?

Like all the other virtues, however, patience is a choice. We can grow in our patience — and that will be the point of our lessons this week — but we will never get to the point where patience is automatic. As long as we live, we will have to make the decision every day to keep going. This life is not a short-distance sprint; it is a long-distance marathon. So we must not only know how to run, but we must decide to keep running, even when it would be tempting to quit.

### Monday: Acts 14:21,22

**Key Idea:** In our journey toward heaven, there will be some serious difficulties to be dealt with.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did Paul know these recent converts needed to understand about life in Christ? In their specific case, what sort of “tribulations” might Paul have had in mind? What other kinds of difficulty might we face in this life?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 29:15.

## Tuesday: Hebrews 10:35-39

**Key Idea:** In the Scriptures, we are urged to keep going and not give up in the face of hardship.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does it mean in **v.35** that we should not “throw away [our] confidence”? According to **v.36**, when may we expect to receive that which God has promised to us? In **vv.38,39**, what is said about those who “shrink back”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:16.**

## Wednesday: James 1:2-4

**Key Idea:** We can rejoice when hardship produces within us a greater endurance.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are “trials,” and how are they different from “temptations”? What does it mean for our faith to be “tested”? In **v.4**, what are we urged to do? Will hardships make our faith stronger if we don’t have this attitude toward our difficulties?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:17.**

## Thursday: Luke 21:19

**Key Idea:** It is only by patience and endurance that we will gain our lives.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What different translations of this passage can you find? What do you think is the main idea of Jesus’ statement? Why is patience (or endurance) such a crucial quality? If we don’t hold out until the end, will any of our other character traits be of any use?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:18.**

## Friday: Revelation 2:10

**Key Idea:** A crown of life awaits us if we make the choice to endure hardship steadfastly.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What did the Lord say was going to happen to the saints in Smyrna? What assurance did He give them? In **3:11**, what did He exhort the saints in Philadelphia to do? What does it mean to “conquer” or “overcome” (**2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21**).

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 29:19.**

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