

Boy, that walk back to get my sermon felt really long, didn't it? Did anyone feel awkward about it? Be honest. Was anyone feeling impatient? I mean, I should've been prepared right, and I only have a certain amount of time to speak, otherwise the service will run over.

Last week, Arlis made the comment that he was glad he wasn't worship leading for the sermon on patience, because he doesn't believe he is a particularly patient person. I would doubt that any of us are particularly good at patience; at least, we may be good in certain circumstances but poor in others. I am not always the most patient person. I can tell you two things that I am absolutely impatient about:

1) My dog barking. I hate it that she barks at every passing car, person, squirrel, and leaf, and that at times she can come off as intimidating to others, even though she really is sweet. I am incredibly impatient with her when she barks outside.

2) I can be an impatient driver, specifically when people take too long to make turns. You don't need to slow down to a stop in order to make a turn, just slow down enough that you won't give your passengers whiplash, make the turn, and let us all get on with our lives.

As I see it, we all experience impatience in life in one of these four areas: impatience with ourselves, impatience with others, impatience with circumstances, and impatience with God.

In a Time Magazine article published in 2015, a study done by Microsoft found that humans have a shorter attention span than goldfish. You heard me right, goldfish can keep their focus without losing concentration for 9 seconds, while people can only keep concentrated on something for 8 seconds. This is down from 12 seconds as discovered in a study done in 2000. The researchers concluded that this decrease in attention span is related to our rise in technology and that people who have a heavy amount of screen time each day have a harder time filtering out any irrelevant stimulus, therefore they lose attention more easily. So if we each have an average 8 second attention span, this means that in order for you to pay full attention during a 20 minute sermon, you would have to readjust your concentration 150 times. If we are in a constant battle with our minds to refocus on the important things, and that refocusing time has only increased in frequency, then no wonder we become so much more impatient when over people and circumstances that affect our valuable time.

We can all agree that having a little patience would make us less stressed and improve our relationships with others. But why is patience a “fruit of the Spirit?” What is so different about Christian patience?

**Patience:** Christian patience is our waiting to allow God to redeem the world in his own time, to redeem us in our own

time, and to redeem others in their own time. IF we realize that God is always in the process and business of redemption, then this waiting is not in vain; we need to continually look to God's redemptive work and in doing so then treat others, ourselves, circumstances, and God with patience.

This morning, in order to fully understand God's redemptive purposes in our patience, we are going to look at the story of Joseph found in Genesis, which is the story of a man who would have every right to be impatient with others, with circumstances, and with God, but by being faithful and patiently waiting on God, was able to be used for God's purposes and was blessed beyond measure.

Now Joseph's Story spans eight chapters in Genesis, from Genesis 37 to 45. Because of time realities and the truth that many would probably start feeling pretty impatient if I stood here and read eight chapters of Genesis, I will instead give a Cliff's Notes version of the life of Joseph by reading the chapters from the *Twible*. The Twible is actually the entire Bible written in Tweets, which for the initiated are short messages on the social-media forum Twitter that can only be 140 characters or less. So, I'll read the Story of Joseph, from Genesis 37-45, in tweets. Then, I will go back and highlight some of the most important moments, and finally we will

consider how he could've reacted impatiently but instead waited for God's movement.

**37:** 11 Bros ticked when Joseph dreams of lording it over them. First they deep-six him in a pit, then try human trafficking. Joe enslaved. ☹️

**39:** Joe's a model slave until he's falsely accused of a sex scandal with the boss's wife. So then he's sold down the Nile. Literally.

**40:** Joe interprets the dreams of a cupbearer (" Early parole!") and a baker (" You're wearing a very red shirt"). Chef, you've been chopped.

**41:** Joe interprets Pharaoh's funky dream about feast & famine; supervises massive Agriculture program. Joe's a hero & leader. A bit smarmy.

**42:** Meanwhile, back at the ranch in Canaan, Joe's family begins to starve. So they trek to Egypt for food stamps in hieroglyphics.

**43:** The brothers are so wiggled out w/ hunger that they don't recognize Joe, who's oddly glad to see his would-be murderers. Family ties.

**44:** Still no Big Reveal. Joe frames Ben as thief to test his brothers' family values. They pass when Judah offers himself instead. A +.

**45:** FINALLY the teary reunion. Joe forgives his brothers and sets whole family up for life. Extreme Makeover: OT Edition. Robes, gifts.

Transition: Okay, so that's a view of Joseph's life at 5,000 feet. If it didn't make sense to some of you, don't worry, we're going to take a closer look at some of the most important events, and specifically, how God continued to intervene in Joseph's life, even when the timing didn't seem to match with expectations.

### **Timeline of Joseph:**

**1)** At 17, Joseph is his father's beloved Son, is given a beautiful tunic and preference over all of his older brothers. This was highly unusual move in that culture, as the older brother would almost always receive the father's favor, and this move by Jacob would put plant the seeds of division between Joseph and his brothers.

**2)** Then, Joseph has two prophetic dreams given to him from God which signified that he would someday rule over his father and brothers. He, not knowing any better, shared these with his brothers and father. Even Jacob was unhappy to hear this, and this only further angered his brothers against him. Though

Joseph knew that God had a plan for him, he didn't know God's timing. And it would take 22 years for that plan to come to fruition. Sharing this with his brothers was the final straw for them, and would set into motion a series of terrible, puzzling, and wonderful events necessary for what God had in store for Joseph.

**3)** Joseph's brothers take him and throw him in a pit, planning on killing him. After some coaxing from the eldest brother, they instead sell him to a passing band of slavers. This would probably be the lowest moment of Joseph's life, betrayed by his own brothers. Though the narrative doesn't say it, I would imagine Joseph had to be wondering why God would allow these things to happen to him.

**4)** Joseph is purchased by Potiphar, captain of the Pharaoh's bodyguard. God blesses everything that Joseph does and Potiphar notices, placing Joseph in charge of His house.

### **Genesis 39:4-5**

*<sup>4</sup> So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. <sup>5</sup> It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.*

5) Things seem to be getting better for Joseph. Even though he was now a slave, he was put into this great position. Maybe God would finally fulfill Joseph's dream. Well, wait a little longer Joseph. Potiphar's wife accuses Joseph of trying to have sex with her, he is thrown in prison.

6) But again, because God has plans for redemption, Joseph is blessed even in prison.

*<sup>21</sup> But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. <sup>22</sup> The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. <sup>23</sup> The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper.*

7) Joseph interprets more dreams and eventually is brought to interpret dreams for Pharaoh. Joseph reveals to Pharaoh that a great famine is coming, and that if Pharaoh and Egypt are going to survive, they need to start stockpiling food. Pharaoh is so grateful for the warning that he makes Joseph second in command of Egypt and puts him in charge of gathering and distributing food. Through this job, Joseph eventually reunites and reconciles with his family, who are now bow are under him because of his position. God's promises to Joseph came true,

and redemption did happen; it all just happened in God's own time.

Now, if we're talking about the four different kinds of impatience, Joseph had an opportunity to feel them all. He very well could've felt impatient about his own abilities to know when to speak and when to be silent. If he hadn't shared those dreams with his brothers, he may have never been sold into slavery. He certainly had every right to feel impatient towards others; he was betrayed over and over again; if impatience is rooted in selfishness, Joseph surely felt impatient that when other's let him down, he suffered serious consequences. Additionally, he could've felt impatient about the circumstances. Why was he continually lifted up to high positions only to be cut down? Finally, Joseph could've been most impatient with God. Why would God show him visions of a great future, only to run him through the ringer on the way there?

\*\*\*Interestingly enough, the author of Genesis doesn't give us a glimpse into Joseph's perspective. We never hear him directly reflect negatively or positively on the circumstances. However, we do see indirectly through the naming of His children, the way that he feels about what he has experienced so far.

**Genesis 41:50-52**



<sup>50</sup> Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore to him. <sup>51</sup> Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, “For,” *he said*, “God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.” <sup>52</sup> He named the second Ephraim, “For,” *he said*, “God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction

\*Giving names with meaning was an extremely important part of Hebrew religious practice, and not all of the names given reflected positive experience. In Genesis 16, Hagar gives birth to Abraham’s son, which did not make Abraham’s wife Sarah happy, and because of this Sarah tormented Hagar and her son. This is what God says to her in **Genesis 16:11-12**

“Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the Lord has given heed to your affliction. <sup>12</sup> He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin.”

Joseph, with historical precedent, could’ve named his children things reflective of the negative nature of his situation. And yet, he was patient, and he saw that God was still with him, in spite of the roller-coaster ride of life he was experienced.

So, what can we learn about patience from Joseph’s story?

**Remember the working definition that we have of Patience:**

Christian patience is our waiting to allow God to redeem the world in his own time, to redeem us in our own time, and to redeem others in their own time. Joseph, in spite of his own failings, in spite of others failings, and in spite of dire circumstances, was able to patiently wait on God's redemptive timing. So how can we learn to be patient in the areas of self, others, circumstances, and God?

We need to know that learning patience isn't just a nice thought, it is a spiritual virtue that Christians must have if they hope to be a part of God's redemptive work in this world. Gerald Kennedy said that "As one grows older, one comes to the conclusion that more lives are destroyed by impatience than any other sin."

So how do we grow in patience? Well, we can only do it one step at a time, and that first step begins with learning to wait on God's timing. The Psalmist writes in **Psalm 27:14**, which also happens to be one of my favorite verses: "*Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.*"

Let's start here by learning to wait on God's timing. And let's remember that God's timing for everyone and everything is different, and his redemption of us, others, and circumstances will happen, if we can just be still and wait.