

Love Is Helpful (I Corinthians 13:4)

When we think back upon people who have been helpful to us in a time of need, we would remember that they were often individuals who were patient with us and kind to us. That shouldn't be surprising - Paul makes it clear in I Corinthians 13:4 that true love waits patiently, it acts kindly. However, if an alien being were to drop into our contemporary culture, it would observe two things fairly quickly: we are often a rather impatient and unkind lot of people. (Invite an alien to church and, sadly, it may draw the same conclusion!)

Without question, both patience and kindness are expressions of the nature of God Who is love. It is the kindness and the patience of God that lead to repentance and salvation. (Ro 2:4; II Pet 3:9,15) True love does not say, after two or three (or ten) attempts, "To Hell with you!" True love seeks to meet a need, not just expose and judge a flaw. What a patient and kind God! This is Who He is. Do you know where He is? When He is in us, we have all the patience and kindness we could ever need.

How do we learn to wait patiently? The same way we received patience - by faith. By believing that God is in control (Ps 31:14,15; Ecc 3:1,11; Ro 11:33), by believing that He is actively at work (Jer 18:3; Acts 14:22; Ro 8:28-29; I Pet 5:10), by believing that He will ultimately right every wrong (Matt 16:27; II Cor 5:10; Col 3:25; Rev 20:12-14). True love waits because God is in control. True love waits because God is at work. True love waits because God gets the final word. Isn't most of our impatience due to ego enthronement? In a surrender to love we declare. "Not my terms, my timing, my way, my will... but Yours!"

When we look to God and receive patience, we find the grace to look through the other with kindness. With patience, we "practice the presence of God", waiting upon our holy options. With kindness, we practice the presence the presence of people, engaging in active goodness for their sakes. Active kindness, while no guarantee, does make it as easy as possible for others to change. (Lest you think that to be modern psycho-babble, read Ro 2:4 again!) Kindness has the power to overcome evil, warm a cold heart, take people where meanness cannot take them (to Christ!) It may look like acceptance (Ro 15:7), tenderness (Eph 4:32), generosity (I Tim 6:18), affirmation (Eph 4:29) - to name a few expressions. Kindness can turn the table on the "Accuser of the Brethren", allowing love to get the final say in any situation.

Love waits patiently until it can act kindly. With the Patient and Kind One Himself abiding in us, impatience and kindness need never get the last word.



Praise Reports & Prayer Requests

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GREETINGS



CALENDAR



We are praying for you that 2013 will be the very best year ever in all the things that matter most in life. That prayer is not likely to find its full fruition in any careless or passive stance by any of us. Neither are we to self consciously employ self-improvement schemes and self-referential practices. It will be realized in a restfully responsive posture of non-selective readiness to trust and obey all God reveals to us. May it be so for us all!

There is still time to register for our Florida Retreat here in Alachua, but available slots are filling up. If you've never been before, it's a full weekend of good food, great fellowship, intense reflection... and a fair amount of joy! (The rest of you know what you're getting into.)

Also, we have a few remaining slots available for conferences, retreats, etc for the 2013 calendar year. If you are interested, contact us soon.

May the new year find us in step with one another and with our brother Paul who said, "I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, Who has so wondrously reached out for me. By no means do I count myself an expert in all this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward... So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us... Stick with me, friends." (Phil 3:12-17, The Message)

There's far more to come!

JANUARY

6,13,20 CCF
8 Alachua Study
10 Gainesville MOPS
24-27 San Antonio, TX (830-331-8517)
29 Ocala Study

FEBRUARY

15-17 One In Christ Retreat, Alachua, Florida

MARCH

1-3 Baton Rouge (225-769-8844)

APRIL

5-7 Titusville, FL (772-563-0430)

FLORIDA WINTER RETREAT

"Living Means Christ" - Feb 15-17, 2013

\$280 couple (all inclusive)	Includes: lodging,
\$155 single (2 to a room)	conference fee
\$240 single (1 to a room)	& 5 meals
<u>Or</u>	
\$65 person conference fee & 3 meals	(no lodging
<u>Or</u>	or breakfast)
\$20 person conference fee	

RESERVATIONS:

\$50 per person DUE BY JANUARY 15th

No reservation fee necessary to attend meetings only

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