

Patience of Prayer

January 5, 2025

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Psalm 40:1-5

Session Outline

1. Patient Waiting (Psalm 40:1)
2. New Things (Psalm 40:2-3)
3. Blessings from God (Psalm 40:4-5)

Theological Theme

David waited patiently on the Lord to hear his cry and as he praised God in response, others came to faith.

Call to Action

Introduce and emphasize the daily prayer guide. Invite people to corporate prayer gatherings at your campus. We need to cry out to God together for our lost neighbors and the nations.






Leader Guide

Patience of Prayer

Introduction

In recent months, our world has been hit with natural disasters of epic proportions as we have faced hurricanes and tornadoes that altered the very landscape of certain states. Finding yourself in a place where nature is threatening and you can't do much for protection is both terrifying and overwhelming. Although we have weather alerts and do the best we can to prepare for storms, sometimes we can do nothing outside of relying on the Lord and waiting for the storm to pass.

The same is often true when facing the storms of life. Just as with a physical storm, the circumstances of life are outside of our control. We may not be able to change what is happening, no matter how much we strive. So, we must trust and pray. When we don't have the power we need, we can cry out to God in prayer and wait on Him. We can trust Him in our waiting, even when we don't know what the outcome of our situation will be.

-  When have you experienced the powerless feeling of facing a natural disaster?
-  When have you faced circumstances in life that made you feel similarly powerless?
-  What comparisons can you draw between enduring storms and waiting for God to act when you cry out to Him in daily life?

Session Summary

David wrote this Psalm as he remembered the ways God had been faithful to deliver him from past difficulties. He compared the tough times to being in a desolate pit, but God listened to David's cries for help, rescued him, and set him on the solid rock. We all face difficulties in life. When we are tempted to rely on ourselves or chase answers from the world, we find ourselves feeling desperate.

Crying out to God and trusting His promise to hear us is wise, and one of the most important things we can do is to make prayer our priority. When we choose to wait patiently on the Lord, we will enjoy the blessings and benefits that come with that trust, and other people will be drawn to the Lord too. At the first of a new year, we naturally consider the current trajectory of our lives. Prayer is the key to living in trust of God through any circumstance.

1. Patient Waiting (Psalm 40:1)

Waiting is a part of every person's life. We all wait for various things: a table at a restaurant, a baby to arrive, a job promotion, a storm to pass, and many other things. Waiting can be exciting or difficult, but we get to choose how we will wait. Some things you dread waiting through, like a medical treatment. Others you excitedly anticipate, like Christmas or a bonus at work. Whatever type of waiting you face, how you wait can be a powerful testimony of your relationship with the Lord.

In Psalm 40, David recounted the way the Lord had delivered him from difficult circumstances in the past. Other Psalms record David committing to patience as he waited for God to answer him and respond to his pleas. Here we get David's reflection of God's faithfulness in His waiting. A key to ongoing trust in God is regular remembrance of His past faithfulness in our lives.




Where do you currently find yourself in a season of waiting? How might remembering God's past faithfulness be an encouragement in this season?

In seasons of waiting, we can follow the example of David and be intentional about crying out to God in prayer with patience. David remained patient as he remembered the ways God delivered him in the past. Recollection of God's past activity can be fuel for our response to current challenges. Because God is consistent in His nature and character, we can be confident that He is working, His timing is perfect, and He has good plans for our lives.


The Lord responded to David's patient prayers by hearing his cries for help. Most people can recall a time when they asked for help or advice and were ignored. It feels terrible to not be acknowledged, especially when that disregard comes from someone important in your life. God's promise to hear the cries of His people shows His loving care for them. This was true for David, for other believers throughout history, and it is true for all who follow Christ today.

Psalm 40

This psalm, which begins like an individual song of thanksgiving, becomes a cry for help in 40:9-17. David believed God would save him again as He had before. Hebrews 10:5-10 cites Psalm 40:6-8 and interprets it as Christ's fulfillment and abolition of the Old Testament sacrificial system. The Hebrew phrase "you have dug ears for me" in 40:6 is difficult. The verb "dug" is often translated "pierced" as in the ritual of Exodus 21:6. But that is unlikely, since a different verb is used there and only one ear was pierced. It probably means you opened my ears in the sense you made me obedient (Isaiah 50:5; Jeremiah 6:10). The Septuagint, followed by Hebrews 10:5, has "a body you have prepared for me."

-  How does it feel when you are ignored by someone important to you? How does it encourage you to remember that God has promised to hear His people?

You can turn to many different people or places when you need help, but there is no greater help than the Lord. Prayerful patience in crying out to God will not be met with indifference. God does not ignore His people and just as He responded to David by turning toward him and listening, He will also turn toward us and hear our cries.


-  Application: Where do you currently need to cry out to God in faith that He hears you?

2. New Things (Psalm 40:2-3)


Continuing in praise, David elaborated on the benefits of waiting patiently on the Lord and trusting Him despite our circumstances. Not only did the Lord rescue him from his present situation, but God also established his steps in a new place. David used the imagery of different types of ground to represent the desolate pit of troubles compared with the security of standing on the solid rock.

David hadn't been in a literal pit, but his circumstances felt that desperate. Think about the times when you have been in similar situations. You have likely experienced the desperation that fed negative emotions and caused you to frantically search for help wherever it might be found.


God transferred David from the pit of uncertainty to the rock of security. The difference is extreme. When difficulties come our way, life can feel shaky and unreliable. When we trust the Lord and patiently wait on Him as we cry out for help, we experience the stability and security of Him as our rock. Life will not be perfect, but when we stand firm and secure in Christ, we can better deal with whatever comes our way. To be clear, this doesn't mean God will always deliver us directly from challenging circumstances, but it does mean we can have a different perspective as we trust Him, no matter what life brings.

-  When have you experienced the difference of these two realities that David described? Which of these do you feel closer to right now?

David also had a new song. Praise is the right response of better understanding who the Lord is and how much He loves us. Praise rises in us as a response to the faithfulness of God as we see in David's life. Think about the times when you have been rescued from something. When you consider all that God did on your behalf, the natural response is to worship Him anew.


-  How has God given you a “new song” as you’ve experienced His faithfulness in your life?

David said others will also see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him as God’s people praise His faithfulness. This fear is a reverence for who God is and His authority as the ruler and creator of all things. This right recognition of God can draw the lost to faith as David wrote about. The way we wait is not only important for our lives, but also for the impact it can have as a witness to others.


-  Application: How can you use your experience with waiting to share God’s glory and love with others?

3. Blessings from God (Psalm 40:4-5)

David said the one who waits on the Lord and trusts in Him is happy, or blessed. This person experiences ongoing joy in the Lord and is not driven by the waves of daily circumstances. The person who lives in obedience to Scripture will be blessed and will experience the fullness that comes from a strong relationship with the Lord.

-  How has trust in the Lord blessed you and given you joy beyond present circumstances?


David reminded us of the importance of trusting God over the wisdom of people. The person who fails to do so will neglect to trust the Lord and rush ahead in false belief in the wrong kind of people. Undoubtedly, this type of foolishness has led many to the pit of despair. Whatever the case, God gives us His wisdom for daily living as we wait and seek to trust Him.

-  How can trusting the wrong kind of people cause you to neglect waiting on the Lord or rush ahead into a pit? As you feel comfortable and is appropriate, consider sharing an example from your own life.

David’s words of worship remind us God’s good deeds are too vast to be numbered. Although we can remember certain things the Lord has done in the past, we can’t track every good work He has done. But when we begin to understand how great God is, we recognize that He alone is worthy of our trust and waiting.

As we embark on a new year, this message is a great reminder to us that with all the unknowns in our world, God is always worthy of our trust. We are faced with plenty of opportunities to rush ahead and attempt to work things out in our own strength. But this is in direct conflict with David’s words and how Christ followers are to operate.




This year, we have a unique opportunity to be involved in a collective prayer effort that will provide us with a fresh start and set us up to watch for the ongoing work of God in our lives. The key is recognizing the power we need is not in our own strength, but God has everything we lack. We must be willing to cry out to Him in prayer and patiently wait for His response. Commit to using the church's prayer guide personally and then joining the corporate prayer gatherings. As we wait in patient trust, we will be a witness to others of the goodness of God.

 Application: How will you seek to join the prayer initiatives we are launching as a church this year?

Conclusion

Whether facing good times or bad, David chose to focus on the character of God. He remembered the ways the Lord had rescued him before, and that fueled his desire to patiently wait for God as he cried out in desperation. When you face trying times, you can follow David's example and remember who God is, what He has done, and how much He loves you. This fuels faith and empowers you to wait patiently for Him.

Instead of turning to the world's wisdom that encourages you to rely on yourself, it is wise to develop your prayer life and take your concerns to God first. When you pray and consider all the ways the Lord acts for your benefit, you see new reasons for worship. The result is a life of faithfulness as a witness to the goodness of God before others, as God uses the ongoing faithfulness of His people to draw others to Himself.

-  How has your perspective on waiting been challenged by today's study?
-  How can we support one another as a group in waiting faithfully for the Lord over seeking to act in our own wisdom and strength? How is prayer involved in this?
-  Who can you tell about God's continued faithfulness in your life?

Prayer of Response

Praise the Lord for His thoughts toward you. Thank Him for hearing your cries and responding in His perfect timing. Commit to waiting patiently on Him and taking your cries to Him in prayer.

Memory Verse

*I waited patiently for the Lord,
and he turned to me and heard my cry for help.
—Psalm 40:1*

Additional Resources

- *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary: Psalms* by Tremper Longman
- *Be Worshipful* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Psalm Chapters 1–41* by J. Vernon McGee

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of Psalms

Purpose

There are myriad messages scattered through the 150 psalms, but overall, this record of the responses of God's people in worship and prayer serves the purpose of teaching us how to relate to God in various circumstances of life. The psalms also demonstrate God's sovereignty and goodness for his people in order to instill confidence in those who trust in him.

Author

Since the book is a collection of many different psalms written over a long time, there is not just one author for this collection. By far the most common designation in the titles is "Of David," which may refer to David as the author of those psalms. David's role as a musician in Saul's court (1Sm 16:14–23) as well as his many experiences as a shepherd, a soldier, and a king make him a likely candidate for writing many of these psalms.

Setting

The book of Psalms consists of many different hymns and prayers composed by individuals but used by the community. If one were to take the names in the titles as authors, the date of composition ranges from the time of Moses (fifteenth century BC) to a time following the exile (sixth century BC or later). Some of the titles do contain historical information that might indicate the setting of the composition, although even this (like the authorship) is ambiguous. They might not refer to the date of composition but to the setting of its contents, being composed some time after the events had taken place. This is a more likely scenario since some of these psalms describe life-threatening situations, where composing a psalm in the heat of the moment would not have been a top priority. In many cases, these psalms include thanksgiving sections as well, showing that they were written after God had answered the prayers.

Special Features

The word for psalms in Hebrew is *Tehil'm*, which means "praise." The English title is derived from the Greek translation (LXX) *Psalmoi*, which means "Songs of Praise." Praise directed to the Lord, the God of Israel, is certainly the primary emphasis in the Psalms. Some have referred to the Psalms as Israel's hymnbook, which is partially true but overall is insufficient to account for all that is in the Psalms. More than one-third of the collection is made up of prayers to God. Therefore, it contains both hymns and prayers that were used in the context of Israel's worship.

Extended Commentary

Psalm 40:1-5

40:1 Waited patiently shows faithfulness to the Lord in refraining from taking things into one's own hands or going to another source for help. The Lord is the only source of help for those who trust in him (40:17; 70:5).

40:2 Pit can refer to a deep well. Someone trapped in a well would probably sink down in the muddy clay and die if someone did not pull him out (Jr 38:6, 10). Figuratively the term is related to Sheol, representing death. To be brought ... up means to be rescued from death (30:3).

40:3 The new song likely refers to the newness of life after being delivered from death (see note at 30:3).

40:5 The shift from personal experience to identification with the community of Israel is significant in linking the psalmist to God's covenant promises to the nation. God's wondrous works are his saving acts on behalf of his people. The experience of the psalmist's personal deliverance is intricately connected with God's salvation of his people.¹

References

1. *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).