



Small Group Session 2.2

Patience, Kindness, Goodness

Spend any time driving on busy inner-city roads or motorways, especially when you are late for an appointment, and you may feel your last ounce of patience, kindness and goodwill towards other drivers drain away. Often all it takes is for someone to cut in front of us to cause us to lose our patience. Today we continue to look at Jesus' character and how he was filled to the brim with patience, kindness and goodwill, even towards His enemies.



Let God Speak First

Spend a few minutes thinking over the events of the last week. Think particularly of times when your patience has been tested to the limit, or when you have been unkind towards someone or when you have been reluctant to do something good for a friend or neighbour.

In the quiet of your heart, offer this event up to the Lord and ask Him to speak to you about it. Then listen and take note of what He may be saying to you.

If you are able, share with the others in the group what you think God may be saying to you.

Report Back

Discuss with the other members of your group how you got on with the memorization of Psalm 23.

Has the memorization of Psalm 23 had any perceptible affect on you?

Say Psalm 23 together as a group from memory (if you are feeling brave, go through it saying one verse each). Don't forget to encourage and support each

other with this important spiritual discipline.

Patience, Kindness, Goodness

Read the following passages: Luke 9:37-45, 18:18-30, 23:32-34, Mark 7:1-23. What do these passages say about Jesus' patience, kindness and goodness?

In Luke 18:19 was Jesus saying that he was not good? If not, what was he saying?

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 suggests that there is a link between love and the three virtues we are looking at this week. In his book "Renovation of the heart" (pp24-25) Dallas Willard explains the connection as follows:

"...But—I reemphasize, because it is so important—the primary "learning" here is not about how to act, just as the primary wrongness or problem in human life is not what we do. Often what human beings do is so horrible that we can be excused, perhaps, for thinking that all that matters is stopping it. But this is an evasion of the real horror: the heart from which the terrible actions come. In both cases, it is who we are in our thoughts, feelings, dispositions, and choices—in the inner life—that counts. Profound transformation there is the only thing that can definitively conquer outward evil.

It is very hard to keep this straight. Failure to do so is a primary cause of failure to grow spiritually. Love, we hear, is

patient and kind (1 Corinthians 13:4). Then we mistakenly try to be loving by acting patiently and kindly—and quickly fail. We should always do the best we can in action, of course; but little progress is to be made in that arena until we advance in love itself—the genuine inner readiness and longing to secure the good of others. Until we make significant progress there, our patience and kindness will be shallow and short-lived at best.

It is love itself—not loving behavior, or even the wish or intent to love—that has the power to "always protect, always trust, always hope, put up with anything, and never quit" (1 Corinthians 13:7-8, par). Merely trying to act lovingly will lead to despair and to the defeat of love. It will make us angry and hopeless.

But taking love itself—God's kind of love—into the depths of our being through spiritual formation will, by contrast, enable us to act lovingly to an extent that will be surprising even to ourselves, at first. ..."

Have you ever been encouraged to read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 by replacing the word "love" with your name? What might be the problem with doing this?

In Stage 4 of the Mathetes programme we will take a long hard look at spiritual formation. For now, discuss what you think Dallas means by "taking love ... into the depths of our being".

Before you go ...

Don't forget to read through *The Daily Disciple* together.

The Daily Disciple

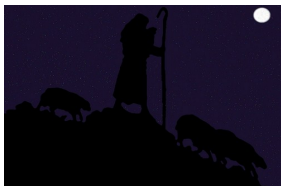
Holy Habits



Now that you have learned Psalm 23, it is important that you recite it on a regular basis. This is not just to refresh your memory, but more importantly it is to let these words, which express what it is like to live in God's kingdom, settle deep into your inner being,

and begin to shape your inner life.

Find a daily time or situation where you can recite Psalm 23. For example, you could recite it during your journey to work, or on your return journey from taking the children to school. If at all possible, recite it out loud—the spoken word is powerful in God's kingdom (God spoke the universe into being—“Let there be light” etc. (Genesis 1), Jesus spoke and people were healed (e.g. Mark 7:31-35)). Psalm 23 should be recited under the ‘invocation of God’ (the technical term is *epiclesis*). This means that you ask God to be with you and to fill you with His Holy Spirit while you are saying the words of the Psalm. This is important because the Holy Spirit will speak to you through the Psalm and will guide you towards the deeper meanings of its words and how they apply to your life.



It is also important to say the *Lord's prayer* every day—this is the prayer that Jesus taught His first disciples (Luke 11:1-4). Here is a version of the Lord's prayer in modern English (you may prefer the old English version):

1. Our Father in heaven,
2. hallowed be your name.
3. Your Kingdom come,
4. your will be done,
5. on earth as in heaven
6. Give us today our daily bread.
7. Forgive us our sins,
8. as we forgive those who sin against

us.

9. Lead us not into temptation,
10. but deliver us from evil.
11. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.
12. Now and for ever. Amen

There is so much depth and richness to this prayer that it is not possible to do it justice to it in just a few words here. But here are some points to bear in mind as you pray this prayer.

1. Jesus begins by encouraging us to recognise that God is our Father and to enter fully into that relationship with Him.

The Jewish concept of heaven was (partly) associated with what we would now call the atmosphere, which is very close to us but which also extends upwards. So when we talk about ‘Our Father in heaven’ we are not saying that He is a million miles away from us or in another dimension. He is in fact very close, as close as the air around you.

2. In the Bible, names meant much more than they do today. In those days the name of someone often stood for every aspect of that person including and especially their character. In this line of the prayer you are honouring not just God's name, but His character too.
3. Here you are asking for God's kingdom (i.e. His *rule* or the effective reach of His will) to come in every area of your life and of the lives of those around you.
6. Here you are acknowledging that God provides all that you need on a daily basis. Note that you are only asking for today's needs, this is because you are trusting Him by leaving tomorrow's needs in His capable hands.

7. Forgiveness is a key which unlocks many things in God's kingdom. We need God's forgiveness for when we have wronged Him so that our relationship with Him can be restored. It is worth pausing as you say this line to give the Holy Spirit chance to show you those things you have done which have offended God. Then ask His forgiveness for them.
8. Here Jesus shows us that there is a connection between how we forgive (or otherwise) those who have of-

fended us, and how God forgives (or otherwise) us for our offenses to Him. Unforgiveness in your heart is very damaging to your soul. Take a moment to think of anyone who has offended you recently and who you need to forgive. This could be something very small (e.g. the person who pushed in front of you in a queue), or more significant. Regardless of how you feel about them or what they did to you, forgive them in your heart.

9. Here you are asking God not to put you through any trials and (10) acknowledging that He can and will deliver you from everything bad.
11. We close the prayer by recognising that God is in ultimate control of the universe (that includes us and our circumstances). ‘Glory’ here refers to God's goodness, greatness and authority.

Say the Lord's prayer every day, either before or after you recite Psalm 23.

Your memory verses for the next two weeks are given below. If it helps, use the guide introduced last week to memorise them.

Memory Verses

Colossians 3:1

Colossians 3:2

Colossians 3:3

Colossians 3:4

Colossians 3:5

Week 1

Mark 15:21-32

Mark 15:33-41

Mark 15:42-47

Mark 16:1-20

Matthew 1:1-17

Week 2

Matthew 1:18-2:12

Matthew 2:13-23

Matthew 3:1-17

Matthew 4:1-17

Matthew 4:18-5:12