

## Two Sides to Loving Like Jesus (Part 1) | 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

This portrait of love simply opens with the words **“love is patient & kind”** & then goes on to list things which stop us being patient & kind with others. In practical every day terms this is what love is... So according to these verses we could say there are two sides to loving others like Jesus loves us. On one side we have patience which includes tolerating, bearing with, enduring, not giving up on, never writing off, not being easily angered by, always forgiving, believing the best of & hoping the best for. Then on the other side we have kindness which doesn't merely tolerate or bear with people but happily & unconditionally serves them, which doesn't only not give up on others but seeks to enhance their lives, which doesn't simply believe the best of or hope the best for but actually goes one step further & gives the best to! In this way the love being described here helps reflect the mercy & grace of God... This morning we're going to think about the first side of loving like Jesus – love is patient.

A couple of months ago I was trying to get Judah (6) out of the car, he was taking his time while I was getting wet & irritable outside... I said *“come on Judah hurry up I'm not waiting here all day.”* His reply was *“that's not very patient daddy”*... So clearly I'm probably not the best person to deliver this message. Do you ever get irritable? Or is there maybe one person who just winds you up? They don't have to say or do anything; you just find it hard to tolerate the fact they exist. Thankfully we don't feel like this about everyone, all the time anyway. However whether it's at home, work, driving in the car, waiting to be served in a restaurant or going to church there are situations & people that highlight our lack of patience.

This portrait on love opens by telling us **“love is patient”** or as the KJV puts it **“love suffers long”**. Then in the verses that follow we find a number of other phrases which touch on this area. In verse 5 we're told love **“is not irritable”** or as the NIV puts it **“is not easily angered.”** Then in verse 7 we're told that **“love bears all things, believers all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”** This is the language of patience. When we meditate through this portrait we also see how other things mentioned also affect our patience level with others. For example if we envy or resent someone it will make us less tolerant of them, more prone to criticise them, treat them harshly or even enjoy when they get something wrong... Likewise being arrogant or rude is also a sign of lack of patience – it signals *“I don't have time for you or your issues or nonsense now”*. All the aspects described in these verses are connected to each other & overlap.

To help illustrate this *patient love* we're going to look at a story from the life of Jesus – Jesus sends out the 12 & then feeds the 5000 in Mark 6. This story will help us learn some things about the patient love disciples of Jesus are called to exhibit. ***Let's turn to Mark 6 & read verses 7-13 & 30-44 together.***

### 1. Patience With One Another

Firstly note who the twelve are. They are a mixed group of men called together around Jesus & sent on a mission. This is highlighted most clearly in the extremes of Simon who was a Zealot & Matthew who was a tax collector. Zealots worked against the government while tax collectors worked for the government. Mathew being among the 12 would have been a struggle for all the disciples, but for Simon he was the total opposite. In order to truly follow Jesus they had to put their differences aside. This would have taken great patience & tolerance. This is also a picture of what Christian community & mission should look like.

Don Carson writes; *“Ideally... the church itself is not made up of natural friends. It is made up of natural enemies. What binds us together is not common education, common race, common nationality, common accents, common jobs or anything else of that sort. Christians come together... because... they have all been loved by Jesus himself. They are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus’ sake.”* If our Christian community does not reflect this – whether it be our Sunday gatherings or any other meeting or ministry we do – then it simply is not Christian enough.

Scott Sauls writes; *“Sometimes it takes having differences, not understanding one another, and even being a little bit irritated & bored with one another, to remind us that the church is a family & not a club. At its best, this family dynamic of the local church functions as God’s fertile soil for growing us beyond tolerance toward true expressions of love & unity.”*

Francis Schaefer writes; *“As a matter of fact, we have a greater possibility of showing what Jesus is speaking about here in the midst of our differences, that we do if we are not differing... When everything is going well & we are all standing around in a nice little circle, there is not so much to be seen by the world. But when we come to the place where there is real difference... but at the same time observable love, then there is something that the world can see...”*

For any of this to work we need to know the reality of **“love is patient”** in our hearts & fellowship. This is where loving one another as Jesus loves us makes a real difference in our relationships.

## **2. Patience With All**

Let me quickly point out a few other things from the story. These 12 disciples go out on their first mission trip which included journeying with one another & staying with whoever would have them. During this time they ministered to many people in different places. We read about their trip in verses 7-13. By the time we reach verse 30 they are back with Jesus, reporting all they had done & taught. We can imagine the excitement in their voices as they shared the stories from their trip... They were pretty impressed with themselves after such a period of ministry.

However the location of their feedback time was busy with people & the disciples couldn’t get an opportunity to eat... So Jesus says to them; **“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some**

**rest.**” So off they went hoping to get some peace, rest & food after their busy trip. Jesus Then it says V33; **“But many recognised them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.”** Jesus is giving them a little window into his life.

The disciples are tired & hungry after their ministry trip. What happens when you’re tired & hungry? You get more easily irritated & impatient; you also become more focused on your own needs than others. All of a sudden being celebrity disciples it’s so appealing... And we see them growing impatient with the inescapable crowd, but Jesus doesn’t. Verse 34 says; **“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.”** Then in verse 35 it says; **“By this time it was getting late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”**

You can hear the irritation in their tone – **“Send the people away...”** In fact it seems like they interrupted Jesus’ sermon to tell him to do so. Then Jesus adds to their irritation by making the most ridiculous suggestion; **“You give them something to eat...”** They want some solitude, not more time with the large crowd. Jesus is now stretching their patience. Would they ever get a chance to rest? Does Jesus not know when to call it a day? *One thing we learn from this story is that it takes great patience to be a disciple of Jesus...* Do we have the patience to be disciples of Jesus? The patience to be included in a group of people where there are those who are opposite to us in every way. The patience to be stretched & inconvenienced by Christ’s agenda to meet the spiritual needs of people around us!

The disciples thought they were the men after their short term mission trip but Jesus was showing them a glimpse of the ongoing reality of being his disciples. It’s not all signs & wonders it takes great patience with one another & others. It’s not a one week blitz for the kingdom; it’s the ongoing demands of patiently & faithfully ministering to a world full of people who are lost like sheep without a shepherd. That takes *patient love*. It’s easy being *Super Christian* for a week, but to survive & excel as a disciple of Jesus we have to learn that **“love suffers long”** (KJV). We have to learn to put our own feelings aside in order to patiently & steadfastly love others. And this is exactly what Jesus asked his disciples to do here in this story.

Yes they’re tired & hungry, so is Jesus! But if they are to be his disciples then they need to patiently follow him right until the end of the day, without becoming irritable, resentful or self-focused. Jesus is teaching his disciples they need more patience. So instead of sending the people away Jesus takes the little his disciples could find & miraculously provides for 5000+ people! And his disciples get to be the distributors of the miraculous provision of God. *Those who patiently persevere with Jesus & others witness the biggest miracles of all.* And guess how many baskets of food were left? Twelve! One for each of the twelve

disciples! Point being, if we put others first we will never go without – Jesus will always provide for our needs. Jesus will fill our basket at the end of every long, tiring & demanding day.

## Conclusion

*Patience is a virtue which helps us to love like Jesus; irritability, envy, being rude, insisting on our own way & being resentful are things which stops loving like Jesus.* Irritability for example sees others as an inconvenience... envy sees others as a threat... arrogance views others as less important... When the disciples were irritated about how long Jesus was taking, they wanted rid of the people. When we are irritable or envious or any of these things, we want rid of others. We see them as a burden to our lives. Irritability makes us resent others & push them away & distance ourselves from their issues. Irritability causes us to put our needs before the needs of others. Irritability can say some nasty things about others. Irritability criticises & blames everyone else for being the way they are, without trying to understand them...

That's the problem with things like irritability, envy, rudeness, & resentment; they always view others as the problem... *"They make me so mad... they are so annoying... stuff them, I have my own issues to deal with... well would you look at them... they only have themselves to blame... idiots... I have no time for Muppets like them... I can't believe they're getting away with that."* But here's the bottom line: God is not assessing our hearts on how irritating others are, but on how irritable we are. He is not judging us on how annoying others are but how patient we are. We need to take responsibility for our own attitudes if we are to grow in loving others like Jesus loves us. Remember we need to start by working on our own hearts. Loving like Jesus is to do with how loving we are, not how lovable others are. And maybe it would surprise us how less irritating others would become if we became less irritable, rude, envious or arrogant & instead became more patient like Jesus!?

Love protects & endures with people we would otherwise write off, it also helps us to patiently persevere in doing good to others even when we don't feel like it – when we are tired, hungry & drained. In the story the disciples got irritated because they got tired of Jesus doing good... 2 Thess. 3:13 says; ***"And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good."*** This is the kind of patient love we're called to. Gal 6:9-10 says; ***"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially those who belong to the family of believers."***

We are called to show *loving-patience* towards all people. 1 Thess. 5:14 says; ***"And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all."*** In church & ministry we come across all sorts of people, as summarised in that verse, but we are called to ***"be patient with them all"***. This is one way we demonstrate love towards them. Eph 4:1-2 says; ***"I... urge you to walk***

in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility & gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” 1 Peter 4:8 says; **“Above all, love each other deeply—because love covers over a multitude of sins.”** Commenting on these words J. R. Millar writes; *“There are some people whom it is very easy to love. They are congenial to our tastes. They have amiable qualities or charming manners, or they have befriended us, or they are social companions. But there are others who are not congenial—not amiable—not to our taste. They have unlovely & disagreeable traits. Faults mar the beauty of their character. Yet if we are Christians—we should not fail to show brotherly love towards any. We must seek that love, which hides the multitude of sins & faults.”*

2 Thess. 3:5 says; **“May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ’s.”** Here is the bottom line: You will never show more patience to others than God has shown to you. Your will never cover more over more sins & Jesus has forgiven you off. This is where the gospel floods in & erases our excuses again & strengthens us to love others with revelation of Christ’s own love for us. God doesn’t love us out of some sense of duty. He doesn’t love us because he has to & therefore does so through gritted teeth... He loves us because he is love. He loves because his heart is full of patience & kindness for us in spite of all the continual things we do to test its limits. He loves us freely, happily & unconditionally without begrudging one once of it. When Christ demonstrated this patient & kind love on the cross he did it for the joy that was set before him. He does not begrudge or regret one once of blood he shed for you & me. He doesn’t look at your life & say well, *“if I only knew you were going to do this or that then I wouldn’t have bothered.”* No he freely & unconditionally sacrificed himself for each of us & patiently invites all to come into loving relationship with him. 1 Peter 3:9 says; **“The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”** This is Christ’s heart & therefore should be the Christians heart. This is the love which the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts (Rom 5:5). This is the love described in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5), & this is the love being portrayed here in 1 Corinthians 13. This is the patience love we are called to have for all & for one another.