

BA

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Kingdom Patience





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2025: Kingdom People



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Prophetic Patience

"Patience is a virtue," they say. The Bible agrees. It is listed fourth among the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). This BA is full of articles promoting the necessity of patience among God's kingdom people. I'll be the first to admit I need more of it.

But patience is a particular kind of virtue. Jesus and His apostles speak of it often in the context of the Lord's coming and the tribulations and suffering we are likely to encounter while we wait (cf. Luke 21:19; Hebrews 6:12; James 5:9, 10, et al). Kingdom patience is an essential attribute of those anticipating the kingdom to come. Thus, patience is a sister to hope (Romans 8:25; 1 Thessalonians 1:3).

We observe this most clearly in Revelation. In a book full of "sevens," its sevenfold reference to *hypomone* ("enduring patience") stands out as a central aim of John's vision: to encourage perseverance among the saints. John sets the stage in 1:9:

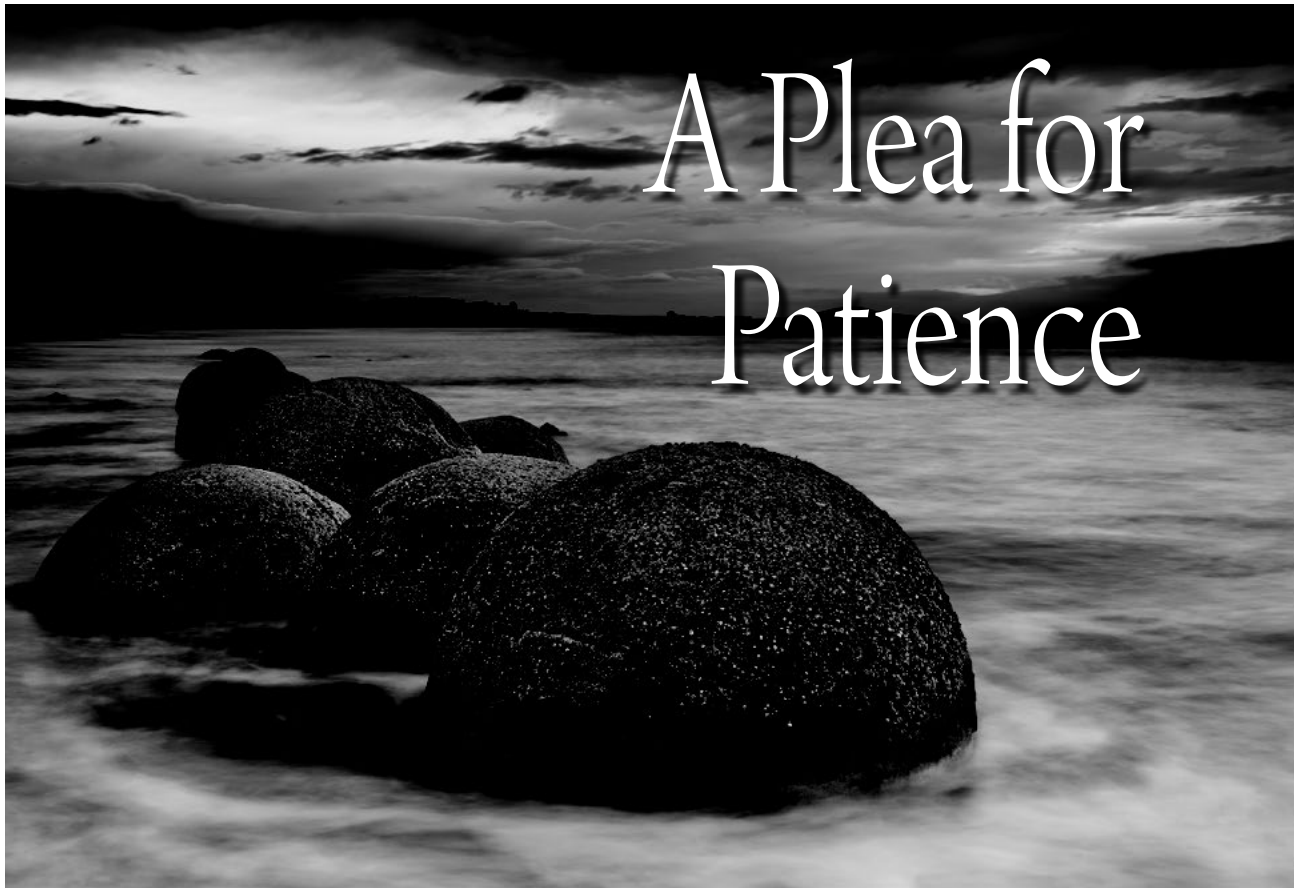
I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ (KJV).

John identifies kingdom patience through tribulation as an attribute of his brethren — and of Christ himself (Hebrews 12:2). Three of the seven churches are commended for their patience (Revelation 2:3, 19; 3:10), but the patience of the saints is most powerfully demonstrated in their persecution by the beast even as they continue to "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (13:10; 14:12; see "Questions & Answers," p. 11).

Brethren, as the Day of the Lord approaches, are we a church like this, marked by Jesus' own patience and able to endure faithfully through tribulations? Will we be numbered among Ephesus, Thyatira, and Philadelphia because we have kept His patience (3:10) in a world hostile to our faith and contemptuous of His commands? Let it be so. Now, as then, "the patience of the saints" is our bold witness that God is in control, especially when we are not.

— Jason Overman





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Why patience is key in the believer's life.

by **Dr. David R. Downey**

People are fond of saying, "Don't pray for patience."

The inference is that God will send trials to build patience, rather than just dropping it on us as a gift.

This is usually true, but should we hesitate? Is patience not worth whatever we pay for it? And if we offer this prayer and nothing major happens, then possibly we have reached a level of patience that such a trial is not necessary. That would be a

barometer of good behavior!

I am looking deeply into Romans 8:8-27 for help. We can nail down the idea of patience in Paul's words in verse 25: "But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance." Not only can we persevere if we believe something is certain, but we are also eager while we wait. Our patience can be augmented and encouraged because we hope for redemption.

Whatever the world thinks of patience (and generally, its outlook is positive), it is cardinal to the Christian. Patience is central; it is the worker bee of faith. It says, deep in the heart where there is stillness, "I believe; therefore, I can wait."

The principle is the same as the relentless drip, drip, drip of water that, in time, eventually wears away a rock. When we have patience, regardless of how small our efforts are, eventually we make a dent. Patience is not dull passiveness but a strong and active virtue. It moves impossibilities with its persistence.

Patience with self

In verse 23, Paul reminds us that we have the firstfruits of the Spirit. This implies that we do not have the full fruit. We wait for our adoption, and yet, we groan!

It is not easy being a child of the King. Many things around us remind us of our separation from Him the Father. The world is certainly poverty-stricken.

Nevertheless, the gap might be most evident in our own sins and weaknesses.

The battle we face with ourselves is first in order because it may be the most difficult. Furthermore, our impatience with ourselves may lead to impatience with others, or even with God.

The firstfruits tend to remind us that we are falling short. Since Jesus is our Lord and He is perfect, we can easily get discouraged. Additionally, when our guide for life is the Bible and it is perfect in its formation and teaching — having authority over all our life — we can too easily find passages that indict us. I am speaking of not only when we willfully sin but also when we follow the Lord with our whole heart. We may feel indicted by the Word of God and the purity of the Lord himself.

What to do?

Paul said that what we suffer now cannot compare to what will be revealed in us (v. 18). And what is to be revealed? Jesus' glory on us. When others attack us because of our strong stand for the Savior, or when our own heart rebels against our weaknesses and our feelings of separation from the majesty of God, we should remind ourselves that we will be revealed as perfect, without spot, because of Jesus' glory on us.

We groan, but we will not always.

Patience with the church

Think this way: The people in your church are as close to you as anyone in the world. This relationship may even transcend blood ties if your family is not part of the family of faith. For all

their weaknesses, church folks share the revelation of Jesus with you.

In Romans 8:26, 27, Paul says that the Spirit will help in our prayers to search out infirmities within our fellowship that hinder growth. He may uncover bitterness, willfulness, fear, doubt, secret sin, rebellion, sickness, weakness, or a host of other things. The Holy Spirit helps seek these things out and reveals them to Jesus, who intercedes for the saints. Why would Jesus need to intercede at all unless we were prone to fail and unable to help ourselves?

We have heard that a chain

where the gospel is consistently and radiantly embodied? We cannot overlook the fact that God builds the church with rough cloth, meaning we are sometimes ungrateful, selfish, halting. It is to the church's glory, and not shame, that she welcomes sinful people.

We can learn to be patient with the weaknesses of church members (including our own). We should not excuse these weaknesses but work with them. When we are patient and focused on our progress, we understand that God is doing a work according to our spiritual desires. Some in our fellowship

“Patience is not dull
passiveness but a strong
and active virtue.”

is only as strong as its weakest link. Since our churches are made up of people with infirmities, Jesus is interceding to bring each together more fully into His plan. Under the visible surface of our church is upheaval. The character of the church is changing, as it should. We need the Holy Spirit to reveal, and Jesus to intercede, for this change to be completed.

What church is there anywhere, of any denomination,

will not join in and may remain frustratingly static, but we can find joy from those who are moving together.

Patience with God

Just as smoke is derived from flame, so patience is derived from faith. When we know of God's sovereign, unchanging nature and of His love for us, we can learn to wait.

We sometimes wrestle with God. That is not very smart, but

we do it anyway. We are in a hurry, and God is not. We pray fervently and see events go directly against our prayers, so we might find ourselves murmuring as the Israelites often did.

Paul reminds us in Romans 8:19-22 that some groaning is going on, and it is because the creation has been “subjected to futility” (v. 20). God did this, but it was in response to our sin. All creation feels this separation and longs for restitution. God’s greatness and the gap fixed by our sinfulness prevent full satisfaction.

Once, while preaching, I told the congregation I was imagining an ant creeping along the front of the pulpit and coming to the end of the corner. I told them, “He has found a real problem in knowing how to cross this gulf here, where my finger is, and how to get home for supper. He probably doesn’t even know he is on the pulpit here at this church and that he is interrupting my sermon. Poor little insect! What does he know of our town or America or the world?”

The gap between God and us is infinitely greater. God is unlimited in power, wisdom, and knowledge, so we should not be surprised when we cannot fathom what He is doing or why He is doing it. We are sometimes ant-like in our comprehension.

If we wrestle with God, we should expect to be pinned to the mat. On the other hand, we can re-focus our thinking and remember the divine love that breathes deeply and waits patiently. The futility we sometimes feel is couched in hope because our future peace is tied to Him (v. 21). Any prolonged ordeal is enough to test anyone’s patience. However, the Christian enjoys the guarantee that one day God will not only make all things right but also deliver an eternal payoff.

Patience is not just a good idea; it is the only way to serve God faithfully. Reading further in Romans, we come across these words from the apostle Paul that sum up our thoughts: “Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer” (12:12, CSB). **BA**

Dr. David Downey writes from
Burleson, TX.



The Patience of Stones

My walls can no longer
weather this world —

Few of my stones remain, tossed aside,
Dilapidated — fragmented

Castles crumble to pebbles,
Homes flicker to ashes,
All returns to dirt

I fell apart
Brick by brick,
Stone after stone
Worn to bones

Deep in these woods
My scattered walls lay
Nature reclaims them,
Desolation reigns
Within my stones

But time after time
You rebuild me,
Brick by brick —
Your hands shape me,
Day after day —
You love me

Together, we sit —
The Maker and made,
My stones are transformed
In spite of decay,
Never forgotten —
A delightful display,
My cathedral of stone

Isaac Overman



Miriam's Song

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by **Laura L. Bradford**

Thinking back to early childhood, I can't remember a time when I didn't have a melody running through my head. I've always loved to sing, to hum, and even to dance as a way of releasing the feelings in my heart. Whether it's a kid's song like "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" or Handel's bold "Hallelujah Chorus" from his *Messiah* composition, a melody has always played in my mind.

Following my surrender to the Lord in the 1970s, almost every tune running through my head has been a worship song. Most of them are taken from the King James Version scriptures, which served as a popular source of lyrics early in my walk of faith.

In recent days, my mind has replayed one of those pieces called "Miriam's Song."

Miriam was Moses' sister who led Israel's women to dance with great rejoicing after they escaped their Egyptian captors. The Lord miraculously parted the Red Sea, enabling His people to cross it on dry ground. When the Egyptians attempted to chase after Israel, the Lord caused the waters to rush back in place, drowning the Egyptians and their horses.

As all of Israel rejoiced over that amazing escape, Miriam led their women with the words "Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Exodus 15:21, KJV).

I've found the echoing praises of this song to be a blessing, continually focusing my thoughts on God. Lately they've helped me trust Him during several overwhelming trials.

In one case, I became the victim of a scam that threatened my bank accounts. However, the encouraging lyrics of Miriam's song assured me that the Lord would save me from this enemy. He had

me contact my bankers, who saw to it that I didn't lose a penny to the scammer.

A second example is when the vision in my left eye suddenly went blurry. I found myself singing praises as the Lord made a way for me to get immediate attention from my ophthalmologist. Now the eye is healing rapidly.

Most recently, I was attempting to install a light bulb when I lost my grip on the bulb, and it fell into the bathroom's ceramic sink, shattering instantly. Shards of glass flew everywhere. But as the words of Miriam's song calmed me, the Lord showed me how to clean up the mess so not one shard was left to harm me.

Those are just three examples of why I'm incredibly grateful for God's praises constantly playing in my mind. When I wake up feeling discouraged and overwhelmed, my sadness turns to joy as the song reminds me that the loving God who parted the sea has given His Spirit to be my guide through every difficult situation. He never leaves me alone. He will save me from my enemies. He will heal my physical problems. He has every answer, every provision, and every encouragement I need to get through even the worst of days.

What a blessing that, regardless of what I face, my spirit is continually singing praises to the God who has such amazing mercy that He gave His only Son to pay the price for my sins. I pray that the songs playing in my mind will always bring encouragement, reminding me that God's unfailing love will be with me forever. **BA**

Laura L. Bradford writes from Walla Walla, WA.





Why Love Needs Patience

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A closer look at
the Love Chapter.
by R. Herbert

Have you ever noticed that in his famous description of the nature of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, the apostle Paul begins and ends his list with the same trait? It is patience: “Love is patient, . . . it . . . always perseveres.” Although Paul uses two different Greek words, showing different aspects of this important quality, they both mean patience.

Patience with people

The first word is *makrothymia*, composed of the Greek for our terms *far away* and *anger* — in

other words, to put one’s anger far away. This involves patience with others, particularly in restraining anger, when patience is often needed most. It does not connote the patience of those who cannot do anything about a situation but of those who have the power to act against the object of anger — perhaps even to exact revenge or punishment. This is the patience of those with power to affect others. It is the patience of those who could react with negative action but choose not to do so.

Husbands need this patience with their wives and wives with their husbands, and parents need it with their children (and sometimes children with parents). Employers sometimes need such patience with employees, and even employers need it for those in authority above them.

It is the patience we should have when someone irritates or hurts us in any way, and we feel a desire to retaliate. It is the kind of patience that every Christian must develop and that we may need many times in a given day. Paul had this kind of patience in mind when he wrote, “be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).

No matter how much we may feel love toward others, the good that might come from that attitude is short-circuited if we do not express it through patience when we interact with them. Love is patient precisely because patience with others requires us to put the needs of others before our feelings.

So it is probably not coincidental that this is the first quality Paul tells us love consists of — patience when provoked or

irritated and full of restraint. That is why Paul also links patience with kindness (2 Corinthians 6:6). *Makrothymia* patience is a primary quality that love for others cannot function without.

Patience with circumstances

The second form of patience closes Paul's "love list": *hypomonē*, which fuses the Greek words translated "under" and "remaining." This word connotes the idea of remaining under, suffering, or difficult circumstances. In the New Testament, the word is often translated "persevering" (cf. Romans 5:3, 4), but it is a particularly rich word with a wide range of meaning.

For example, in Luke 21:19, we find it translated "*Stand firm, and you will win life*" (emphasis mine). The King James Version translates this verse less clearly as "In your patience possess ye your souls."

This kind of patience represents the attitude of those who are not in a position of strength but of weakness, unable to do anything to change the situation they are enduring. It is the patience of the Christian undergoing persecution for their faith, whether the persecution comes from the individual's government, job, neighbors, or even their own family. Those dealing with long-term illnesses, injuries, poverty, loneliness, depression, grief, or any other kind of ongoing suffering display this kind of patience.

If it is not coincidental that Paul begins his list of love's qualities with patience (what we must have with individuals), it is also likely that he ends his list with

endurance, the patience we must have with situations. If we cannot love others without the first type of patience, it is probable that we cannot love God without the second kind. And we certainly cannot continue in the way of love without that perseverance. Just as patience with others is an act of service or love, patience with events is an act of trust or faith.

Practicing patience

At the most obvious level, we need patience with others in order to serve them. Working with children provides constant



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examples of this. Whether it is our response to endless small requests or the hundredth time we have to remind a child about a family rule, we must choose whether we respond patiently or impatiently, whether we are helpful or unhelpful.

Of course, this truth does not apply to just our interactions with children. In any situation,

only through patience can we override our own natural inclinations and embrace what has so well been called "the holy inconvenience of service."

In many other ways, exercising patience is an act of love that helps us as well as others. And for those of us who know we need to work on developing patience in our lives, this area can be particularly profitable to meditate on: When, how, and why do we need to apply patience with others?

Pivotal quality

Carefully looking at 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, we see that love begins with and ends in patience, and that this quality is pivotal to effectively loving others and loving God. A number of scriptures show that God is a God of patience, both with people and with events (Romans 2:4, 15:5; 2 Peter 3:9, 15, et al.).

If we are to become like God, we must strive to develop patience — in its two forms — with His help. As Paul, the apostle of patience, wrote (using both of the two Greek words for *patience*), if we do our best and ask God for the extra help we need, we will find ourselves "being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might" to "have great *endurance* and *patience*" (Colossians 1:11, emphasis mine). **BA**

R. Herbert (a pen name) holds a doctorate in biblical studies and ancient Near Eastern languages and archaeology. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.

For His Name's Sake

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by Sheila Bain

Why do kingdom people need patience? What does it look like, and what is its purpose?

Patience can be difficult today. You've heard people mock the expression "Christ is coming soon." Peter says it was the same in his day (2 Peter 3:4). Why be concerned about how to live if Jesus delays?

But isn't our faithful patience until Christ returns for His name's sake and glory? Name's sake is about reputation — the part of a person that lives beyond the grave. Scripture tells us what God does is for His name's sake so that it's not profaned by us or non-believers (Isaiah 48:11). Shouldn't we do the same for Him?

Because the Father's reflection is in Jesus, our patience in waiting preserves the reputation of both the Father and Son (John 14:9).

The Word tells us to be patient, hope, and look for deliverance because "those who hope in Adonai will renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31). But there must be preparation on our part, as Hosea told Israel: "return to your God; hold fast to grace and justice; and always put your hope in your God" (12:7).

Paul encouraged the Colossians with the same instruction to "live lives worthy of the Lord . . . pleasing to him, being fruitful . . . and multiplying in the full knowledge of God" so that they were "able to persevere and be patient . . . fit to share in the inheritance of his people . . ." (1:10-12). That inheritance is worth waiting for!

Patience "proves" us, as James says (1:12). We prove our qualifications for earthly jobs. Does our kingdom inheritance require any less? We believe deliverance is coming one day when Christ returns,

so we should take comfort in Peter's words: "following along with his promise, wait for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness will be at home . . . as you look for these things, . . . think of our Lord's patience as deliverance . . ." (2 Peter 3:13-15). Because of this, we should imitate those who wait in trust and patience (Hebrews 6:12).

Kingdom people reckon our patience and His delay as deliverance — for us and for others who are drawn into His kingdom. His coming is nearer every day, so we must remain patient (James 5:8), and, as Isaiah says, wait on the Lord and look to Him (8:17; 26:9). Our kingdom patience and watchfulness uphold His name's sake and righteousness.

This isn't easy to do. Feelings can deceive us. Testing our patience may come in moments when we don't feel connected to Him, but that doesn't mean He isn't working. He never asked us to feel, but to trust and obey. Therefore, we must remain surrendered to His Word and promises of what is coming.

Patiently waiting for God's promises is not for our glory or the approval of others. It is for His name's sake because it glorifies His reputation. We trust the Father that Jesus is returning because His Word is trustworthy. Our patience shows the world that we believe in the promise of our kingdom inheritance and that it's something worth waiting for.

BA

Sheila Bain writes from Western Grove, AR, and attends the Jasper congregation. Scripture quotations are from the *Complete Jewish Bible*.



Questions & Answers



What does the book of Revelation mean by the “patience of the saints”?

The “patience of the saints” in the Revelation of Jesus Christ (13:10; 14:12) refers to the steadfast perseverance of believers in the face of trials and tribulation. Specifically, it identifies their unwavering commitment to God’s law and their active faith in Jesus.

Grasping the context for John’s use of the phrase reminds us he is commissioned to “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this” (1:19). Later, in chapters 13 and 14, John describes two kinds of people: those who follow the beast and those who are faithful to Jesus Christ. This is the context in which he writes, “Here is the patience of the saints” (13:10; 14:12).

Interestingly, John refers to this *patience* (*hypomone* — variously translated “patience,” “endurance,” “perseverance,” “steadfastness”) seven times in Revelation. At the book’s beginning, he introduces himself with “patient endurance” (1:9, NIV). Here, *patience* is paired with two other words — *tribulation* and *kingdom* — to describe the characteristics of Jesus and those who follow Him (1:9; see also “First Word,” p. 3). Compare this concept to the teaching of the apostle Paul, who exhorted the church to “continue in the faith, and . . . We must through much tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22; cf. 2 Timothy 2:11, 12).

In the letters to the seven churches, this *patience* appears four times, referring to three of those churches (Revelation 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10, KJV). This is a good indicator of the chief importance that patient endurance is to God’s church, especially at the end time. As Revelation unfolds into “the things which will take place after this” (1:19), the “patience of the saints” is highlighted twice

more. In Revelation 13:9, 10: “If anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” And in Revelation 14:12: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

Revelation 13 talks of the power and blasphemy of the beast that arises from the sea and makes war with the saints, as the rest of the world follows him (vv. 1-8). “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (v. 8).

Of this time of persecution, verse 10 offers assurance to the saints. *The Believer’s Bible Commentary* states, “True believers are assured that their persecutors shall go into captivity and be killed with the sword. This enables the saints to wait in patience and faith.” Empowered by the dragon, the beast will certainly carry out his war. None will escape being involved in some way, either deceived and worshipping him or faithful to the Lamb despite persecution. Thus, God calls the church to steadfast faith.

The final reference to “the patience of the saints” is in the next chapter (14:12). It reveals what this perseverance looks like. Against the beast, false prophet, and their mark, followers of the Lamb are known, specifically, for their obedience to God’s commandments and their trust in Jesus, despite all their trials. These two key traits (trust and obey) define the saints across time and tribulation. But this apocalyptic encouragement speaks especially to those who see these events unfolding and have this precious patience when it is needed most.

— Elder Chip Hinds



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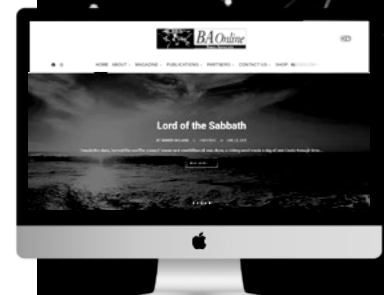
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A Homecoming to Remember



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by **Diana Derringer**

“Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you” (Luke 8:39).

“Who lives here?”

“We do,” I said.

“How long have you lived here?”

“We live here together. Remember, I’m your wife.” He then stared until recognition crossed his face.

“When can we go home?”

“We are home. This is where we live now.” Over and over, I gently prodded his memory.

My husband suffered a heart attack, a stroke, a fall resulting in traumatic brain injury, and a lack of oxygen when his heart and lungs stopped functioning on December 10, 2009. Following these, medical staff did not believe he would survive. Miraculously, he did.

Then they anticipated the need for long-term care. Yet in less than four weeks, my husband walked into our home — a home he failed to recognize.

After several days, he began recalling the move to our house, and his questions changed.

“When did we leave the old house?”

“About nine years ago.”

“When are the other people leaving?”

“We’re the only ones here now. Two former university students visited a few days before your fall, but they’re gone now.”

“Where do we keep the soap?” — or shampoo, bowls, or countless other items used daily.

We found them together.

One part of our routine that my husband never questioned was our evening time of Bible reading and prayer. After I finished reading a Bible passage

each night, he would clasp my hand in his before we prayed and turned out the lights.

His need for outpatient therapy lasted only a few weeks. My husband quickly progressed from walker to cane to unassisted but supervised care. We continued balance exercises at home for a few weeks. He gradually regained greater independence.

Bit by bit, his memory also returned. My husband went from very long-term and almost no short-term memory to primarily short-term memory loss. For several years, few casual acquaintances would have recognized his memory difficulty as anything more than an ordinary over-fifty hurdle. Those who know us well marvel at God’s mighty work in my husband’s life and the witness that this has provided. We continue to pray that his story, both verbal and written, will point everyone we meet to the great Physician. We want them to know that, whether we experience God’s miraculous physical and mental healing or not, God offers spiritual healing to all.

The summer following my husband’s hospitalizations, we took a short vacation. Although a refreshing change, it also proved exhausting for both of us. As we returned, the closer we came to Kentucky, the more excited we grew. Finally, we crossed the state line, and with joy, my heart echoed his spoken sentiment: “I’ll certainly be glad when we get home.”

Yet that experience pales compared to our rejoicing when we one day cross the threshold of our eternal home.

Are you ready to go home?

Jesus waits with open arms. **BA**

Diana Derringer writes from Campbellsville, KY.





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A Fishing Lesson

The perseverance of Peter,
the fisherman.
by Daniel Flores

One night, Simon Peter was determined to fish by the Lake of Gennesaret, near where he lived. So he prepared his nets and boat and went fishing. Perhaps he told his wife to be ready to cook the fish when he returned.

Peter entered the water and cast the net for the first time, hoping to catch a fish. But the empty net proved he would have to cast it again.

Determined, Peter cast the net a second time, and the result was the same: No fish. He no doubt was a persevering man, as he cast the net for another hour and still caught no fish. Perhaps the

thought crossed his mind that he mustn't return home empty-handed. What example would he set for his family?

So for the next few hours, Peter continued the same exercise with the same result until he finally said, "One last time. If we don't catch anything, we'll go home."

Tired, he had to take out the boat and wash the nets before returning home without any fish.

But Someone was passing by who would teach Peter a lesson that would serve him for the rest of his life: that true perseverance for a disciple begins by hearing and obeying the Word of God.

Jesus' word

The Lord was also by the Lake of Gennesaret, and a crowd gathered to hear Him. He got into Peter's boat and asked Peter to put out a little farther from land

so He could teach from there. Peter obeyed, even though he was ready to go home without a single fish.

After speaking to the crowd, Jesus gave Peter a specific instruction: "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch" (Luke 5:4).

Peter, tired and perhaps discouraged after a fruitless night, responded, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net" (v. 5).

This moment marks the beginning of a lesson about perseverance that would transform the lives of Peter and those around him. He was no doubt a hard worker, as it takes determination to try all night doing the same thing over and over. But he needed to listen to Jesus and obey Him to have an abundant catch.

continued on page 30

David Discovers Patience



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by Marcia Sanders

David watched, dumbfounded, as his friend Jason was accused by another student, Bryce, of cheating on a test. David knew Jason hadn't cheated because they had studied together, and Jason knew all the answers.

What David couldn't understand, though, was why Jason didn't defend himself in front of the teacher. He stood there as Bryce went on and on about how he had seen Jason copying answers from Bryce's papers.

Man! If someone had accused me of something so awful, you'd better believe I'd defend myself vigorously, David thought.

Finally, Jason spoke. "Mrs. Pierce, may I make a suggestion that might settle this issue?"

"Certainly," she replied. "What's your idea?"

"What if you pull each of us into another room and ask us the questions that were on the test? That way you'd know if either of us needed help in completing our own test."

"That's an excellent idea."

"No!" Bryce exclaimed. "I've already answered all the questions. You have my paper, and I'm telling you Jason copied from my test."

Mrs. Pierce remained calm. "If you are telling the truth, Bryce, then you'll have no trouble answering the questions orally."

Twenty minutes later, a subdued Bryce followed Mrs. Pierce to the office as Jason joined David in the hallway. David stared at his friend. "I can't believe you just stood there and took it while Bryce was lying about you copying his answers. I would

have let him have it with both barrels, telling him just what I thought of his lies!"

Jason looked at David for a moment before answering him. "Do you remember the lesson we had a few weeks back in Sabbath school? The one where the Jewish leaders made up all kinds of lies about Jesus to get Him in trouble with the officials?"

"Yeah, I remember that story. What does that have to do with you getting accused of cheating?" David asked.

"Well," Jason began, "we read about how after the chief priests made all of their accusations, Pilate said something like, 'Aren't You going to say anything? Haven't you heard the charges they've accused You of?' Mark 15:5 says that Jesus didn't answer him at all . . . and that Pilate was amazed."

"Yes, but that was Jesus. We certainly aren't Him!"

"No, we're not," said Jason. "But we are trying to be more like Him. So I figured this was a chance to show patience when falsely accused. I think Mrs. Pierce appreciated that I didn't yell or argue with Bryce. Peacefully enduring a difficult challenge proved a much better witness of my faith than getting loud and making a scene."

David reflected on Jason's words. "Well, you've certainly taught me a good lesson on patience in all of this. I'll start looking for ways to endure with patience — and silence."

Jason and David laughed as they headed home.

BA

Marcia Sanders writes from Fort Smith, AR, where she attends the Church of God (Seventh Day) with her husband, Randy.





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A special celebration of
cancer remission.

by **Lydia E. Harris**

Lord, you've been our
refuge from generation to
generation (Psalm 90:1, ISV).

Thirty relatives crowded into my niece's home for our family prayer time. The adults sat in the living room, and the children perched on the stairway nearby.

Every few months for many years, our extended family of siblings, children, and grandchildren had gathered to pray. But this was a special occasion to thank God for the stable health of six

family members who had battled cancer. Adding up the years since the diagnoses, we now celebrate a total of fifty years of cancer remission — precious years of life given by God. My heart warmed with gratitude as three generations, aged three to seventy-five, united to pray.



We began by singing praise songs to God. The children requested their favorites, including "Jesus Loves Me" and "Awesome God." When our three-year-old grandson suggested "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," we sang it as well. After all, God made the starry host.

We also sang hymns, including a family favorite, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Tears rolled down my face as I remembered

my oncologist's words "You have incurable cancer."

"Will I be dead in six months?" I asked.

"I don't think so," he said. "But I don't know if you'll get hit by a car."

"Good," I replied, "because we're expecting a grandchild in six months, and I want to be here for my grandkids."

And now I was. Two grandchildren, born since that dreadful diagnosis, were among those rejoicing in God's goodness.

After singing praises, we thanked God for answered prayers. Short prayers, one after another, popped like popcorn as we voiced our gratitude. The children prayed simple, sincere prayers like "Thank You for my brother and sister." And some of the cancer-free adults thanked God for added years of life.

I glanced at the framed Bible verses hanging nearby on my niece's wall — the verses God gave her when she began her cancer journey:

He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many (2 Corinthians 1:10, 11).

Here we sat, the “many” who had prayed, thanking God that He had heard and delivered. I wasn't the only one with misty eyes.

After our time of praise and thanksgiving, we split into groups to pray for requests gathered beforehand: wisdom and guidance in making decisions, health issues, help transitioning into retirement, friends who needed to know Jesus, and more.

As the prayer time ended, we sensed it had been a holy time. One grandmother who had traveled a distance said, “It was pretty awesome to hear all the grandkids pray and see they felt at ease and knew what to pray about.”

And a mom said, “I really like that our kids are growing up in an extended family that prays.” As we parted with hugs and smiles, I knew God was smiling too.

After I sent an update about our gathering to out-of-state relatives, one niece replied, “I wish we could have been there.” She

added, “My friends are envious of our large praying family and yearn for the same.”

If you also desire a praying family, remember Jesus' words: “Truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:19, 20).

“Prayer is the best gift we can give our families.”

A family prayer time can begin with just a few. Twenty years ago, God nudged my husband and me to start one. We already had the required quota of two. We invited family members to join us, and they came when they could. And some prayed simultaneously in other cities.

In the beginning, we felt awkward praying aloud together. Using a four-step prayer format (praise, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession) added structure to our prayer times, and short, conversational prayers helped us feel more comfortable. Soon our prayers flowed naturally as we agreed together.

Over the years, God has heard many united prayers, and He has showered us with spiritual, physical, emotional, and material blessings. But not all prayers have been answered as we hoped, and the outcome of some remains unclear. Yet while we wait, God continues to give us courage, grace, and peace.

Prayer is the best gift we can give our families. As we gather,

our families can become powerhouses of prayer, blessing future generations in ways we can't imagine. **BA**

Editor's note: Now sixteen years later, Lydia again faces treatment for cancer. She values your prayers for healing.

Lydia E. Harris writes from Lake Forest Park, WA. Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.





Patience in

© Francesca Leslie | istockphoto.com

by Whaid Rose

Church leaders face the ongoing challenge of how to measure ministry impact. We want our efforts to count for something. However, when we measure success by the wrong standards, a problem arises.

By secular standards, ministry success is usually about the number of people in attendance (bodies), financial resources (bucks), and facilities' size (buildings).

Ministry is about people, and it involves money. There are benefits to having adequate facilities. But making them the sole measurement of success runs counter to what we observe in the life and ministry of Jesus. Since He is our model, let's take our cues from Him.

Priorities

*First, notice how Jesus prioritized His life. He spent only ten percent of His time on earth teaching, healing, and revealing the kingdom of God. About the rest, all we're told is that He "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

Furthermore, Jesus spent most of His ministry years with people from the margins of society, not with those from the upper echelon who would bring visibility and influence to His ministry (15:2).

Finally, we notice that Jesus wasn't driven by the tyranny of the urgent. He regularly withdrew from the crowds to spend time alone in prayer. It's been observed that while "He was often busy, He was never in a hurry."

Mustard seed ministry

This is seen in the story of the hemorrhaging woman in Mark 5, sandwiched between the healing of a demon-possessed man and the story of the synagogue ruler whose daughter was dying. Jesus' long pause amid the crowd to ask who touched Him was an example of His unhurriedness.

The urgency of the moment was that Jairus' daughter was dying (v. 23), which provides deeper insight into the disciples' reaction. It wasn't just that Jesus' question made no sense to them; they were concerned about what Jesus' delay could mean for the dying girl.

Jesus' unhurriedness and unconventional approach to ministry is part of a larger motif in Scripture that is mostly overlooked. It is called "the unhurried way of the kingdom." Its basic premise is that God's kingdom advances through small, hidden acts of ordinary faithfulness and courage.

This is the point of Jesus' parables concerning the nature of the kingdom, the classic one being the parable of the mustard seed. It is the smallest of seeds, but it quietly grows into the largest tree in the garden (Matthew 13:31, 32). The farmer has no choice but to wait with patience.

This answers a question that historians have long grappled with: why and how Christianity grew so rapidly during the early centuries, despite the marginalization and persecution of Christians. As it turns out, such persecution was the fuel of the church's growth, not its deterrent. How so?

Veteran scholar Alan Kreider answers this question in his book titled *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*. In it, he contends that central to the life and witness of Christians in the first few

Waiting

centuries was the singular virtue of patience.

Resisting impatience

This is likely disappointing for Christians in today's "micro-wave" culture, marked by the desire for speed, convenience, and instant gratification. However, Kreider goes to great lengths to show that patience, not the things we rely on today (such as evangelism or church growth strategies), is what the early Christians focused on most.

He points primarily to the writings of early church fathers, such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. Each of these wrote extensively on patience, underscoring its importance in Christian living. Tertullian's *On Patience* asserts that patience is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian and connects impatience with the Fall of man in the garden.

The virtue of patience therefore loomed large in the spiritual formation of early Christianity. This explains why, in Christian dogma, patience is one of the seven virtues held in contrast to the seven deadly vices, and why patience is contrasted with anger or wrath.

This also explains why, after

a period of intense persecution, Paul and Barnabas joyfully preached the gospel in the very cities where they were persecuted. They reminded discouraged Christians that by much tribulation they will enter the kingdom (Acts 14:19-22).

Paul and Barnabas' perspective was informed by Jesus' earlier admonition "By your patience possess your souls" (NKJV), concluding a lengthy discourse on the kind of tribulation His followers would face at the end of the age (Luke 21:7-19).

Patient endurance

The word *patience* comes from the Greek *hypomone*, which means "to abide under," and is rendered *endurance* or *patience*, depending on the translation. I'm inclined to combine both words to form *patient endurance*. It's one thing to endure suffering; doing so with patience answers the greater challenge of serving for the joy set before us (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

This is how the early Christians endured severe trials and how twenty-first century Christians should as well. This is how we bear up under the weight of the cross Jesus calls us to carry in

following Him (Luke 9:23).

From this perspective Paul defended his ministry against those who claimed his leadership was unsuccessful and unimpressive and his preaching embarrassing. Paul's defense was that his strength was in his weakness, and that his unimpressiveness was essential in pointing people, not to himself but to the Christ he proclaimed (2 Corinthians 4:1-5).

We derive from this that Paul measured ministry impact by a different standard, taking his cues from the life and ministry of Jesus, who will one day reveal the true impact of our work in the light of eternity. Until then, we wait patiently, continuing to live and serve in the unhurried way of the kingdom. **BA**

* I owe a number of these thoughts to Skye Jethani in his devotion "Jesus Did Not Hurry."

Whaid Rose is dean of the Artios Center for Vibrant Leadership and pastors the Newton, NC CoG7. He lives in Denver, NC. Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.



The Way of Waiting



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A personal journey of
learning kingdom patience.
by Ruhama Assefa

There's a kind of waiting that transforms you — not just the passing of time but the kind of deep, spiritual waiting that matures your soul. I've walked through it. I've prayed through it. I've cried through it. And through every moment, God was shaping something in me that I now recognize as kingdom patience.

Highs and lows

I was the firstborn daughter in my family, and for as long as I can remember, I longed for a

sibling. I would tug on my parents' hands and say, "I want a baby sister!"

But when I was in second grade, my mom became seriously ill. After surgery and a long recovery, the doctors told her she would never be able to have another child.

It was heartbreaking.

Then a few years later, God did the impossible: My mom became pregnant. The pregnancy was high risk, for her and the baby, and each day felt like walking a tightrope of faith. In her last week, Mom slipped and injured her spine, and we feared the worst.

But God preserved both my mom and the baby. After nine long years of waiting, praying, and believing, I finally held my beautiful baby sister in my arms.

At 17, I dreamed of studying

abroad in the US. I worked hard and earned a scholarship. I prayed fervently, fasted, and did all I could to prepare for the student visa interview. I was confident — even excited.

Then came the unexpected rejection. Not once but twice.

I was crushed. I felt abandoned. I had no backup plan and no energy to start something new. But in my quiet time with the Lord, the Holy Spirit whispered something in my heart: "'No' is also an answer. Be focused on the kingdom, not just on the world."

That moment shifted something in me. I began to see my spiritual maturity as no longer looking to God's hands for what He can give me but looking to His face — because He is enough.

Faith and praise

We often admire biblical figures like Hannah, Abraham, and Jacob for their faith, but what makes them powerful is *how* they waited. They didn't wait passively but with tears, prayer, and perseverance. They are like the people Jesus describes who receive the seed of the Word: "But the [seed] that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

Their example reminded me that patience isn't the absence of frustration; it's the presence of faith. It's not about murmuring or complaining but about trusting God's perfect timing and giving thanks for what we have, even while hoping for more.

As I grew in my walk with the Lord, I also learned that waiting is not wasted when it's filled with worship. Paul and Silas praised God in prison — not because they wanted the gates to open but because they knew God was with them. Paul and Silas praised in prison — not because they asked for freedom but because they trusted the One who could give it.

Kingdom patience is an active, faithful surrender. It's crying and praying like Hannah. It's enduring like Abraham. It's wrestling like Jacob. And it's loving God through the "no" just as fiercely as through the "yes."

True kingdom patience is about holding on even when things don't make sense and saying, "Lord, even if You don't open this door, I still trust You."

Jesus is the ultimate example of kingdom patience. In Mark 14:60-62 and 15:3-5, we see

Him standing in silence, enduring false accusations, betrayal, and unjust suffering. He had every right to speak, every reason to defend Himself. Yet He remained silent. That's the kind of patience that brings heaven to earth — the patience that trusts God's plan even when it hurts.

What matters most

I'm 20 now. Young in age, maybe, but old enough in spirit to know that kingdom patience is one of the hardest yet holiest things God can work in us. While it's about waiting for a promise, it's also about who you become

while you wait in praise and faith.

In a world that glorifies instant results, God invites us to a different kind of life — one rooted in faith, endurance, and eternal hope. Because this journey isn't just about what we gain in this world but about whom we meet at the end of it: the One who is worth the wait. **BA**

Ruhama Tewodros Assefa
writes from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



Mud

Remember when Jesus healed a blind man by spitting on the ground, making mud with His saliva, and putting it on the man's eyes? It was such a simple yet miraculous act. By obeying Jesus, that blind man saw for the first time.

We all have something in our lives that makes us "blind." Dreams, desires, and prayers we carry in our hearts — things we long to see fulfilled with all our strength but that remain unrealized.

I have pleaded with tears to the Creator for dreams that have been in my heart since childhood and others that have grown with time. Sometimes I find myself wishing that Jesus would come and make mud as He did back then and place it on the eyes of my soul so I can see those promises fulfilled, those desires realized.

I wonder if you've ever felt the same way. Do you have something in your life that you long to see so intensely that you can almost feel the weight of the waiting? May Jesus come into your life in the most unexpected way, just as He did with that blind man, and grant you the vision to behold what you have been waiting for with stubborn faith, persistent hope.

— Oscar Mata

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Guidelines for seeking a partner for life — God's way.
by Israel Rodriguez

Recently, a brother from church asked me a question that, although simple, reveals a deep concern shared by many young and not-so-young Christians. Thousands of believers ask themselves this question every day, especially those who wish to honor God in all areas of their lives, including love and marriage: Is it more spiritual to wait patiently in prayer for that special someone, or is it acceptable to take initiative and search for them?

This tension between human action and dependence on God's will has sparked many

doubts, conversations, and, at times, frustrations.

In the Christian context — especially in the Church of God (Seventh Day) — this dilemma is even more relevant, because courtship is not seen as merely a romantic phase but as a path toward marriage, a sacred institution. Furthermore, the Bible does not provide a step-by-step manual on how to find a partner in the twenty-first century. This leaves room for interpretation, personal experience, and well-intentioned — but not always accurate — advice.

In a culture that normalizes casual dating, Christians seek something deeper: a Christ-centered relationship filled with purpose and holiness.

Taking initiative

Within the Christian community, two common views often

arise regarding how singleness should be lived.

"I'm waiting on God." This approach is based on fully trusting that God, in His perfect timing, will bring the right person. Those who adopt this stance often reject actively seeking someone, viewing the search as a sign of anxiety or lack of faith.

"I'm praying and open to meeting people." This second view involves prayer for divine guidance, while also being open to participating in activities, meeting people, and exploring possibilities. It's not seen as a lack of faith but rather an act of wisdom and responsibility.

What does the bible teach us?

A clear example is the meeting of Isaac and Rebekah in Genesis 24. Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son. While there was prayer and trust in God's guidance, there was

also intentional action. The servant traveled, searched, asked for signs, and evaluated the response. There was prayer — but there was also movement.

This passage reveals an important truth: Faith is not opposed to action. In fact, many times God works through our decisions and obedient steps.

This leads us to the concept of free will within God's sovereignty. While we believe God has plans for us, He also gives us the ability to choose, discern, and act in line with His will. Seeking a partner with wisdom and purpose is not a sin if done with a heart that longs to honor God in everything.

Why it's hard

Finding a partner within the Christian context is not as simple as "just find someone who goes to church." It involves several spiritual, emotional, and cultural filters that can make the process feel overwhelming.

Faith compatibility (2 Corinthians 6:14). The Bible advises us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For many Christians, this means they cannot and should not consider relationships with those who don't share their faith. Even with emotional or physical chemistry, spiritual differences can become a serious barrier to a lasting and healthy relationship.

High standards. It's not enough for someone to simply believe in God. Many seek compatibility in character, spiritual maturity, life mission, and ministry calling. These expectations raise the bar and reduce the number of people with whom

there may be a true spiritual and emotional connection.

Social pressure. While secular culture encourages delaying marriage and embracing casual relationships, many churches (including ours) may place pressure on singles to marry early. This double expectation can cause anxiety and confusion: "Am I too late? Am I too picky? Why are all my friends married and I'm not?"

Limited social circles. Many Christians interact only with other believers in limited settings, such as church or Christian events. While these are safe environments, they can also be limiting, reducing opportunities to meet someone compatible in a natural, pressure-free way.

Dating apps. Some Christians feel that dating apps are frivolous



or incompatible with a spiritual view of love. Even with Christian platforms available, challenges remain: fake profiles, unrealistic expectations, or the fear of being judged for using them.

Doctrinal differences. Even within the faith, differences in denominational doctrine can be significant obstacles. These often don't surface early on but can cause major conflict as the relationship deepens.

Personal and spiritual factors

Before seeking a partner, it's essential that a person has a solid identity in Christ. It's not about finding someone to "complete you" but about being a complete person in God — someone who knows their value, purpose, and calling.

Prayer and intentionality are also fundamental. A person shouldn't search from a place of desperation but from a healthy heart that desires to share life and purpose with someone else. Ask yourself "Why do I want a relationship? What am I truly looking for?" These are part of the spiritual process.

Trusting in God's timing is another pillar (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Sometimes the desire is legitimate but the moment has not

yet come. And that's not punishment — it's preparation. There is so much to learn, heal from, and grow in before sharing life with someone else.

There's deep value in the single season. It's a time to deepen spiritually, serve, discover passions, and develop emotional wisdom. It's not a stage to "survive" but one in which to flourish.

Unique obstacles

Living as a Christian means swimming upstream in many areas of modern culture. Here are some of the most specific obstacles.

- The conviction to wait until marriage for sexual relations. This decision, rooted in biblical principles, is countercultural and often drives away potential partners who do not share the same commitment.
- A lifestyle different from the secular world. The music you listen to, the language you use, your priorities and boundaries may seem strange even to others who identify as believers.
- Disappointment with those

you live while you trust. The believer's role is not passivity but active obedience. It means walking, moving forward, serving, growing, praying, discerning — and trusting.

Waiting is living with your eyes on Jesus, trusting that along the journey, God will align the timing, people, and circumstances.

Consider the following verses that help us balance this perspective:

“He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22). *Implies action.*

“Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of

Build real friendships. Not everything starts with romance. Many healthy relationships begin with deep and sincere friendships.

Use available tools with discernment. Christian dating apps are not bad in themselves. Use them with prayer, clear boundaries, and open eyes.

Grow spiritually and serve while you wait. Instead of focusing on what you don't have, focus on what God wants to do in you today. Serving matures you, shapes you, and connects you with others.

Looking for a partner isn't easy, especially for those who want to honor God with their heart, body, and decisions. But it's not impossible either. It's not about getting desperate or closing yourself off. It's about discernment. God doesn't bless passivity nor reward anxiety. He honors active faith — the kind that trusts while walking, prays while living, and serves while waiting.

Remember: The most important thing is not finding a partner but walking with Christ every day. If that is in place, everything else will come in His perfect time —if marriage is God's plan for you. Don't wait for the right person to come. Be the right person while you wait and act in faith. **BA**



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who say they are believers but don't live the values. Not everyone who says, “Lord, Lord” lives under the lordship of Christ (Matthew 7:21). It's painful but necessary to recognize that not all who call themselves Christians are seeking a relationship based on holiness, purpose, and honoring God.

Seek or wait?

The truth is, both are valid. The question is not whether you should seek or wait but how

your heart” (Psalm 37:4). *Speaks of spiritual priorities.*

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18). *Affirms God's desire for relationships.*

Encouragements

Be an active part of your Christian community. Participate in activities, small groups, or ministries. These open genuine opportunities for connection and friendship.

Israel Rodriguez

attends the Fort Smith, AR Church of God (Seventh Day). Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version*.



Undaunted

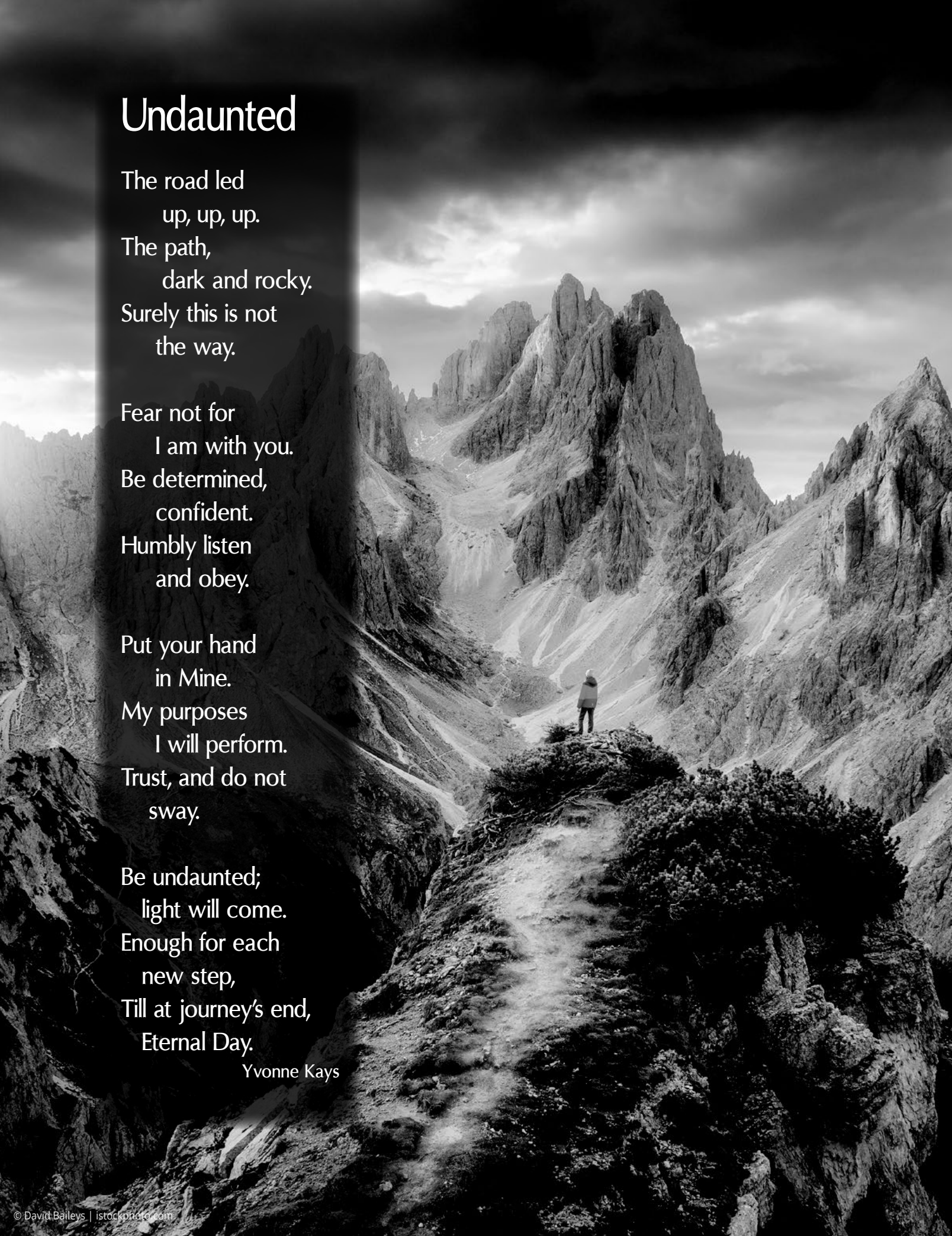
The road led
up, up, up.
The path,
dark and rocky.
Surely this is not
the way.

Fear not for
I am with you.
Be determined,
confident.
Humbly listen
and obey.

Put your hand
in Mine.
My purposes
I will perform.
Trust, and do not
sway.

Be undaunted;
light will come.
Enough for each
new step,
Till at journey's end,
Eternal Day.

Yvonne Kays



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As an ambassador. An Artios Ambassador is a volunteer who attends CoG7 events and promotes Artios with a table and/or slideshow or video. Please contact Lisa Harp Hinds at lisa.harp@artioscollege.org for more information.



CoG7 2025 Convention

If you were not part of our Biennial Convention, visit our YouTube channel to check out biennial reports from districts and ministries, as well as sermons given during the convention: <https://www.youtube.com/@cog7>.



GC Missions Leadership Team

We are pleased to share that the Missions Ministry of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) United States and Canada has a new leadership team. Ronald Rousseau now serves as director, with Moises Capetillo as assistant director and Priscilla Weekes joining as our grant manager.

As we transition from the faithful work of Elder Bryan Cleeton, we want to express our deepest gratitude for his many years of service to the mission field. Please stay tuned for updates as the new team builds on this foundation and continues to support and expand mission efforts worldwide.



Federation Global News

The Church of God (Seventh Day) International Federation wants to share with you all that is happening in the Church around the world. Check out their newsletter:

English: <https://shorturl.at/SEPLa>

Spanish: <https://shorturl.at/o0kSF>



Want more on patience?
Read this issue's Online Extra,
"Not Just a 'Wait' Problem,"
by Stephen R. Clark



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A Vision for Missions

by **Ronald Rousseau**

One of my early “Wow!” experiences as a young boy was planting a seedling. It was a bean I had found, and I wondered if I planted it, would it grow?

So I did, and every morning before heading off to school, I would check it and water it. I had hope (Romans 8:24).

One day, to my surprise, the seedling broke through the ground, and there it was — about an inch tall. I was ecstatic!

Like my experience with the seedling, a spiritual seed can encapsulate hope, nourishment, life, and so much more. It can also help us discern God’s providence and vision for missions (Isaiah 11:1).

I must admit that while the bean seedling was growing, I

was dreaming of the harvest — specifically, sitting down and eating some beans. Perhaps my dreams were that of a child, but they gave me hope.

Today, the work that the church has done in diligently sharing the gospel of Jesus in missions — planting churches and teaching the truth — gives me hope. It should give us all hope. I would like to share what that hope looks like for missions by using an analogy of Type 2 diabetes.

Holy Spirit

Our pancreas produces insulin whose purpose is to regulate glucose in our blood. In simple terms, Type 2 diabetes is a resistance to insulin. The insulin is there, but the body ignores it. Hold that thought.

As we look at the second chapter of Acts, it clearly says that there was a paradigm shift in

Christendom in the early church. God brought a great dispensation to advance the work of evangelism as tongues of fire descended on the obedient group of Christians who gathered in prayer and worship. God removed barriers through the Holy Spirit. God was also telling us to go and spread the gospel and that language would no longer be a barrier.



So think of the situation this way. The Holy Spirit is the insulin in our lives, but there is resistance to the Spirit's purpose in us, just as happens with Type 2 diabetes. The Spirit wants us to engage in mission work, but there is resistance to the influence of the Spirit.

Fortunately, it is not always this way in missions. There is a real impact and work that we have collectively done in taking the gospel to the world. The church body has faithfully supported so many initiatives of GC Missions, but we need to do more. The vision is that missions be integral to our mind and heart as a church.

Breaking barriers

As we do missions in the world, we will always face barriers. These are disappointments and discouragements that come from unexpected places. But even today, God is removing those barriers.

We must always have hope that if we plant the seed, God will make it grow. We must also believe that the harvest God can provide will always be greater than we can ever imagine. Using another mission analogy, Peter learned this truth when Jesus told him to cast the net into the deep waters (Luke 5:1-7). In this, I have hope.

If we know that God is a generous and wonderful God, we should want to be obedient and plant the seed, cast the net. We have done this in many places and in many ways: orphans and widows, SHINE, church planting, Cristo Viene, and more.

As we anticipate reaping the harvest, what is our expectation?



The vision that God has shared with me is this: We need to cast more nets and plant more seeds, for the harvest — the catch — to be great!

Transforming missions

Perhaps one of the invisible outcomes of doing missions is that while those who are served are transformed, the servants are also transformed. When you go on a mission trip, you are changed.

One of the benefits of missions is the number of our church members who come back to their local churches motivated (touched by the Spirit) to continue the work and adopt a

mission mindset. As we expand, spreading more seeds by involving our members in missions opportunities, we hope for transformation in the Church where missions is not just seedlings abroad but in the communities where our churches are.

We can do missions both abroad and at home. The potential harvest will be a double blessing: We bless those who are abroad, but we also see the blessings here at home.

Joining the journey

In the future, I will share some concrete steps on how this happens. The first is to get down on our knees in prayer. We must





feed our mission with prayer — not for the sake of prayer but for the sake of prayer that leads to divine discernment, that motivates us to be bold and take on problems that are challenging.

We have planted the seed; now it's time to ponder on the harvest. We at GC Missions are full of hope for what the future will bring. We invite you to come along with us on the journey. We are anticipating, hoping for many "wow" experiences. Please join us in focusing on Jesus and following His plan.

We are excited and emboldened to do the work that the Lord has prepared for us to do. The harvest is great, but the workers are few (Luke 10:2). Won't you obey the Holy Spirit in you and join us? **BA**

Ronald Rousseau is the director of GC Missions and superintendent of the Central District. He writes from Chicago, IL.



A Fishing Lesson

continued from page 14

Luke 5 shows us the surprising results of Peter's obedience: "They caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking" (v. 6). The same net Peter had washed was now breaking. Perhaps he would no longer need it for that work. Now he would dedicate himself to another type of fishing: for men (v. 10).

Trust and obey

This act of obedience reflects the importance of persevering, even when our own strength and experience tell us it's not worth trying.

Perseverance is not just about effort but about trusting in Jesus' voice that there is a greater purpose, even if we cannot immediately see it. Peter didn't know that this act of faith would lead to a miracle that would change his life.

Sometimes in our own lives, we face times when it seems our efforts are in vain, but Luke 5:1-11 reminds us to keep going, trusting that the results will come at the right time.

When Peter and his companions obeyed Jesus and cast their nets into the sea, the catch was so abundant that the nets began to break. They filled two boats to the point they almost sank. This miracle demonstrates not only the power of Jesus but also the reward of perseverance in listening to the voice of the Lord.

Failure to abundance

We are like Peter. How many times have you tried to save your marriage? How many years have

you spent attempting to overcome that sin that has dominated and discouraged you? Have you tried repeatedly to discipline your children, but without success? Have you longed to be a better father or mother, but you continue to fail your family? How many times have you tried to motivate the church to evangelize, disciple, change attitudes, or help others, but without seeing results?

The fruits of perseverance may not be immediate or evident in our lives, but this passage calls us to believe that even when we are already washing our nets or about to withdraw without success, hearing and obeying the word of God brings blessing. Peter and the other fishermen went from a night of failure to a morning of abundance, thanks to their willingness to try once more — not in their own strength, but in Jesus'.

That morning, more people were in the boat with Peter. The catch belonged to everyone, and in the face of what happened, everyone was afraid. But only Peter fell to his knees before Jesus and acknowledged his own unworthiness: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (v. 8).

If you have already washed your nets and given up, listen to the voice of Jesus today and obey His word. With a good and upright heart, hold fast to it. **BA**

Daniel Flores is executive director of the Church of God (Seventh Day). He writes from McAllen, TX, where he lives and attends church with his wife, Kerina.





Where Are You, God?

If you have passed through a difficult season, you have undoubtedly found yourself asking that very question. Too often, we find ourselves in need of a good measure of patience as we await God's answer.

What we know through the Spirit and the Word is that we must not grow weary or discouraged in these seasons of trial. James writes, "Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect . . . lacking nothing" (James 1:4).

Note that James links patience and spiritual maturity. As Christians, learning to endure trials is part of our spiritual development.

No child of God escapes these wilderness experiences. Jesus himself was driven into the wilderness by the design and purpose of God to be tested (Matthew 4:1). Moses, after running ahead of God's plan (Exodus 2:12), spent the next forty years in the wilderness, learning the importance of patience. These experiences are necessary for our maturity.

The Holy Spirit, moving on James, speaks to us in these seasons: "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (1:2). This is difficult instruction — to count it all joy — and is possible only through the Holy Spirit, coupled with a divine perspective that transcends the immediate.

In the wilderness, there is good and bad news. First, the wilderness experience is often isolating and conflicting. By God's design, He strips away the distractions and separates us. He pulls us aside from the fray, just as He did with Jesus and Moses, so that we might learn the lessons found only in the wilderness. This may mean loss of a job, separation from family, or even a hobby God says "enough" to. This is God's way of turning

our attention to the things He desires to develop within us.

Thus, there is great purpose in the wilderness, and herein is good news: God uses these experiences to develop and prepare us. They are part of His work within us to take us deeper in our relationship with Him. And ultimately, God desires to take us out of the wilderness.

Yes, God's design is that the wilderness is only transitory. The wilderness was for a season for Jesus and Moses, just as it is to be with us — and that's great news! God's intention is to move us out at exactly the right moment.

We read that, at the end of forty days, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee" (Luke 4:14). Likewise, at the end of forty years, God spoke to Moses, "The place where you stand is holy . . . I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:5, 10).

Wow! What incredible moments. In this we learn that the wilderness is not only transitory but transformative.

Some reading this may describe their circumstances only as wilderness. Let me encourage you: God sees you. God has purpose in this, God will bring you out at precisely the right moment, and you will be transformed for His glory.

It is a glorious thing as God brings us both into and out of the wilderness, as He works within us a deepening trust and peace that transcend circumstance, and as He brings us into greater effectiveness for His kingdom. Be patient, church. God is at work.

— Greg Lincoln





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