

3 Valuable Tips for Showing Patience in Your Marriage—Part 1

The first tip I want to share with you is *prayer*, but don't just pray for patience. I am sure you all heard the preacher's story about the guy who prayed for patience, and he lost his job, his house burned down, and he had a flat tire all in the same day. Of course, that's a myth, but many of us have a concern about praying for this fruit.

If you are not intentionally trying to grow fruit, the process may seem more painful than it needs to be. However, if you desire to grow spiritual fruit, I have a safe prayer for patience that you can pray.

“Lord, I ask you to help me to respond patiently today.”

This prayer can help if done every day. You can add, “I want to express your patient love toward my spouse today. God, I know that my spouse is your child. You were beaten and died for any sin they committed today. Please God; let me express your patience today in responding patiently to my spouse.”

A focused, intentional prayer can keep you mindful of the fruit of your agreement so that your spouse can taste from you today. Imagine how you would feel if your spouse was praying this prayer for themselves today. Imagine if two spouses were praying this prayer within the same marriage. Imagine if they followed through on a regular basis to respond patiently.

Wow, would their children be messed up. They would actually see two parents being patient toward one another. Imagine what that could do for their faith and character. I know we are only dreaming, but dreams often come true for those who pray and work toward being the answer to their prayers.

The second tip that will move you toward patience is *detachment*. Many spouses can fall into a really bizarre belief pattern. They may believe that their spouse is deliberately trying to offend them or purposely causing them pain. Oh, I know every once in a while, many of us get in a mood where we deliberately try to frustrate or anger our spouse by doing something due to our lack of patience. It's important that you don't make all their annoying behavior all about you. It's not all about you. They would probably have this behavior no matter whom they had married. They are honestly just being their human, sin-fallen self.

Detachment allows you take a step back and diffuse yourself. You will probably have to say it out loud, "This is not about me. This is who they are. They are not trying to be mean or spiteful, they're just being themselves." If you can step back, you can take whatever the behavior is more patiently.

How you choose to frame your spouse's behavior is largely how you will respond. If you see it just as a personal attack and that they are out to get you, the response you have will most likely be less patient. But if you can frame it as them simply being themselves, you might be detached enough to be patient.

How you see your spouse's behavior is your choice. Your spouse does not control how you see them. You can control how you see their behaviors as part of the blessing of having an imperfect and human spouse who loves you and not as an all out alien attack to steal the joy out of your life.

Spouses must refuse to view their partner's annoying quirks as deliberate offenses. This is a choice—to refuse your previous interpretation of your spouse's behavior and choose a more gentle and patient way to view them.

After you apply prayer and detachment, a third tip I would offer in the area of patience is to "stop." That is, stop believing and behaving as if you have the power to change your

spouse. First, God has never commanded you to change your spouse. He has only called you to love your spouse. Nowhere in Scripture do you see it spelled out to change your spouse.

God, Himself, alone can change a person. We have limited powers of change. The limits of your power are to change yourself. Beyond changing yourself, you are powerless. You are, and are forever, powerless to change any human being including your spouse.

Powerlessness at first seems difficult, but when you truly accept your powerlessness toward your spouse you're finally in reality. Once you are in reality, you will be so less angry and controlling you might actually come across as being more patient. Actually, you are just accepting reality. The reality is you cannot change your spouse. So I encourage you to "stop" doing what God has already made impossible to do.

See, if you believe a lie, you behave in a peculiar way. Now we all know God didn't give you the lie so you could change your spouse. You got this lie straight from the enemy. Just look at the fruit of strife, contention and discord that proves it's straight from hell itself. A seed can only produce what it is. Apples produce apples, and lies produce strife.

I found out that when I was able to give up the lie that I could change Lisa, I was able to relax. After I relaxed, I found often enough I was much more accepting of who she is right now. I didn't need her to be better to love her. I actually started to like her more, and patience seemed to be much easier for me.

Now that you are dangling out there in being powerless, how does change occur? Change can occur as a reaction or action toward your circumstances. So your changing can influence change.

There is another way change can occur. It's another secret I have learned on the road of marriage. It's a powerful secret.

To utilize this secret, you must be fairly squeaky clean in your behavior toward your spouse.

Now if you are not squeaky clean, this secret may backfire on you, so be careful. Before you start, honestly ask yourself about how your attitudes, behaviors, and service toward your spouse are currently. If you feel good about your attitudes, behaviors and service to your spouse, proceed. Proceed to the One who designed, created, gave birth to, fed and clothed your spouse all these years: her Father, the Living God of all the heavens and earth.

Acknowledge who He is, and I recommend gratitude toward him for who your spouse is. Then go to Him who can change both you and your spouse. Approach Him with gentleness and let Him know your situation or the difficulty you're having with His child. Then do the dangerous part.

Ask if the problem is you. "Father and Father-in-law, God, if I am believing wrongly, acting wrongly, or in anyway the problem, correct me. Change me and don't let me be wicked in any way to your precious child, my spouse."

Then be quiet and see if the God of heaven and earth has anything to say to you. If he does, thank Him for the correction. Repent and follow His direction to you immediately.

If he does not speak to you correctively, and your own heart does not convict you of any sin, proceed gently, "Father, if I am not the issue then change in my spouse what you alone can see so we can both glorify you." Now be silent, don't give God advice or any insight about your spouse.

Leave your prayer place with faith that God is both able and willing to change your spouse. Change may not be immediate, but I have experienced miracles of God where he changed Lisa or me.

So in short, I am totally powerless to change my spouse, but God is willing and able. Turn yourself and your spouse over to God, and He is able and willing to make change. You see patience avoids trying to change your spouse's behavior that you struggle with.

Check back on Friday as we discuss a more tips on how to be patient in marriage! {eoa}

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