



PRETEEN

APRIL 2024

FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PATIENCE AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

Waiting is a part of life. Thankfully, we don't have to wait on our own. Through the Holy Spirit, God can help us experience the patience we need to wait well. After all, God is patient with us. God is in control and knows what's best for us. Even though God's people had been waiting for years for the promised Savior, at just the right time, God sent Jesus. Because we're created in God's image, we can reflect God's patience in our lives. We can be patient when we remember what God has done. We can lean on God's Holy Spirit to give us the strength we need to trust God and show patience with the difficult circumstances in our lives.

CORE INSIGHT: The theological foundation for PATIENCE

Transformation by the power of God's Spirit. God's Spirit is transforming my unique and imperfect life into the character of Jesus.

It can be difficult to find patience while you're waiting for something important—or even something that's not important. At its core, patience is about trust: trusting people to follow through . . . trusting that a process will run smoothly . . . and most of all, trusting that God has our best in mind and that God's timing is better than our own. Thankfully, as we follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit is helping us grow and transform to become more like Jesus. This transformation includes growing in our ability to trust that God will be with us while we wait. As we follow Jesus and trust God, we will grow in patience.

PATIENCE is waiting until later for what you want now.

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT PATIENCE WITH KIDS

First, areas where people struggle to show patience are subjective. For some, it could be extremely difficult to wait for something that another person might have no problem with at all. It's good for people working with kids not to belittle their experience with patience. We're all on a continuum of growth in this area. Show empathy and lead with love as kids share about their experience with showing patience while they wait. Some kids might even share some very difficult situations where they are waiting for resolution—such as their parents' divorce, unemployment, or illness. Be sure to have a plan for when kids share these sorts of situations. Take time outside of Small Group to have a follow-up conversation, and determine who else needs to know about the situation and how you'll follow up with them.

Patience can also be dependent upon where kids are developmentally. Preteens that are 10 or 11 years old might be able to wait longer because they've had more practice. Kindergarteners can only wait so long before they get distracted, start complaining, or rush to complete whatever they're waiting for. Have . . . patience with kids as they learn patience at their phase of development.

One last thing to keep in mind when it comes to patience: you may have kids in your environment that experience ADHD and struggle with impulse control. You may have other kids with a neurodivergence for whom waiting and demonstrating patience is extremely difficult—or perhaps even impossible. The way you talk about patience and what it means to show patience should be filled with grace for kids in situations where this will be a lifelong struggle. Don't equate a lack of faith as the reason they have difficulty waiting. This is not a faith issue, but rather a neuro-physiological issue over which they have little control.



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WEEK 1

Key Question: **When is it hard to have patience?** As we start our month talking about patience, we help preteens think about the times when it's most difficult for them to wait. When we're able to anticipate the moments when patience might be tricky, we can prepare and be ready to wait. We pray that kids will learn to trust God with the situations where they have to wait.

We kick off the month with a patience proverb found in **Proverbs 14:29**: *"Anyone who is patient has great understanding. But anyone who gets angry quickly shows how foolish they are."* When it comes to waiting, we have a choice. We can either lose our patience and get upset, or we can choose to keep our cool and think about what we can learn through our waiting. We can trust that God will help us wait well.

Bottom Line: **Waiting can make you wise.** There are lots of times in life when we have to wait. Kids have to wait in lines, for school to let out, or to take their turn on the playground. In some situations, it can be more difficult to wait than in others. We pray that kids will remember that the times when we have to wait can become opportunities for us to trust God and grow in wisdom.

WEEK 2

Key Question: **What could you miss out on by not waiting?** We will face times when we have a choice between what's good and what's best. We might rush to take the good because we don't want to keep waiting for what's best. Yet it's in those moments when we might miss out on something really great. We pray that kids will learn how to wait with the future in mind. God has something amazing planned for them if they learn to have patience.

For week 2, we turn to **Genesis 25:24-34**, where we find one of the best examples of what happens when someone is not patient—the story of Esau. After a hunting trip, Esau was exhausted and hungry! And wouldn't you know, his brother Jacob had a pot of stew cooking on the fire. Jacob took advantage of this situation and offered a bowl in exchange for Esau's inheritance. Turns out, Esau couldn't resist. He lost something extremely valuable, all because he was impatient.

Bottom Line: **When you think you can't wait, think twice.** Through the story of Esau, we pray that kids will discover why it's important to have patience and wait. We will face moments when we want to rush and take the first choice that comes our way, but that might not be God's best for us. We pray that kids will discover that when they wait, they can experience something even better than they can imagine.



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FOR LEADERS ONLY (CONTINUED)

WEEK 3

Key Question: **What can you think about when it's hard to wait?** Having a strategy when it comes to waiting is a great way to have patience. We pray that as kids discover more about trusting God with patience, they'll consider all of the truth of Scripture and think about the ways God has helped people throughout history. We pray that this will give them hope as they trust that God will help them in the future. Waiting might be hard, but God's Holy Spirit can help us wait well.

In week three, we head to **Exodus 32:1-35**. Moses met with God on Mount Sinai. He left his brother Aaron and the rest of the Israelites to wait. Rather than waiting patiently for Moses to return, the entire nation of Israel rebelled. They built a golden calf and began to worship it instead of worshipping God. If only they had remembered how God rescued them from Egypt and trusted God while they waited!

Bottom Line: **When you have to wait, remember what's true.** We can't avoid having to wait, but we can choose how we respond. A good way to discover patience is to think about what's true about God: God loves us and knows what's best for us. God cares for us and is with us. We can trust God no matter what. We pray that kids remember what's true about God when they have to wait.

WEEK 4

Key Question: **What are you waiting for right now?** As we finish our month talking about patience, we want to help preteens consider the current areas of life where they need patience. When we're able to anticipate the moments when patience might be tricky, we can prepare and be ready to wait. We pray that kids will learn to trust God with each situation where they have to wait.

We finish the month with a story found in **Luke 2:25-35**. God's people had been waiting for hundreds of years for the Savior. God promised Simeon that he'd get to see the Messiah before he died. We believe that Simeon waited a long time. But finally, when Mary and Joseph came to the temple with Baby Jesus, Simeon finally saw what he'd been waiting for.

Bottom Line: **God is with you while you wait.** We might have to wait for something small, like in a line at the ice cream stand . . . or we might have to wait for something big, like for a parent to get a new job. While it's true that patience is harder in some situations than others, we pray that kids will remember that they don't have to wait on their own. They can trust that God is with them while they wait.