

TNT

Be Patient in Difficult Moments

Maybe you grew up, like I did, watching the animated hijinks of Wile E. Coyote. Suspending your disbelief that a desert-dwelling animal had access to such a massive supply of TNT, it's incredible how many times the Coyote would accidentally blow himself up. No matter how well-prepared or elaborate the scheme, something always went wrong, leading to an explosive ending. But have you ever felt like you're operating with a short fuse that's ready to blow up in your face?

We're modeling our mercy after Jesus' mercy as we continue our [Cross Training](#) journey. Mercy comes when we receive God's grace, forgive others, show kindness, and develop patience. So how can we become more calm and loving when it's easier to explode?

What You Need to Know

Genuine love *"is patient"* (1 Cor. 13:4) because *"Love bears all things"* and *"endures all things"* (1 Cor. 13:7). No wonder God shows his love for us in *"the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience"* (Rom. 2:4). Jesus shows his *"perfect patience"* towards his followers when we take too long to understand his will and obey (1 Tim. 1:16; Luke 22:31-34; John 14:9). The *"God of endurance"* (Rom. 15:5) is *"slow to anger"* (Ex. 34:6), patiently waiting for people to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

We say someone has a "short fuse" when — like a stick of dynamite — it doesn't take them long to explode. The Greek word *makro* means "long," so the word translated *"patience"* — *makrothumia* — makes us think of a looong-fuse or a *"longsuffering"* nature (Gal. 5:22, KJV). It describes "a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation" (Louw-Nida). With patience, we can "bear up under provocation" showing "forbearance" (BDAG).

To unite Christ's church, imperfect people have to create *"perfect harmony"* with other imperfect people (Col. 3:14), understanding that none of us have "arrived." No one has *"already obtained"* our goal, none are *"already perfect,"* but we *"press on"* (Phil. 3:12). While our brothers and sisters might *"not yet"* (1 Cor. 3:1-3; 8:2) act as spiritually mature as they should, we can believe the best in each other and look forward in the hope of future growth (1 Cor. 13:7). So Christ's followers put on *"compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another"* (Col. 3:12-13).

What You Need to Do

What do you do when you feel the reins slipping out of your hand, as your tongue — like an untamed beast — is about to lash out (James 1:26; 3:3-8)? Some people count to ten, but how about remembering these ten familiar words instead: *"I can do all things through him who strengthens me"* (Phil. 4:13)? How about imitating Nehemiah, who paused before speaking in a stressful moment, and quietly *"prayed to the God of heaven"* (cf. Neh. 2:4-5)?

But we need to center ourselves in God's will before the tense moments come, taking time away to pray (Eph. 6:16-18) and meditate on God's Word (Psalm 1). How did the most patient man who ever lived navigate life's difficulties? In his most stressful, emotionally draining seasons (Matt. 14:13), as demands and interruptions piled up (Mark 6:31-32), Christ slipped away to pray (Mark 1:35; Matt. 14:23). As important as sleeping and eating are to our health (and even our patience), Jesus sometimes gave up both to spend time in solitude (Luke 4:1-2) and prayer (Luke 5:15-16). So don't neglect your spiritual well-being!

When you fail, repent and call on the Lord's partnership in your life (Psalm 51). Don't let one outburst become a downward slide of shame, disappointment, and frustration (cf. Matt. 25:29). God's mercy toward you never runs dry (Lam. 3:23). He's a rock (Psalm 18:2), a help in your weakness (2 Cor. 12:9-10), the source of unimaginable power at work within you, as you cling to Christ (Eph. 3:20-21). Can anxious, impatient people like us have a "long fuse," "*bearing with one another in love*" (Eph. 4:12)? With man, it might seem impossible, but "*with God all things are possible*" (Matt. 19:26).

Through the Week

- **Read** — Luke 22:31-34; 1 Tim. 1:12-17; Prov. 16:32; Rom. 15:1-7; 1 Thess. 5:12-18
- **Reflect** — Ask yourself, *Am I willing to bear with others' weaknesses and failings, as God bears with mine?*
- **Request** — Pray, "*Lord, give me the good sense to be slow to anger and overlook offenses*" (cf. Prov. 19:11).
- **Respond** — Take extra time this morning to prayerfully prepare to respond graciously to the day's difficulties.
- **Reach Out** — Ask someone, "*What irritation or 'button' is the Achilles heel of your patience?*"