

Day 7

Patience

Silence (2 minutes) Take some time to be quiet, to calm down, and to listen. What has God been teaching you? What are the next steps He wants you to take? How is your spirit doing?

Scripture *"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."* James 1:19-20

Discussion It's probably not a surprise to people that U.S. culture has moved more to being slow to listen, quick to speak, and quick to anger. In entertainment (TV, movies, music, and sports), social media, education, politics (federal, state, and local) news commentary, and even churches, there has been a dramatic shift in this direction. Those of us who remember a time of much more patience, cooperation, and respect can be tempted to judge who is to blame and complain. That doesn't really fix anything; we are then just more tempted to obsess and become bitter. Jesus doesn't call us to bitterness and it isn't a fruit of the Spirit. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. James tells us, *"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry..."* As followers of Christ, that is the direction we need to go, whether our culture improves or not. A good habit could be to assess our own part of conversations, particularly when we disagree or feel impatient or irritated. Did I listen well or just wait until I could speak? Would I be able to repeat back what I heard? Was I eager to understand their thinking, looking for common ground? Was I slow to speak? Did I let them speak first? Did I interrupt? Did I speak briefly so that dialogue was encouraged, or give a long monologue, which discourages conversation? Did I become angry slowly, being careful not to use words that people experience as insulting? Did I respectfully take a break from the conversation to cool off? Or did I continue to talk, getting angrier until I said something that damaged the relationship? It's probably a lot easier and faster to build a positive relationship, even with someone we have disagreements with, than to repair one that has been damaged. And when our relationships are damaged, Jesus does expect us to repair them. *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment...Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift"* (Mt. 5:21-24). *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen...Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"* (Eph. 4:29-32).

Application Patience with others is a way in which we as Christians can shine the light of Christ in a way that directly shows God's love in our lives. God desires for us to be patient not just with those we get along with but also with those who tend to get under our skin. Is there anyone today you can specifically ask God to assist you being patient with?

Prayer Father, I commit myself to be *"quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."* Please work in me to speak *"only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs and to be kind and compassionate to others, forgiving them just as You forgave me."* I commit myself to stay away from bitterness and sarcasm. When bitter remarks and sarcasm enter my mind, please help me to be silent, to not speak them. When I lack discipline and I do speak them, please convict me and help me to quickly stop, confess it to You, and when needed ask forgiveness of others. Thank You, Father, that You have forgiven me and are working in me. Please continue to make me more like You. Thank You, Father. I love You. Amen.

Silence (2 minutes) Talk to God about what you are learning. What are your fears? Where are your hangups? Pray for direction.

Scripture memory for the week: *"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."* James 1:19-20