

Growing in our Patience with Difficult People: Romans 12: 9-16

Difficult people are everywhere in a sin-saturated world; they often bring suffering. Am I a difficult person to someone else? Jesus, the Suffering Servant, is our ultimate example of endurance as He bore unspeakable hostility from others. He intercedes as our High Priest so that we too can endure. Let's refresh our hearts through the lens of Scripture, realizing the Gospel is the key to peace.

Two Questions: Why and how should we grow in patience and love with difficult people.

I. Why should we grow in patience and love toward difficult people?

1. Scripture: We were made to bring glory to God. (Isa. 43:7)

- o To give God glory is to give the (difficult) people in our lives the right impression of God.
- o Rom. 8:28 tells us that for those who love God all things work together for good, and verse 29 says, *"those whom He foreknew He predestined to be conformed to His image."* The good is that we are conformed to Christ's image.
- o God is using difficult people to sanctify us (i.e. to make us more like Him).

2. The Biblical Mandate is clear: *"Love your neighbor as yourself. And..."in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you,"* (Matthew 22:39 and 7:12). We know that the Gospel is the key to peace.

3. 2nd Cor. 5:15 *"and He (Christ) died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him."*

4. God Himself is patient. Patience literally means slow to anger. Exodus 34:6

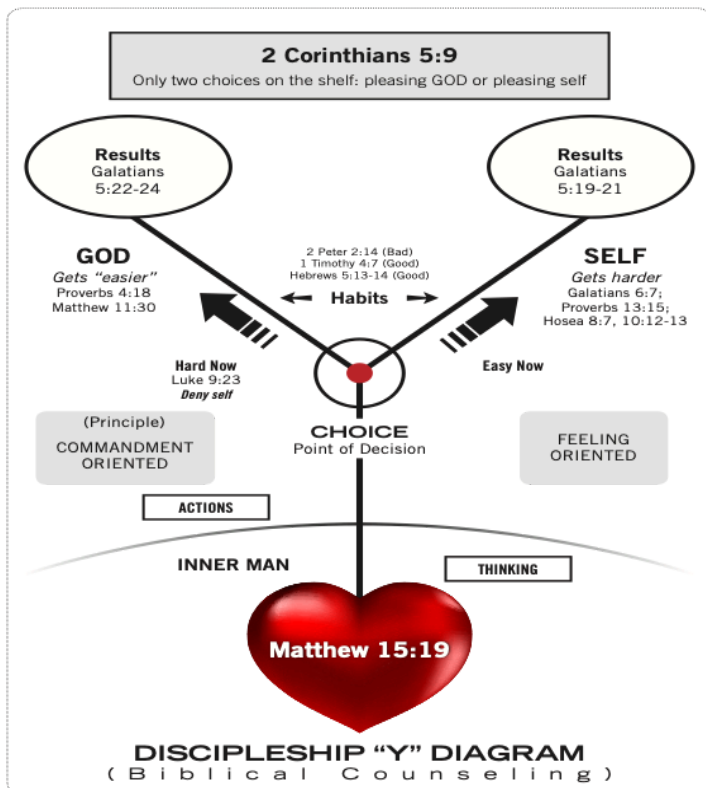
5. James 1: 19-20 *"Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."*

6. Jesus said, *"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..."* Mathew 5:44.

7. The Book of Proverbs illustrates that there is wisdom in growing in patience when dealing with difficult people.

- Prov.12:16 says: *"A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult."*
- Prov. 20:3 *"It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel."*
- Proverbs 17:14: *"Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out."*

8. Romans 12:14: *"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them..."* vs 16, *"Live in harmony with one another..."* vs. 17, *"Repay no one evil for evil ..."* vs. 18 *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all..."* vs. 20 *"if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink..."*



Y Chart

Matthew 15:19 *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery...false witness, slander."*

Only two choices on the shelf: 1) Live for self or 2) Live for God. Following our own desires, a feelings-oriented life lived for self (i.e. the flesh), reaps corruption. Gal. 6:7-8.

"The works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy ..." Gal. 5:19-21.

Paul Tripp: We were meant to live in loving worship upward toward God and outward toward neighbors with patience and love. But the DNA of sin is selfishness. We dehumanize others as either vehicles or obstacles to what I want.

James 4:1-2 *"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you... Your passions are at war within you... You covet and cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel."*

II. How can we grow in patience and love toward difficult people? We must be born again.

When we choose to recall the cross and God's instructions to us and decide to live for God rather than self, we are living a Commandment or Scripture-oriented life. *"So, whether we're at home or away, we make it our desire to please him."* 2 Cor. 5:9.

See Jesus as our example. “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” Hebrews 12:3.

Living for God requires denying ourselves and is harder at first. It involves replacing our sinful habits with Scripture-driven thoughts and habits, but becomes easier, pleases God, and produces fruit in our relationships with others.

R.C. Sproul, Live all of life *Coram Deo* - “in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.”

We are able to grow in patience with difficult people once we recognize that we too are sinners, who have experienced the love of God due to the “riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us.” (Caroline Newheiser), Ephesians 1:7-8. Then we are able to:

1. Pray for the troublesome person. Matt. 5:44.
2. Pray for yourself and your own heart. Matt. 7:3-5 (speck vs. log), James 5:16
 - a. Acknowledge the possibility of our own sin first before looking at the sin/s of others. What is my part, if any? Where do I need to grow? Idols at play? My own sins against God are first, worse; most in need of repenting (Bigney).
 - b. If appropriate, recognize your need for a softened heart and greater humility. Ezekiel 36:26b, “*And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*” A softened heart can replace bitterness and resentment.
 - c. Augustine: “Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.”
3. Realize we can be hypersensitive to the choice of words and behavior of others. Eccles. 7:21 “*Do not take to heart all the things that people say...*”
4. Overlook the offense if possible. Prov. 19:11, “*Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.*” We’ve been forgiven more sins against God than all the sins combined that have been committed against us, so we can look past others’ sin against us, to see Jesus on the Cross. (Brad Bigney)
5. Recognize when you’ve been sinned against, but don’t sin in response. Mark 7:20; Prov. 21:23
6. Seek and follow godly counsel. Prov. 11:14b
7. Seek to have a forgiving heart. Matt. 6:12; Matt. 18:21-25.
8. Be patient, humble, kind. 1 Cor. 13:4-7. Keep engaging the hard-to-love person and when upset, respond redemptively.
9. Find ways to serve the one who is against you. “*If your enemy is hungry, feed him...*” Rom. 12:20
10. Leave room for the Lord to work.
11. Do not gossip regarding how you have been offended. Psalm 34:13
12. If needed, go to the person seeking reconciliation, Matt. 5:23-24 (Caroline Newheiser).
13. Gently restore with clarity & charity, making charitable judgements, and speaking the truth in love. Ephesians 4:15. (Ken Sande, Robert Jones),
14. Involve others when appropriate. Matt. 18:15-20. Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3)
15. To the repentant offender, forgiveness involves four promises:
 - a. 1) I will not dwell on this incident.
 - b. 2) I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.
 - c. 3) I will not talk to others about this incident.
 - d. 4) I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Rom 12:18.

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