

Deny Yourself.

A six-week guided practice in laying down our lives and taking up our Christ

Lesson 6: **Patience.**

Introduction...

Holy Week is a season unto itself. Throughout Lent, we've looked at various ways to focus our thoughts and actions on our faith through scripture, meditation, and prayer. This week we will conclude our Lenten study with a look at one of the most difficult disciplines to master - patience. Jesus has come into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey's colt, and been welcomed with palm branches and praise. Soon, he will take his last meal with the disciples, washing their feet and instituting the Lord's Supper we celebrate at Communion to this day. He'll be arrested, tried, and convicted on fabricated charges. He'll be crucified. And we, as Easter people, know he will be resurrected, and still come once again. We know all that will happen; but during this week, this season unto itself, we must wait.

Scripture Focus...

From Paul's letter to the Romans, Chapter 8, verse 22-25:

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." (NRSV)

Meditation... (adapted from Mark Bertin, <https://www.mindful.org/a-15-minute-meditation-for-patience-and-resolve/>)

1. Sit comfortably, upright and alert. Bring a sense of strength and comfort to your body. Relax your eyes.
2. Notice that with each breath there's a physical movement of your body. Notice the rising and falling of your chest; notice the air moving in and out.
3. Your mind will most likely stay busy and sensations may take over in your body. Note whatever you observe. Then, bring your attention back to the breath. See if you can bring a sense of ease and calm to the next few breaths.

4. Become aware of sensations in your body as a whole. There may be pain or discomfort. If something feels urgent or too painful, make an adjustment.

5. See if it's possible to observe these sensations and let them go. Practice staying patient with the discomfort in your body if possible.

6. Expand your awareness to your thoughts, which might feel uncomfortable or anxiety-provoking or overwhelming. For the next few moments, observe your thoughts and note them: thoughts of the future, the past, the present.

7. With a sense of resolve, focus on the next breath or two. Either continue to note thoughts and let them go, or shift your awareness to emotions. Emotions are part of our moment-to-moment experience that's not fully under our control. The art and skill of managing our emotions requires awareness of them. And yet, often emotions feel like triggers. It's like we're hooked and we must do something about them.

8. For the next part of the practice, see if you're able to let go of that hook. Acknowledge your emotional state whether you feel happy, sad, overwhelmed, anxious, angry, unsettled. Remind yourself that it is ok to struggle at times. Note the emotion if it triggers thoughts or an urge to take action. Then, return to the anchor of your breath.

9. With each in-breath, welcome a sense of open awareness. Take it all in with a sense of acceptance, awareness, and clarity.

10. With each out-breath, find whatever words capture your wishes for yourself in this moment and focus on these positive thoughts.

11. As the practice ends, notice any tendency for your mind to leap forward into the future or any urge to jump off your meditation seat. Come back again to each breath. With a sense of intention and resolve, choose when to end your practice, and continue on with the rest of your day.

Prayer:

Holy God, let me be filled with the power of your presence, upheld by your strength, and set free from my own anxieties and worries. Let me be emptied of all that would stand in Your holy way. **Amen.**