

How to Deal With Struggles With Patience

We live in a world of instant gratification. We want it all, and we want it now. We're a nation of express lanes, fast food, high-speed Internet and smartphones.

Sure, there are benefits, but it's a problem when we impose those same expectations on people. We demand instant acceptance from our peers, instant response from our employees and instant help from our spouse, regardless of the circumstances. And when we don't get the immediate response we expect, we react negatively.

My type A personality and our demanding world have joined forces and resulted in one of my biggest struggles: being patient. Being patient with circumstances and being patient with people is something I have to work hard at. Both my kids and my wife, Susan, are helping me with it.

My Kids Have Taught Me

My kids have taught me a lot of things, and I can tell you, it's a very humbling experience. One thing they've shown me over and over again is my lack of patience. For example, they've pointed out my impatience with the grocery store cashier during checkout, with the waitress at a restaurant and while hurriedly driving them to school.

You get the picture. It's kind of embarrassing to admit, but I was even impatient while in traffic today when my son Marky was with me. When my children point out my impatience or other faults, I can respond by being defensive and telling them to be quiet. Or I can listen and thank them for pointing it out to me and ask them to keep reminding me. I'm pleased to report I've been patiently doing the latter. Here's another lesson learned from my children on patience.

My Wife Has Taught Me

My wife also knows my struggle with patience. It was Oct. 11, 2010. Susan was sitting across the table from me in the conference room at a Family First leadership team meeting. I received a text from Susan during the meeting at 10:47 a.m. I know the exact time because I saved the text as a constant reminder. It simply said, "Patience, kindness." She saw how I was being short and cutting people off in the meeting and gave me a gentle nudge in the right direction.

The Choice

Patience is a choice. When you're patient, you choose to hold your tongue instead of releasing its venom. You choose to have a long fuse instead of a quick temper. Patience is choosing to control your emotions rather than letting your emotions control you.

Do you struggle with being patient? What do you do about it?

Portions of this blog post came from Mark Merrill's book, All Pro Dad: Seven Essentials to Be a Hero to Your Kids.

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