

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

LESSON 3: HUMILITY AND PATIENCE

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Christian Character Development. When Christians fail and ministries fall apart, it is often due to a lack of character development in the leader. A Christian leader must take character development seriously, because discipleship requires that we grow in Christ-like character. This module examines a number of Christian character traits that are necessary for developing servant leadership. We will look at what the Bible teaches about these traits, and examples of Jesus and others displaying them. Godly character should be evident in the life of every follower of Christ, especially those who are leading others.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is Christians who are maturing in their faith and desiring to serve God. The lessons will be especially helpful to those who are pastors, church leaders, mentors or teachers, but also anyone wishing to grow in their relationship with God.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

LESSON 3: HUMILITY AND PATIENCE

PURPOSE

This lesson explores the Christian character traits of humility and patience, how Jesus and others in the Bible exhibited them, and how we can develop them in our own lives.

LEADER'S NOTE

We are born as selfish people. Little children often think that the world revolves around them and for them. Some people never grow up in this regard, and still believe that the world should exist to please them. They want what they want, and they want it now! Humility and patience are two virtues that are contrary to our natural instincts of serving ourselves first. Some participants may personally find this lesson difficult. As a leader, create a safe place where they can be honest with one another, and allow time for sharing and discussion. It is difficult (even impossible) to improve our character traits unless we are honest.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Describe a situation that causes you to be impatient.
- ❖ What is one accomplishment in your life that you are personally proud of? Is there a place for personal pride in the life of a Christian?
- ❖ What is the difference between humility and pride? How can false humility be a form of pride, and what is the difference between true and false humility?
- ❖ What have you waited for a long time and are still waiting for? What makes patience in this instance difficult?



STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH:

- ❖ **The Virtues of Humility and Patience:** These two virtues are related. All of us want to get our own way. If we are very honest with ourselves, we want what we want, and we want it right now! We believe we deserve it. We believe we are owed what makes us happy, even if it would take away happiness from others. This is a sin that we must combat, and only by surrendering to the Holy Spirit can we learn to think differently. Pride comes from believing that we are more important than others. Impatience comes from believing that other people's plans and time are not as important as ours.
- ❖ **Humility:** In order to possess true humility, we must understand what it is and isn't.
 - **Humility is not Pride:** Pride is thinking too highly of oneself and it is the opposite of humility. We may think we have enough social manners to not boast in public, but we are guilty of pride when we talk about our achievements to make us look important. A humble person does not crave attention, does not point out others' faults, does not neglect people of 'lower' status, and is not hypocritical.
 - **Humility is not Shame:** Self-imposed shame is the opposite of humility. When we boast about our imperfections or speak poorly of ourselves so that others will feel sorry for us and praise us, we exhibit false humility. We are God's workmanship, and we should not insult God by insulting ourselves. When we think too little of ourselves, we sin.
 - **Humility is Thinking Correctly About Ourselves:** When we have the correct Biblical view of ourselves (created in God's image), we can extend grace and love to others. When we stop ranking people and determining their worth to us, we can truly love them. This requires humility. The truth is, we are not greater than the least of the people we serve. We are all God's creation. We are all fallen. We are redeemed, not by our own works but by God's grace. Consider these verses about the danger of not being humble:
 - o [Proverbs 11:2](#)
 - o [Proverbs 16:5](#)
 - o [Galatians 6:3](#)
 - o [Proverbs 26:12](#)
 - o [James 4:6](#)
 - o [Romans 12:16](#)

ASK:

What is the danger of pride?

Why is God opposed to the proud but pleased with the humble? What do pride and humility have to do with our salvation and the grace we receive from God?

The world sees humility as a negative and weak trait – it is very bad to be humiliated! But God thinks otherwise. How does humility actually show great strength of character?

**TEACH:**

- ❖ **Humility in the Life of Jesus:** If anyone has reason to elevate his position above all others, it is Jesus! The four Gospels make this very clear. Not just a man, Jesus is also the Son of God and fully divine! And yet, He was not proud. He had an accurate and healthy sense of His importance, and that is what allowed Him to do the will of the Father, to love others authentically and to draw people to Himself.
 - **Jesus lived a humble life:** Jesus was born into a poor family. We can presume that as a young man He learned the building trade from His earthly father, Joseph (Mark 6:3). He did not have riches or earthly wealth, or even a house to call His own (Matthew 8:20)! He put the will of the Father and the good of others before His own comfort (John 6:38).
 - **Jesus deferred to the will of the Father:** Jesus and the Father are equal in glory, but during His time on earth Jesus chose to submit to the will of the Father. He did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Matthew 26:39, Philippians 2:5-7).
 - **Jesus accepted God's purpose for His life:** Proud people aspire to something greater than they are meant for, and those who feel shame refuse the good they were meant to do. Those who are humble accept God's plan for their lives. Jesus knew His purpose was to come and lead us to God through His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus suffered humility in death, and did not escape it even though He had the power to do so (Luke 4:18-21, Philippians 2:8).
- ❖ **Biblical Examples of Humility:** Many of the people chosen by God to lead others had a proper sense of self-worth. They did not foolishly think that they could do anything great in their own power. Those who thought they weren't good enough learned to accept themselves as God created them (in His image).
 - **King David:** David had humble beginnings – he was a shepherd, not the son of a King. But God chose him because he had a heart for God and trusted in Him. David is a great example of humility. He did not think that God owed him everything; instead, he was grateful and humble. He called himself God's servant. He knew in his heart that all he was, all he accomplished was due to God alone (1 Chronicles 17:16-27, Psalm 69).
 - **Apostle Paul:** Here we have a man who could have thought highly of himself – born of high position and one who became a great Apostle. Yet he knew that he was unworthy and indebted to God. He realized he was nothing apart from Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:9, 1 Timothy 1:15).
- ❖ **Patience:** The second virtue we will look at today is patience. In order to possess true patience, we must understand what it is and what it isn't.
 - **Patience is not Impatience:** We understand impatience as a restlessness, anger or frustration at not having things happen when and where and how we want.



Impatience produces an urge to have things a certain way, and causes stress when that ideal does not materialize. We may be impatient with circumstances or with people. It may stem from unhappiness or dissatisfaction with ourselves, or a lack of trust in God's sovereignty. A patient person trusts God for the outcome and timing of their own plans; they also care about the plans and needs of other people.

- **Patience is not Laziness:** Being patient does not make us indifferent to how events unfold, nor does it stop us from desiring good for others and ourselves. We must not think that patience is lack of action, or sitting back and never trying to improve a situation. We must still work hard, still take care of our basic needs and the needs of those we provide for. Patience is not passive, it does not give up when there are difficulties.
- **Patience is the ability to endure deferred satisfaction or reward.** It is waiting for others when waiting is for their good. It is trusting in God's plans and timing and not insisting that our methods are superior. Waiting is hard, but endurance over a long period is harder. We must recognize that the urges to have things done our way in our time frame are not from God. God teaches us to wait on Him, which can be one of the most difficult tests of our patience. Consider these verses:

- o [Psalm 27:7-9](#)
- o [Ephesians 4:2-3](#)
- o [1 Peter 2:19-23](#)
- o [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#)
- o [James 5:7](#)
- o [2 Timothy 2:24](#)
- o [Hebrews 6:9-12](#)
- o [Romans 5:3](#)

ASK:

What are some areas of life that require us to be patient?

What does patience have to do with our trust in God and love for others?

What are some consequences of patience? What are some consequences of impatience or hastiness?

Why is it difficult to be patient with others who have different life circumstances, temptations and callings than we do?

TEACH:

- ❖ **Patience in the Life of Jesus:** All of the Christian virtues are modeled in the life of Jesus. Patience might be a strange attribute to ascribe to Jesus, since He had the power to make anything happen when He wanted!
- **Jesus was patient with people:** Despite the fact that the disciples left their old lives and spent their days with Jesus, they often displayed selfishness. They were greedy, impulsive, and failed to understand what Jesus told them over and over again. Jesus forgave them, and still believed in their potential. He did not get angry with them, nor refuse to repeat what he had taught them before. We see several examples of Jesus dealing patiently with His disciples ([John 14:5-11](#), [John 20:24-29](#)).



- **Jesus was patient with circumstances:** Jesus had tremendous power and wisdom, and yet humbly worked alongside His father living an ordinary life. He was both humble and patient before He began His public ministry. Jesus probably had to endure boredom and weariness as He waited to fulfill His destiny! Jesus also endured tremendous physical affliction at the end of His life, and resisted the temptation to escape from His death on the cross (1 Peter 3:18, Luke 24:46, Hebrews 12:2).
- ❖ **Biblical Examples of Patience:** There are other good examples of patience in God's Word – God's people being patient in the midst of trials.
 - **Abraham:** Sometimes we have to be patient with God Himself. Abraham received a promise and a blessing from God that he would bear a son, and be a father to a great nation – in fact many nations! At the time of this promise, Abraham and his wife were too old to have children (in their seventies). He had already spent his lifetime praying for a child, but God had him wait another 24 years before he was born! Abraham did not always wait with patience; his wife, Sarah, was also impatient for a child and thought she had a better plan. Together they tried to force God's promise by having a child through Sarah's handmaid! This was not God's intention. God's plan was for Abraham to patiently endure until the right time (Genesis 12:1-3, Hebrews 6:15).
 - **Job:** One man in the Bible suffered more than any other for the purpose of testing his faith! Job lost his family, his wealth, his health, and yet he did not curse God. Job waited patiently on God's plan, and he knew that sometimes good people must endure trials and hardships. In the end, God restored to Job all he had lost; in fact he gave him twice as much (Job 42:10, James 5:10-11).
- ❖ **Evaluate your own Humility and Patience:** We have seen that humility and patience are virtuous character traits. They were exhibited by Jesus, and praised in God's Word. When we display humility and patience, our own plans, comforts, and desires are put in proper perspective.
 - Consider situations that arouse your pride or impatience. Our actions are a direct result of our beliefs. Think about the beliefs you have that contribute to your actions. Are they correct? Are they Biblical? Memorize one of these verses and recite it when you are not displaying the character of Christ.
 - o Romans 12:12
 - o Galatians 6:9
 - o 1 Corinthians 13:4
 - o Isaiah 40:31
 - Consider the following attitudes and behaviours that demonstrate pride and impatience in disguise! We are people who are easily deceived. Are any of these evident in your life?
 - o self-reliance by refusing help from others
 - o self-confidence by not taking needs to God in prayer
 - o acting on a mission from God without waiting for God's timing



- o forgetting to come to God in repentance regularly for forgiveness
- o doing only what you are comfortable doing, staying away from risks in your life
- o becoming angry with yourself, others, or circumstances
- o broken relationships, or few close friendships
- o difficulty connecting with a church community
- o not seeing answers to your prayers

TASK:

Developing our Christian character is about choices: we either make use of opportunities to be a servant leader, or turn away from them. Divide your participants into small groups of 3-6. Have each group discuss the scenarios in "Choosing Christian Character" at the end of the lesson and answer the questions.

DISCUSSION

- ❖ Consider what your life would be like if Jesus Christ had not saved you and changed your heart. As you reflect on this, does it humble you to think of what God has rescued you from?
- ❖ Is it easier for you to naturally think too much of yourself, or too little? What would you recommend to a person who wanted to think less of themselves and more about others?
- ❖ How have you responded in the past when a prayer of yours has gone unanswered? What goes through your mind, and what happens in your heart? Have you been patient, accepting God's plans as better than your own?
- ❖ Consider a situation in which you are often impatient. Describe it for the other participants. Then think about the following:
 - Why are you so impatient in this situation?
 - What is it that you are rushing to get to, and why do you need to get there?
 - What is your motivation for this?
 - What happens if you cannot reach your goal in the time you want to?
 - Is the source of your impatience self-centered, or putting God and others first?
- ❖ What is the most difficult form of patience for you? Patience with people, patience with circumstances, or patience with God?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Pray that your participants would choose to develop humility and patience, demonstrate love and honour to others, and put God's ways before their own. Pray that they would be



patient in trials, patient with God's responses to their prayers, and patient with themselves as they grow in Christian character. Pray that they would humbly receive correction from God and others, and have a healthy view of their own worth. Pray that they would know how precious and beautiful and important to God they are, but also how they must depend on Him every moment of their lives. Thank God for each participant and the growth of Christian character evident in their lives.



CHOOSING CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

-HUMILITY AND PATIENCE-

In small groups, discuss the scenarios below. For each situation consider these questions:

- o What would your natural response to this situation be?
- o How would someone who is humble and patient respond to this situation?
- o What might the consequences be of demonstrating Christlike character in this situation?

A newspaper reporter comes to interview you because of the work your church has been doing in the community. They want to know whose idea it was to serve the poor in the neighbourhood, and who is responsible for the ministry that is changing the community for the better. You have been leading this ministry with a small team. It would be a chance for personal glory. What do you tell the reporter?

You are overlooked to be leader of a ministry and are instead assigned something much less worthy of your talents. You know that the person, selected for the position you wanted is inferior to you.

You are stopped in traffic. It may be a train, an accident, crowds or animals to blame – you don't know. You are missing an important meeting that will impact the ministry you are passionate about, and you wonder why God would let this happen.

You want to do something new – something important that you believe God has put on your heart. It is all you can think about! But it requires the permission of the elders at your church to go ahead with it. They say no, not now. You are despondent, and you don't feel they understand how important this is to you. You wonder if this set-back proves this is not something God wants you to do.

You have little time left in the day and two people have come to see you for counseling. They are both fellow members of your church – one is quite well-off and powerful in the community. The other is a woman with a sinful past. You do not know who has the greater need, but you can only see one of them today. Who gets preferential treatment?