

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Maturing From Trials.*"

This is our third sermon on trials.

- In the first sermon we discussed how trials test and prove our faith.
- In the second sermon we discussed how we can count it all joy when we experience trials b/c of the patience they produce.

And this morning we're going to discuss how that patience produces maturity in our lives.

Please look at **verse 4**...

**4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

Verses 2 through 4 are worded oddly. If we weren't familiar w/ these verses, we'd expect them to say: **Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing the test of your faith produces patience, WHICH makes you perfect and complete, lacking nothing.** We would expect to be told trials produce patience, and patience makes us perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

But that's not what it says: instead there are some important words at the beginning of **verse 4**. It's the words **let patience have its perfect work**. These words are actually a command. They're telling us to do something, and this brings us to **Lesson 1**...

### **LESSON 1: WE HAVE TO "LET" TRIALS MAKE US BETTER INSTEAD OF BITTER.**

Before we discuss this lesson, let me first make an important point...

Trials and temptations are NOT the same. I'll discuss temptations in a later sermon, but briefly:

- Tests or trials are from God. He has a special purpose in them. He wants to use them to make us better. He uses them to bring out the best in us. This is what we've been discussing the last few weeks.
- Temptations on the other hand do not come from God. Temptations come from the enemies we face: the devil, the world or our flesh. **James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.**

Think of it like this:

- God tests us to bring out the best in us.
- Satan, the world and our flesh tempt us to bring out the worst in us.

So trials and temptations aren't the same, but there is a common temptation we face in EVERY trial and it's this: it's the temptation to turn against God. It's the temptation to get angry or bitter toward God.

This is exactly what Satan said Job would do if God allowed trials in his life:

- **Job 1:11 Stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"**

- **Job 2:5 Stretch out Your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”**
- Sadly, this is even what Job’s wife TOLD him to do: **Job 2:9 “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!”** What a wonderful wife. How in the world one of the greatest men in history ended up w/ this woman I have no idea.

I would love to be able to say, “*Trials produce patience, and patience makes you perfect and complete, lacking nothing*” but I can’t say that b/c Scripture doesn’t say that, and Scripture doesn’t say that b/c there’s no guarantee trials are going to make us **perfect and complete, lacking nothing**.

It’s important to understand trials don’t always produce maturity in people’s lives. There’s no guarantee trials are going to make us better. They can also make us bitter.

- Perhaps you can think of people who have been through trials and it seemed to produce the opposite maturity: it produced immaturity. They became bitter or resentful. They said things like:
  - *How could God let this happen?*
  - *Why would God do this to me?*
  - *I don’t deserve this!*
  - *When I see God I’m going to give Him a piece of my mind!*
- Perhaps if we’re honest, we can think of times in our lives when trials didn’t produce patience or maturity. Instead, of making us better, they made us bitter.

We have to be aware of this danger w/ trials, and **verse 4** gives us the solution. **Verse 4** tells us how to become better instead of bitter. It says **LET patience have it’s perfect work**

- **AS let endurance have its perfect result**
- **ESV let steadfastness have its full effect**

We need to understand the word **let**...

The Greek word for **let** is [\*echo\*](#) (pr: eh-ho). It means, “*to have, hold, own, possess, lay hold of, adhere or cling to.*” Of the 712 times it occurs in the NT, 613 times it’s translated as *have*. Here are a few places the word for **let** is used:

- When Jesus tried to be baptized in **Matt 3:14 John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need (or have) to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?”** The word for **need** is *echo*.
- **Acts 2:44 Now all who believed were together, and had (this is *echo*) all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had (again this is *echo*) need.**

It’s a word describing ownership. It’s not just about accepting trials in our lives, it’s about taking ownership of them. We can’t reject them and resist them – allowing them to make us bitter – we have to embrace them – allowing them to make us better. This is how we **let patience have its perfect work**.

The word for **let** is a verb, b/c it’s commanding us to do something:

- We have to **let** God work through the trials...
- We have to **let** the trials make us better.

It's possible to fight against them, resisting them, preventing them from accomplishing the work God wants them to do.

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I'm assuming most of us have been to the doctor and gotten shots. Right before he sticks the needle in, he always says the same thing: *"Relax. Try to stay as relaxed as possible. This is going to hurt, but it's going to hurt more if you resist."* Basically the doctor is telling you to accept what's about to happen, and if you don't you're going to make it worse.

And it's the same w/ trials...

- We're going to experience them...
- They're going to hurt...

But we make it worse if we resist. Instead, we want to accept them, and...

- It's our acceptance that allows patience to produce maturity.
- It's our acceptance that allows trials to make us better instead of bitter.

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After Job's wife told him to **Curse God and die**, he said, **"You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed ACCEPT good from God, and shall we not ACCEPT adversity?"**

Basically he said, *"We need to let trials be part of our lives. We can't reject them. We can't resist them."* Job was willing – at least initially – to receive the trials God was allowing in his life.

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We can all agree that the time of greatest testing is still future. **Rev 3:10** calls the Tribulation **the hour of TRIAL which shall come upon the whole world, to TEST those who dwell on [it]**. If you're familiar w/ the plagues and judgments that are poured out during the Tribulation you can know why it's described this way. It will be a time of difficult testing, and everyone will fall into one of two categories regarding how they respond: they get better or they get bitter...

The first group, that gets better: **Rev 11:13** **They were afraid and GAVE GLORY TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN.**

The second group – experiencing the exact same trials – they get bitter...

- **Rev 16:8** **The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun...9 men were scorched with great heat, and THEY BLASPHEMED THE NAME OF GOD...THEY DID NOT REPENT AND GIVE HIM GLORY. 10** Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl [and there was] darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. <sup>11</sup> **THEY BLASPHEMED THE GOD OF HEAVEN BECAUSE OF THEIR PAINS AND THEIR SORES, AND DID NOT REPENT.**
- **Rev 16:21** **Great hail from heaven fell upon men. MEN BLASPHEMED GOD because of the...hail.**

These groups face the exact same trials, but they produce two completely different responses:

- One group is drawn to God. They **give [Him] glory**. This group gets better.
- The other group **blasphemes God**. They refuse to **give [Him] glory**. This group gets bitter.

It all comes down to how we respond to trials, and whether we **let them have their perfect work.**

I'd like to give you two examples from the OT:

- One example of trials making someone better.
- One example of trials making someone bitter.

Please turn to **2 Sam 15...**

One of the lowest points in David's life took place when his son Absalom stole the throne from him. Sadly it wasn't just that Absalom took the throne, it's that the nation of Israel also chose to follow him. Look at **2 Sam 15:13...**

**13 Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."**

This had to be excruciating to have Absalom take the throne from him, and it's made even worse when he learns the nation rejected him and embraced his son.

As a result, David was forced to flee the capital. Look at the next verse...

**14 So David said to all his servants who *were* with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."**

So David and his men fled so Absalom didn't kill them.

Now at this point you're thinking, "*Things can't get any worse.*" Well actually they can when David meets a man named Shimei while he's fleeing. Look at the next chapter, **2 Sam 16:5...**

**5 Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul whose name *was* Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came.**

Since Shimei is related to Saul, he hates David for being king instead of one of Saul's sons. Either he didn't know how Saul was rejected by God or he chose to ignore that fact. And cursing isn't enough for him. Look at the next verse...

**<sup>6</sup> And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left. <sup>7</sup> Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: "Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! <sup>8</sup> The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you *are caught* in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!"**

Shimei blames David for Saul's death and the deaths of those in Saul's family, but if you're familiar w/ 1 Samuel, you know David could've killed Saul on multiple occasions, but he never did. He even stopped his men from killing Saul when they wanted to, and at this moment one of David's men – Abishai – the same man who wanted to kill Saul earlier, wants to kill Shimei too. Look at **verse 9...**

**9 “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!”**

Abishai is the OT Queen of Hearts from Alice in Wonderland: *“Off with his head!”*

Abishai doesn't like anyone treating his Uncle David this way, but listen to what David said...

**16:10 But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because (now notice this...) THE LORD HAS SAID TO HIM, ‘CURSE DAVID.’ Who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’”**

**<sup>11</sup> And David said to Abishai and all his servants, “See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now *may this* Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so (notice this a second time...) THE LORD HAS ORDERED HIM. <sup>12</sup> It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day.”**

The reason I wanted to look at this is David is experiencing a terrible trial, and twice he attributes Shimei's actions to God. He saw Shimei as a trial from God, and he was determined to accept it and not allow it to make him bitter.

Now I don't personally think God ordered Shimei to do this, but you see how David received this, and it's a tremendous example to us. He surrenders to the trial **letting patience have its perfect work.**

And if you want to know how much patience was required of David during this trial, look at the next verse...

**<sup>13</sup> And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust. <sup>14</sup> Now the king and all the people who *were* with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there.**

Picture this...

David and his men continue walking, while Shimei curses, throws rocks, and kicks up dust at them. Do you think that took some patience to walk along while Shimei did this? If you asked me for a great example of patience or longsuffering in Scripture, this is a picture of it right here. I can't imagine the patience and longsuffering it took for David and his men to allow Shimei to continue acting like this. You can be sure this trial was producing patience in their lives, and David was **letting that patience have its perfect work.**

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Now I also want to briefly show you someone who was NOT like Job or David...

- Someone who didn't let patience have its perfect work...
- Someone who became bitter instead of better...

Please turn to the right to **2 Chr 14:2**. Samuel, Kings and then Chronicles.

**2 Chr 14:2 Asa did *what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God.***

I want to show you a few verses about Asa, but first I wanted you to see what's said of him. He was a great king. He was one of the best in the OT. If what we're about to read can happen to him, it can happen to us too.

Now please turn to the right to **2 Chr 16:10**.

Sadly – like many people – Asa had trouble finishing well. Toward the end of his life he was attacked by another nation and instead of turning to God, he turned to the king of Syria for help. In doing so, he took a bunch of silver and gold from the temple to pay him man off.

Asa's plan worked, but then a prophet named Hanani rebuked him for turning to Syria instead of turning to God. Now listen to the way Asa responded when Hanani confronted him...

**10 Then Asa was angry with the seer (or prophet), and put him in prison, for *he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time.***

He got so angry when he was rebuked he imprisoned the prophet and he even lashed out at some of his own people.

But despite Asa's terrible actions, God did something wonderful for Asa. Perhaps it's b/c he had been such a great king and had served God so well throughout his life, God graciously reached out to him and tried to draw Him back to Himself. Look at **verse 12...**

**12 And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians.**

God allowed this trial in Asa's life. It was probably a terrible case of gout or gangrene. Maybe you say, "*This doesn't seem too wonderful or gracious.*" It was b/c Asa reigned 41 years, and this was the 39<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. He's within two years of the end of his life, and this great king who had spent decades serving the Lord faithfully was about to finish terribly.

Very mercifully God sent this illness – a trial – to provide Asa w/ a final opportunity to turn back to God. Asa had struggled turning to God. He previously turned to the Syrians instead of turning to God. Now God gives him another chance, but unfortunately he failed. He only turned to the **physicians**. To be clear, there's nothing wrong w/ turning to physicians for help, but the verse is worded in such a way as to criticize Asa for **ONLY** turning to the physicians.

God allowed this trial in Asa's life, but Asa didn't **let patience have its perfect work**. Instead, he **let** it make him angry toward God. God wanted to use this trial to make Asa better, but he let it make him bitter instead.

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Let me conclude this lesson by saying this...

Every trial is an opportunity for us to become better or bitter. We have to choose to let patience make us better. This means accepting the trials God allows in our lives, and if we submit to them patience is able to have its perfect work.

So here are the questions we need to ask ourselves:

- Are we letting patience have its perfect work in our lives?
  - Are we responding like Job and David?
  - Are we letting trials make us better?
- Or are we preventing patience from having its perfect work in our lives?
  - Are we responding like Asa?
  - Are we letting trials make us bitter?

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Now let's look at the rest of **verse 4**...

**4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

If you've been here for the last two sermons, you've probably noticed we've broken down each verse, looking at phrases and sometimes even individual words. I did that for the end of **verse 4**: I had a lesson about the three things patience does in our lives. The lesson was, "*Patience...*

- *(Part I) Perfects us...*
- *(Part II) Makes us **complete**...*
- *(Part III) Allows us to **lack nothing**.*

I wanted to explain how patience does these three things, but something happened. As I studied out these words I found out pretty quickly they're all saying the same thing. Basically they're synonyms. Listen to this...

- The word for **perfect** doesn't mean free from error or free from mistakes like we generally think. It's the word *teleios* (pr: tel-ee-oss) which means, "*brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness.*" Basically it means **complete** or **lacking nothing**.
- **Complete** is *holoklēros* (pr: huh-lock-lay-ross) and it means, "*complete in all its parts, in no part wanting or unsound, entire, whole.*" Basically it means **perfect** or **lacking nothing**.
- [**Lacking nothing**] is three words in Greek that mean just what they sound like: you don't need anything: you're **perfect** or **complete**.

So **verse 4** isn't describing three different things patience produces in our lives; it's describing one thing patience produces in our lives in three different ways. James is very repetitive. He uses synonyms. You can circle the words **perfect and complete, lacking nothing** and write, "*Maturity.*"

And this brings us to Lesson 2...

## LESSON 2: (CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK'S SERMON) TRIALS PRODUCE PATIENCE, WHICH PRODUCES MATURITY.

Last week's sermon discussed trials producing patience, and now we can see how that patience produces maturity.

Jerry Bridges said, *"Every adversity that comes across our path, whether large or small, is intended to help us grow in some way."*

God wants a mature, finished, complete project, that's lacking nothing. And it's trials that produce patience that produces maturity...if we let it. God's goal for our lives is maturity:

- We have children and we want them to mature.
- God has children – us – and He wants us to mature.
- Imagine how tragic it would be if our children stayed children. God feels the same: He doesn't want His children to stay children.

The author of Hebrews rebuked some of his readers who had been following Christ for some time, but were still children spiritually:

- **Heb 5:12** **By this time you ought to be teachers, [but ]you need *someone* to teach you...[you still] need milk and not solid food.**
- **Heb 6:1** **[Leave] the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection (or maturity).**

Before I make the next point, I want to briefly share something w/ you...

Especially since Pastor Doug has arrived, more of my week consists of studying for the three messages I prepare: the sermon, Sunday School in Hebrews and Wednesday night in Revelation. As a result of all the time in God's Word, I'm often learning information I didn't already know. It's truly a blessing, I love it, and I'm thankful to be able to do it week-in-and-week-out.

But occasionally something happens where I wouldn't say my knowledge or understanding is increased, I would say my knowledge or understanding is changed. I'd go so far as to say I learn something that contradicts something I previously thought. Whenever we read the Bible, the question should never be:

- What do we think?
- Or what do we want to think?
- Or what have we been told?
- Or what makes the most sense to us?

The question should always be, *"What does the Bible say?"*

And this past week when I was studying **James 1:4** I didn't just learn more about trials, I learned something that caused my thinking about trials to change.



When we're going through trials, we'll sometimes guess what we should be learning or what God is trying to teach us. We'll say things like, *"I went through this trial and..."*

- *I learned to trust God more.*
- *I learned to be more honest.*
- *God is teaching me how to forgive.*
- *God is teaching me to have tougher skin.*

These are the kinds of things we say, and...

- We could be learning these things through trials...
- God could be teaching us different things as we go through trials...

But that's not what James is saying in **verse 4**.

He doesn't say there's one particular area of our life that grows, or one particular lesson we learn. He doesn't say...

- **Let patience have its perfect work, that you might grow in this weak area that God wants to target.**
- **Or Let patience have its perfect work, that you might learn the lesson God has been trying to teach you for 15 years.**

He says trials produce patience, and patience produces maturity...and it's a maturity that affects every area of our Christian lives. Trials affect – and have the potential to improve – every facet of our spiritual lives.

This is the point James is making: he says **trials will produce patience, which will allow us to be perfect and complete, lacking nothing**. By definition, these words are all encompassing. James is saying every part of us is affected...if that wasn't the case, we wouldn't be very complete. We would be pretty lacking.

Think of your children growing up...

- Yes, they might grow and become stronger in some areas while remaining weaker in other areas...
- Yes, they might develop victory in some areas while continuing to struggle in other areas...

But for the most part as your children grow, they generally grow and mature overall.

If I can use a weightlifting analogy...

Squats are called the "King of all exercises." They get this name b/c – unlike some other exercises – they train your whole body, including even your cardiovascular system:

- If you curl you'll be using your biceps.
- If you bench press you'll be using your chest.
- If you do pullups you'll be using your back.

But if you do squats, you'll be using more of your body than during any other exercise.

And trials are sort of like squats – b/c they hurt and are painful like squats – but also b/c they train or strengthen your entire body spiritually. There isn't one small area of your spiritual life that is strengthened by trials; all areas of our spiritual life are strengthened...helping us to be **perfect, complete and lacking nothing**.

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We don't ever reach the perfection or completion God has for us on this side of heaven, but trials bring us in that direction.

And I stress this – I try to make this point clearly – b/c I hope it might be an encouragement to you. When you go through trials, keep in mind how every area of your Christian life can be positively affected.

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And James isn't the only one to make this point about trials. Please listen to these words Paul shared in his second letter to the Thessalonians. If there's a NT church we'd want to be like, it would be the Thessalonians. They were a wonderful, mature church...and Paul said trials produced this maturity...

**2 Thes 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,**

Paul applauds them for having faith that grows exceedingly and love that abounds...and he says why that's the case in the next verse...

**<sup>4</sup>so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God FOR YOUR PATIENCE and faith in all your PERSECUTIONS AND TRIBULATIONS that you endure,**

All the trials and tribulations they'd experienced produced patience, and that patience produced maturity.

But the clearest place Paul makes this point is in **Rom 5:3-4**. Please turn there...

**Rom 5:3a We glory in tribulations** (or trials),

You can circle the words "**We glory in tribulations**" and write, "*James 1:2 and 1 Pet 1:6.*"

- Paul says, "**We glory in tribulations...**"
- James says, "**Count it all joy when you fall into various trials**"
- Peter says, "**In this you greatly rejoice...[when] you have been grieved by trials...**"

It's a theme in the NT that we're supposed to find glory and joy in trials b/c of what they produce, and Paul says what trials produce in the rest of the verse...

**3b knowing that tribulation** (or trials) **produces perseverance** (or endurance or patience);

The word for **patience** or **perseverance** or **endurance** is the same word we've discussed in the last two sermons: *hypomonē* (pr: who-poh-muh-nay). I told you it means: "*steadfastness, constancy,*

*endurance, perseverance. The characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.”*

You can circle the words **tribulation produces perseverance** and write, “*Jam 1:2-3.*”

- James says, “**trials test our faith faith producing patience...**”
- Paul says, “**tribulation (or trials) produces perseverance (or patience).**”

And listen to what this **perseverance** or patience produces...

#### **4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.**

Paul says **tribulations** – or trials – are going to produce **perseverance** – or patience – which is going to produce **character**.

Trials lead to well-rounded virtue or character:

- There is no virtue that trials can't build in our lives...if we let it happen.
- There's no character that trials can't strengthen in our lives...if we let it happen.

And I want to make a brief point about trials...

I want to make sure when we think of trials, we don't think only of monumental issues. Not all trials stop us in our tracks and cause us to recognize we're going through something life changing. Most of the trials we experience take place on a day-to-day basis. They might even be unrecognizable b/c they've become somewhat routine.

But even if these trials become unrecognizable, we want to recognize they are often the most common way God shapes us. It's our endurance – our perseverance – through the day-to-day trials of life that often cause the most maturity in us:

- Sleepless nights with babies...
- An unpleasant coworker...
- A strong-willed child...
- Marriage struggles...
- Financial issues...

And we also need to recognize these situations can make us bitter too: they can make us as bitter as the person who lost a child or experienced a trial we would consider to be earthshattering. Bitterness through trials can occur after one terrible event, but often it occurs throughout a lifetime, steadily increasing over time as a result of the daily struggles we experience.

OR...the alternative is we can let these day-to-day trials produce patience in us that produces maturity.

So here's the question: which person are you?

- Do you embrace your daily trials and see them as tools in the hands of God to help you mature?
- Or do you resist them becoming more bitter, day-by-day?

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You have a list in James 1 and Romans 5 describing how maturity takes place, and in both lists patience is first. God wants us to learn patience, b/c patience is what's necessary for maturity.

Another way to look at it is patience is the key to every other blessing:

- James says patience is the key to being **perfect and complete, lacking nothing**.
- Paul says patience is the key to **character and hope**.

Patience is first in both lists b/c the Christian who doesn't learn patience will learn almost nothing else. Let me say that one more time: the Christian who doesn't learn patience will learn almost nothing else.

- The Christian who doesn't learn patience will not mature.
- The Christian who doesn't learn patience won't experience many of the other blessings God has for us.

And this brings us to Lesson 3...

### LESSON 3: PATIENCE AND MATURITY GO HAND-IN-HAND.

Please think about the reality of this lesson. For a moment, consider how much patience and maturity go hand-in-hand:

- A patient person is usually a mature person, and a mature person is usually a patient person.
- An impatient person is usually an immature person, and an immature person is usually an impatient person.

Think about children...

- When we see a child throwing a fit b/c he's not getting what he wants, we think, "*That is a very immature child!*"
- When we see a child waiting patiently, contently, we think, "*That's a very mature child.*"

We all see how patience and maturity go hand-in-hand w/ children.

What do you start teaching your children from the earliest possible age? Or let me say it like this...

What do you start TELLING YOUR children at the earliest possible time so they can start learning what you want to teach them at the earliest possible age? What is the first word they hear from you? "*No!*" And that word is meant to teach your children one thing: patience.

I don't want to sound harsh – we were all children at one time – but:

- Children are born impatient.
- They are born selfish.
- The only person they think about is themselves.

So what we do is we tell our children, “No!” to train them to be patient, and as we do that we’re helping them mature:

- We recognize that if our children don’t learn patience they’ll learn almost nothing else...
- And we recognize if we can teach our children patience, it will go far in helping them learn most other things they need to learn.

We’ve all seen children who are very patient and they seem more like adults, and we’ve all seen adults who are very impatient and they seem more like children. Maturity isn’t an issue of age or height...

- Maturity is shown by our response to trials...
- Maturity is shown by our response when we don’t get what we want...
- Maturity is shown by our response when we’re not treated the way want to be treated.

These are the revelations of maturity...and they’re all related to patience.

Like we’ve talked about, patience is often translated as *endurance* or *perseverance*. If you think of patience as endurance or perseverance, then you can almost think of patience as the quality of not quitting:

- When you see immature children - or adults - who lack patience, they often quit. When they experience trials they give up. They don’t have the maturity to endure or persevere. They have decided NOT to let patience have its perfect work.
- When you see mature people – whether children or adults – who have patience, they don’t quit. When they experience trials they don’t give up. They have the maturity to endure or persevere. They have decided to LET patience have its perfect work.

God wants to learn patience so we can endure and persevere. And God teaches us patience by allowing trials in our lives. There’s nothing that can teach us patience like trials. No sermon can teach you patience...

- Sermons can teach you how to respond to trials...
- Sermons can teach you what trials can accomplish in your life...

But sermons can’t teach you patience. Only trials can.

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I’d like to close by sharing a story w/ you that took place this past week...

I’ve been taking our kids to the pool each week to teach them to swim:

- I can talk to them about swimming...
- I can tell them what swimming is like...
- I can even show them videos of people swimming...

But obviously if they want to learn how to swim, they’re going to have to get in the water.

Now when I first brought the kids to the pool a few months ago, I could barely get them to come all the way down the steps. When they came down the steps, they stayed glued to the sides. I had to continually challenge them to come out further into the water, including even forbidding them from standing on the steps or holding on to the sides.

Once they got comfortable leaving the steps and letting go of the sides, they wanted to play, but they didn't want to learn to swim. I've had to force them to do – or practice – other things instead that would allow them to learn to swim.

Now I got permission from Rhea to share this story...

This past week I was in the deep end w/ Rhea. By this point I've watched her swim in the shallow end, but this is the first time she's ever been in the deep end. As you can imagine she was clinging to the side, she was scared, and she didn't want to be there.

We were having a conversation about how she was feeling, what I wanted her to do and what she didn't want to do. She was telling me how scared she was, how she didn't want to be there, she was almost begging me to be able to go back to the shallow end, and she was either crying or pretty close to crying. I could see the fear in her face.

The truth is I've seen the kids act fearful and reluctant since I first brought them to the pool, but this was the most fearful I'd seen Rhea. As we were hanging on to the side together, I said, *"Rhea, I've been pushing you this whole time. Every time we've come to the pool you've had to do things you didn't want to do. There's nothing I've wanted you to do that you actually wanted to do. It's been a constant stretching and challenging. I know you haven't liked it, but if this wasn't the case you'd still be sitting there on the steps."*

She did end up swimming across the deep end from one side to the other, and after that she ended up swimming across the pool from the deep end to the shallow end w/o touching the bottom.

- I could see how much it built her confidence.
- I could see how much better she felt about her own ability.
- I could see how much more faith she had.

Trials are really like this: they're like the deep end of the pool. We don't like them. We wish we didn't have to engage in them. We'd rather sort of sit on the steps in the shallow end where:

- We're comfortable...
- We never have to be challenged...
- We don't have to do anything we've never done before...
- We don't ever have to be afraid...

If we're honest, we have to admit we'd probably spend our lives sitting on the steps if we could.

But if we had our way...

- If God never challenged us...
- If He never stretched us...
- If He never grew us through trials...

There would be two very unfortunate consequences...

1. First, we wouldn't be very much use to God. There wouldn't be very much God would be able to do w/ us.
2. Second, we wouldn't be very much like His Son.

## **LESSON 4: TRIALS MAKE US MORE LIKE CHRIST.**

When we talk about being perfect, complete and lacking nothing, you say, “*What does that look like?*” Simply put: it looks like looking like Jesus, and trials are one of the main ways God helps us look like – and appreciate – His Son. What does it look like to be mature? It looks like looking like Christ.

Let me close w/ this quote...

Douglas Kelly said, *"As God's dear children, we, who by grace are adopted, are called into the fellowship of suffering trials with Christ, soon enough to be followed by glory, glory with Christ. The trials come before the glory; the cross comes before the crown. This is the case with God's only begotten Son, and it is the case with His adopted sons and daughters."*

### **LET'S REVIEW THESE LESSONS:**

**LESSON 1: WE HAVE TO “LET” TRIALS MAKE US BETTER INSTEAD OF BITTER.**

**LESSON 2: (CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK'S SERMON) TRIALS PRODUCE PATIENCE, WHICH PRODUCES MATURITY.**

**LESSON 3: PATIENCE AND MATURITY GO HAND-IN-HAND.**

**LESSON 4: TRIALS MAKE US MORE LIKE CHRIST.**