

# A Rested Development

## How Patience Leads to Life

June 11, 2023



Today we're learning why sometimes slowing ourselves is the fastest path to growing ourselves. Cuz when it comes to living *this* life to the fullest, the *right* way is *always* the *fastest* way; making it essential to identify what's actually *working* in our *current* way of life. So: **What's pushing you forward?** What do you want to *do* with your life, where are you actually *hitting* your mark, and most importantly, *why?*!

Well, there's no time like the present to *study* success, because we've *never* been quite so successfully *obsessed* with *achievement* and *progress*! Think about it; **most of human history has more in common with each other than us.** We're *weird*, because *transportation*, *communication*, *information*, and *survival* have all been relatively *relatable* from the times of *Moses* to *Jesus* to *your* great-grandparents. I mean it was 19 centuries *after* Jesus before cars *finally* outnumbered horses and buggies – but then just *half a single* century to go from *cars* to spaceships! And the same *shift* changed last century's letters to Facetime, as well as our libraries to the internet, and farm to table to microwave dinners.

**Progress is happening at an unprecedented rate!** And *that* has led to an increased emphasis on *action* and *achievement* at all cost. Which begs the question: **is all our effort good?** Well, as we saw last week, it depends on the *intention* of that effort. Cuz we should always be *making* effort – but only *aimed* at what God and His *Word* are working *within* us. Cuz that's how *He* leads *us* to the real *rest*; regardless of the pain along the way. So:

**[We should]** Make every effort to enter that rest. - Hebrews 4:11 NIV

Because **it's effort and aim together that get us to something better.**

And the only effort that can produce the *progress* that's truly *good*, has to be aimed at getting closer to God. *Right?* Then **what went wrong with the nimrods back at the Tower of Babel?**



They said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens [Sure seems like well-aimed effort], so that we may make a name for ourselves; *otherwise* we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do *this*, then *nothing* they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and *confuse* their language so they will not understand each other." So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. – Genesis 11:4-8 NIV

**WHY?!** Doesn't God want us to be reunited? Well *absolutely* – but in *everything*, there's a right way and a *wrong* way to get it *done*. And the Tower of Babel is a cautionary tale that reminds us **the wrong way can't take us to the right place**. Cuz to *survive* when we *arrive* at our desired *destination*, we have to have taken the *only path* that equips us to *stay alive*.

[Which is why Jesus makes it crystal clear:] I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except *through* Me. - John 14:6 NIV



Because following *Jesus'* footsteps in *our* effort to make it back to our *heavenly* home just *happens* to have **the transformative effect that grows just what we need before we stand in the presence of God**. And that includes developing the *discipline* that was *missing* from the Bible's Babel builders. Because *that discipline* is something we *all* need from the moment we were *born*. And we know all *about* it thanks to a famous **marshmallow munching Stanford experiment**.

Y'see, back in 1972 **Walter Mischel** studied kids by putting them into an empty room, one at a time, with a single marshmallow and told them they *could* eat it – *but*, if they *waited* 15 minutes without giving in to *temptation*, they'd be *rewarded* with a *second* treat. And after *some* grabbed and *ate* while *others* managed to *wait*, we've learned *two* big lessons from the experiment:

**Delayed gratification is good for us:** *Follow-up* studies found that children who were able to *resist* temptation and *wait* for a better *reward* had better lives in terms of *academic* performance, *social* skills, and overall *success* later in life. And the *second* big takeaway is:

**Self-control can be learned:** The test *also* showed that the discipline it takes to *delay* gratification is *not* an innate trait but *can* be learned and improved upon. Children could be *taught* strategies to *distract* themselves or *reframe* the situation and become *better* at delaying gratification.

*So there's hope for us yet!* And God *knows* that. Which is why He's willing to *slow* us down rather than *shut* us down. Just like the Babel builders. Cuz when our *aim* and *effort* are *right*, **it still takes time on God's planned path to get our heart right**. And it's easy to see *who* needs more time:

[Because they said,] Come, let us build ourselves a city [good effort] with a tower that reaches to the heavens [good aim], so that we may make a name for ourselves [Oh... sorry! That's *not* the heart we're looking for. It isn't what *you do* that makes you worthy. And God's gonna have to slow your roll so you can take the time to get it *right*.]

Cuz **God spoke the universe into existence**, and *He* says *He* plans on giving out new names when *He* thinks the *time* is *right* (ISA 62:2, REV 2:17), so **making a name for ourselves isn't just self-glorifying, it's God-defying!** It's giving *ourselves* the reward *He* wants to give us, before growing the character that goes hand in hand *with* it. And since we *all* need to learn some of *that* self-control, **this life is full of marshmallows to teach us why we should be willing to wait**.

And sure enough, when we examine every situation, relationship, and experience, we learn everyday how **life teaches us the power of patience**. Especially your children! And that is *critical* work in God's plan because patience is an essential spiritual *discipline* and *fruit* that, *in turn*, teaches us *obedience* and *trust*. Because **patience is obedience to what we trust**. After all, the *only* way we'd ever *obey* and *not* grab marshmallow #1, is by leaning on our *trust* for the *treat-giver*. Because **patience means trusting what we're promised over what we possess**. It's the only way we'll make a sacrifice. And *we* have to develop that discipline cuz it's the only way we'll ever let go and give God complete control. But *we* know it's *His* plan cuz His *Word* sympathizes, saying:

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but *painful*. Later on, *however*, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. - Hebrews 12:11 NIV



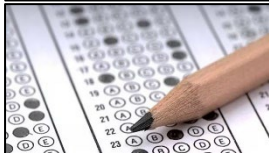
And **how funny is it that patience is so hard for us?** I mean, last week's whole message was about how *tempting* it is to tolerate a little *pain* if it means we *get to* rest and wait – while this whole message is about how *intolerable* the pain of *resting* and *waiting* is, when we're being *tempted*!



You get that? *We're brats!* **The resting and waiting we want we call *comfort*** while **the resting and waiting we don't want we call *patience***. And because it's what *we want* that determines the way *we see* things, it should be *clear* that *our* self-centered *hearts* need some work! So thank the Lord for every extra *day* we get to work on getting our heart *right*!



Because each *day* is an chock-a-block *full* of opportunities for godly growth, when we *ask* ourselves, **"To rest, or not to rest."** Cuz that *is* the question. And we should **resist the rest we want when it shows *obedience to God***; while we should **want the rest we resist when it shows *trust in God***. So let's *practice* with a couple everyday examples:



**Let's say you heard about a need for volunteers in the Ark, and feel you should do it, but it's a little intimidating and it would make it hard to skip church during *football* season. *Do you:***

- a. Convince yourself that after *work*, **you deserve Sunday off**, and it'll be *fine* without you.
- b. *Justify* yourself by *explaining* there's extra 10am games this year, but **you'll help later**.
- c. Find where to sign up, set your DVR, and **pray for God to use you** however *He* wants.

**Great, now let's say you're single and just met someone super funny and attractive at church and all you can think about is proposing – and what to name your four perfect kids. *Do you:***

- a. Get grandma's ring, **drop to one knee**, and confess your love to... "What's your name?"
- b. Make the case that meeting at *church* was *fate* and **marriage must be God's will**.
- c. Press pause, **pray for patience**, and ask God how to handle the next step.

*Tough stuff both ways!* But *honestly*, I think **most of us are better at resisting the rest we want than taking the one we don't**. Because like we talked about, we live in a time *obsessed* with taking *actions* to *achieve* success. So it seems *counterintuitive* for us to believe **the patience to press pause can get us to our goals faster**. But it *can*! And *we're* gonna slow down to look at *five* big *benefits* of slowing down – that can actually push us forward *faster*.



**1. Mindfulness and presence:** We're repeatedly reminded in God's Word to:

Be still, and know that I am God. – Psalm 46:10 NIV

Which seems like it would *slow* our progress – but when we emphasize *taking the time* to be fully *present* in the moment, we develop a deeper *awareness* of our *thoughts, emotions, and actions*. And that **self-awareness enables us to make better, more thoughtful choices** while *avoiding* our automatic and impulsive *reactions* that *create* problems, *complicate* plans, and *slow* us down.

**2. Recharges and rejuvenates:** God promises us:

I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint. – Jeremiah 31:25 NIV

Even though *that* means *pausing* our *pursuits* to let the *Lord* recharge our batteries. But patiently *resting* in God's care can increase our *physical, mental, and emotional* energy. And when we put our *other* priorities on *hold*, we find it easier to *focus* on what brings us *joy, relaxation, and healing*. And that opportunity for **self-care can increase our present sustainable speed while also preventing a future burnout** that *could* slow us to a *stop*.

**3. Enhances creativity and problem-solving:** We're urged:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. – Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV

Pausing our *efforts* and *ideas* to *turn* them *over* to the *Lord* and wait for His *instruction*, **provides an opportunity for our brain to better process information and make connections**. And *sometimes*, getting us to take a break is *all* He has to *do* to get you to the fresh *insights* and innovative *solutions* that *naturally* emerge *after* resting. But, regardless of *how* He does it, God can *use* our patient pause to push us *past* a brick wall that *otherwise* would've held us *back*.

**4. Builds stronger relationships:** We're also instructed to:

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. – Ephesians 4:2 NIV

Because slowing down in *conversations* and *interactions* allows us to actively *listen* and make deeper *connections*. And **taking the time to give others our full attention, allows us to understand, empathize, and emotionally invest** in them in a way that makes *our* communication more *effective* while avoiding the *misunderstandings* that would've *eaten up* our time.

**5. Strategic planning and reflection:** We're *not* in control, and *therefore* told:

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans. - Proverbs 16:3 NIV

Intentional pauses to *invite* and *involve* God in our affairs, allows us to better *reflect* on our *goals, progress, and overall direction*. When we regularly *review* and *adjust* our strategies, **we can align our actions with God's plan for our best, instead of wasting time miles down the wrong path**.

**So, what's pushing you forward? Patience.** Whether you *recognize* it or *not*, all our *real progress* is a result of the real *trust* and *obedience* we demonstrate each day *we* patiently *wait* on *God's* plan. So to ace the *test* of unwanted *rest*, just remember **good things come to those who wait!**