

The Raw Power of Practicing Patience in Your Marriage

A fourth tip to increase patience toward your spouse is to experience the pure *power* of patience. The Proverbs state in 16:32 that a patient man wins a city.

Now go back in time to the writer of Proverbs' time. What was the primary protective structure of a city in Old Testament times? That's right; it was the big, thick wall that surrounded the city.

I can't think of a better picture of an angry person than a walled off city. Now how would a patient man win a city? Why not a cruel man, a strong man, a clever man or a great warrior?

I thought and thought about this proverb. I remember stories and movies about wars where a general would camp outside of a city. He would encircle the city so no one could leave. He would cut off its water and food supplies and wait. He would wait while the enemy city would get weak, dehydrated and starved. They would fight internally and eventually open their gates to their well-fed and watered conqueror. Patience was the force this general would use. You see, patience is raw power.

Anger needs food sources. Your impatience is the food source of anger. As you react, overreact or just act plain silly, anger gets stronger. That anger mocks your impatience and can turn the focus toward you and never be dealt with.

I have found that patience cannot nourish anger. Patience is to anger what kryptonite is to Superman. The angry person feels the adrenaline rush, their thoughts race faster, and they have x-ray vision of seeing into your history and your feeble impatience.

Yet with the kryptonite of patience, it's not you who looks foolish. It's not you whose rationale is faulty. No, it's you who appears together, confident and calm in the wings of your spouse. They eat up their resources rapidly and eventually need to open up and get honest.

It doesn't happen the first time you are patient. Like the general who waits day after day, the spouse becomes weakened because the food of your reactive impatience is no longer feeding them.

You see the power of patience is that it is an intentional force. Like an intentional blow a black belt would strike an opponent with, so is patience. Patience is an action. Patience is not some passive state of agreement or being walked all over.

Patience is power. When I am patient with myself, Lisa, my children and any of my staff or counselors, it is always a better experience than if I responded impatiently.

The next tip I would like you to consider is that patience is a seed. In Galatians 5:22 it talks about patience being a fruit of the spirit. Fruits all have seeds. Fruit trees all grow the same way; the fruit (i.e., an apple, orange, etc.) falls off the tree, the rotten fruit gives way to seeds. The seeds go into the ground and with the conditions of soil, rain and light it creates a new fruit tree—this process has been going on for thousands of years.

The power of a seed is incredible. Humans are still just fancy dirt. Remember Adam was created from dirt. When we see an act of patience like a listening ear, silence about a spouse's mistake, a laugh instead of a glare, we are sowing patience into our spouse's being. Patience allows us to discipline our responses toward our spouse and some of his/her difficult behavior.

Now seeds like these don't grow instantly. Seeds take time to

mature. As I intentionally plant the seeds of patience, I won't reap instantly, but I will reap eventually. I have found that as I have become more patient (by Lisa's assessment) I have also received more patience.

I am a sinner until death. I feel sorry for Lisa that I will sin and will absolutely need her patience. I want to keep planting the seed of patience in the soil of Lisa because there are days I need to eat the fruit of patience she has grown.

I also have had Lisa sow patience into my soul. This process also allows me to remember how she has been patient with me, and therefore I am more patient with her. I think you can see the principle of sowing and reaping that can happen in a marriage. Sow like the wind and reap a harvest when the season comes for you to need a harvest.

This last tip may not seem like a pleasant one, but it does help when your goal is being more patient. This tip is about *forbearance*. Forbearance means there are just some things in life that will not change either in a lifetime or at least not your lifetime.

Things that are unchanging such as things about your spouse, you will just simply need to forbear. I know it's not glamorous, but in every marriage you get to be like Christ and forbear.

Being patient can motivate you to change and become more compatible with your spouse and modify your behaviors that can be annoying. Patience can help you through this season with your spouse.

Although spouses feel they must communicate the little things that bother them, this doesn't always bring about change. Just think about how many times the Holy Spirit has reminded you about change. If you take a moment, there have been some things He has talked with you about for years.

The Holy Spirit has forbore many of your less-than-wonderful characteristics. Forbearing your spouse's shortcomings is an opportunity for you to grow the fruit of patience.

Now, if you're forbearing, don't do it grudgingly. When you are forbearing, a good sense of humor helps. I have found that if I can laugh I can enjoy my spouse instead of merely tolerating her. She is the daughter of God, and she has flaws. Her flaws can be cute or annoying depending on where my heart is. So see if you can smile before you start talking to yourself about the wonderful gift of your spouse. {eoa}

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