

Cornerstone Conversations

One of my all-time favorite school teacher stories is about a nursery teacher who at the end of an exasperating day had to put boots on all 31 of the children before she sent them outside in the snow. As she struggled to lace up the last boot on the foot of the 31st child, the child looked at her and said, "These aren't my boots."

Thinking that she would have to go back and re-boot the whole class, she furiously ripped off the boots only to hear the little one say, "They're my sister's boots, but my mum let me wear them today."

I wonder does life ever try your patience? I think we all have times like this, I know I do. There is just something about being born on this planet that makes us vulnerable to snap, often destructively, in response to life's inevitable stress.

What is it that pushes you to the edge? Is it that bloke who keeps cutting you off in heavy traffic or the person who pushes in at the supermarket check out? Or perhaps its when somebody is just rude? It's different for all of us, but we've all experienced that temptation to explode when somebody or something stamps on our frayed nerves.

I hate to turn up the pressure, but it's in these moments of near-nuclear explosions that we find out how closely we're walking with the Lord. Galatians 5:22 says, "And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience." When life takes us to the edge, it's easy to tell if we are being controlled by the Holy Spirit, or whether our old nature is going to step up to manage the situation.

Being patient doesn't mean that we morph into mild mannered sappy people for Jesus, with no fire in our belly. But the kind of patience that the Spirit wants to produce in us does bring restraint to our anger. Anger always clouds good judgment while patience helps us stand back and evaluate the tension in a constructive way.

Patience says "no" to our "gut reaction" to do the first thing that comes to mind. When your gut reaction is: "I'm resigning from this job right now!" patience says, "Why don't you give it a few days and pray about it. Think about how this will affect your future and your family." Patience gives you the space you need to make better decisions.

An impulsive "I'm heading to the garage right now to buy that new car!" may need patience to slow you down long enough to ask yourself, "What's wrong with the car I have? Is there anything better that God would want me to do with the money?"

And, patience may just get your anxious little self out of the way so that God can accomplish what He has in mind, through the trial that has you so frazzled.

Isaiah assures us that "those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary" (Isaiah 40:31 NASB).

So all together now: Let's take a deep breath, step back, and patiently wait for Him to manage your response. No wonder patience is called a virtue!

Rev'd. Linda