

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JUNE 1996

PATIENCE WITH GOD

BY KATHY KELLER

Accustomed to quick fixits, we often find ourselves dismayed at the slow pace of change in our lives.

In Christian circles it is common enough to hear talk about God's patience with us, his troubled and fallen children. It is less common to hear about our need to be patient with God—in other words, to be content with his time-table, his agenda, and his pace for working in our lives.

Accustomed to quick fixits, we often find ourselves dismayed at the slow pace of change in our lives. Old habits die slowly, or return to trouble us after a period of dormancy; painful relationships stay painful, with little movement to show that God is hearing our prayers. Both internally, in our hearts, and externally, in our lives, God seems to move much too slowly to change those things which assault our happiness and even compromise our relationship to him.

What can we do about this problem? Should we just grit our teeth and hunker down to endure until God sees fit to change things? Or can anything be done to "hurry up" our sanctification, so that we have more power to overcome those sinful habits of thought and life?

Well, the Bible has much to say about how we can encourage the growth of grace in our life, and so the first thing on the list of anyone who is serious about this question should be to study the Scripture and find out what it says. Just as there's no good cursing the difficulty of assembling a bicycle while the directions lay unread on the floor, there is no point in grumbling at God for the way he is working in our lives if we remain willfully ignorant of his purposes. A good place to start is by reading the letters in the New Testament. Paul,

James, John and others were continually dealing with the question of how God wants his people to live their lives so that they will please him. Unless you know what the Bible says on this subject, it's very possible that you may be missing some major building block of growth, such as obedience in caring for the poor or reconciling fractured relationships

If doing a serious subject study of God's directions for growth and change is the foundation, are there any other steps a person can take to develop patience with God's processes in his or her life? I can think of several.

1) Become an effective repent-er
Repentance is not a once-and-done thing that ushers you into the kingdom.
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HABITAT ENCORE

BY YVONNE DODD

For the third year in a row, Redeemer will be sending two teams to the Sandtown area of Baltimore for a week of heavy lifting, hammering, painting, knocking down and building up as volunteers in the New Song Habitat for Humanity housing rehab project. Joined by some folks from the Village Church, the Habitat teams are made up of men and women who take a week off from their normal jobs and travel to an urban neighborhood to rehabilitate homes for alongside those who otherwise could never afford to by a home of their own.

Team members raise support not only for their living expenses, but for the housing materials they will need for the "Redeemer" house. This helps defray the costs of construction, which is part of Habitat's strategy for keeping their housing affordable. In a recent magazine article, the writer claimed that by the year 2000, Habitat may be the largest home-builder in the U.S.—an outstanding claim, considering that Habitat only

builds homes for extremely low-income families and does not use government money to build!

But housing rehabilitation is only part of what our New Song Christian friends are doing in the Sandtown community. One might ask why we take people from our church all the way to Baltimore when New York has such need for affordable housing. It is because we're convinced that the Baltimore
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PATIENCE WITH GOD

dom of God at your conversion and then is never returned to again. Luther said “All of life is repentance.” Among other things, that means that learning how to repent continuously, thoroughly, humbly, and unreservedly helps us to remove things which would otherwise become major road-blocks to growth in our lives.

Psalms 66:18 says that if we cherish sin in our hearts, God will not listen to our prayers. If God has shown you that there is something he wants you to change—a relationship to reconcile, a resentment to get over, a grudge to give up, a sin to renounce—then you must do so or your growth, your change, your very relationship with him will grind to a halt.

In the world of steeplechase riding, if a horse balks at a hurdle and refuses to jump, it is not allowed to continue with the rest of the course until it backs up and jumps that particular hurdle. Refuse to jump again and the whole race will stop until the horse gets over that hurdle. Likewise, if you know of a place where you are refusing to obey God’s will for your life, expect to go no further in your progress with God or other issues in your life until this particular one is settled.

2) Accept the role of suffering in your life Sometimes our dissatisfaction with God’s timetable for healing either the sin or the circumstances in our life is based on a faulty notion of the place of suffering in our lives. We think “Nothing good can come of this. Why doesn’t God change it now?” Without seeing things from God’s perspective, we may miss knowing how he has designed to use suffer-

ing in our life.

Paul’s prayer to be relieved of his “thorn in the flesh” was rejected by God because God wanted to show Paul that in his weakness, he was then more dependent on God, thereby allowing God to reveal his strength. When everything is going our way, we tend to rely on our own gifts and abilities. It is only when we are at the end of our own endurance that we cast ourselves on God’s strength. God may have a purpose for continued suffering in your life that you have not yet discerned. Be patient under his hand.

3) Cry out for a breakthrough Patience should not be equated with silence or passivity, however. Job stormed heaven with his complaints. David poured out his heart to God in Psalm 69, begging for relief both from his enemies and from his inner guilt. If you have done the work of searching the scriptures for God’s directions for your growth in grace, renounced any known sin, and humbled yourself under the suffering still remaining in your life, it is perfectly acceptable to cry out to God for relief.

Set aside some time for extended prayer—at least a half a day, if not an entire day or a weekend. Get hold of some instructions for spending a day with God. Lorne Sanny’s book *How to Spend a Day With God* is a good example. Take time for praise and confession, and warm your heart up with good devotional reading, like John Newton’s Letters or Oswald Chambers. Then wrestle with God. Pour out your true feelings to him, holding nothing back. Be as honest as you can both about your needs and your wants. Ask God for some discernible change,

something that will give you hope and will bring you closer to him. This could be a change in your circumstances, or a change in yourself. Whatever.

4) Work at re-designing your subconscious (a.k.a. meditate on the truth)

While you are waiting patiently on God to change both you and your circumstances, you can actively begin redesigning your subconscious. Many of our most troublesome desires, temptations, and emotions arise out of a place in our hearts that we have little control over, or so it seems. Dreams flood us with forbidden lusts, or waking daydreams stray into resentment or anger.

The cure for this is relatively simple, but lengthy. Computer experts have long had a saying “GI-GO.” This stands for “Garbage In, Garbage Out,” meaning that if you program bad data, you will get bad data out. Our minds and hearts are the same way. If we spend years stuffing sinful images and thoughts into our subconscious minds, that’s what will come back at us for years, even after we have changed our conscious commitments and wills. This can be extremely frustrating, causing a person to question whether they have ever really been changed by the Gospel, or asking whether change is even possible.

Do not despair. Although this takes time, you can patiently replace the garbage in your subconscious with good stuff. Meditating on Scripture is a good place to start, although it is also appropriate to fill you mind with other good books, thought, conversations, etc. (*Philippians 4:8*)

REDEEMER REPORT

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services at 10:30 • 6:00

Senior High Missions Trip to Peru Seeks Prayer and Financial Support

Two years ago the Senior High Youth Group did construction work at a medical clinic in Mexico. Last year, they rehabbed houses in the Sandtown community of Baltimore with Habitat for Humanity. This year they are again going abroad to do more construction work at a Scripture Union training facility which was leveled by Shining Path terrorists. They are asking for prayer for their preparations, their safety while traveling and working, and, of course, for the \$1400 support each one must raise. If you wish to give a donation, memo your check "Youth Missions Trip-Peru" and either put it into the offering or mail it to the church.

Dr. Keller to speak at BOLD June 4 and 6

It will be Tim's turn to speak at the weekday lunchtime BOLD meetings the first week of June. On Tuesday, June 4, at 12:45 p.m. he will speak at St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave and 50th Street. On Thursday, June 6, he will speak at St. Paul's Church at Fulton and Broadway downtown, also at 12:45 p.m. This is a good opportunity to bring your friends from the office to hear the Bible taught.

Pre-Marital Seminar Held June 29

Redeemer both recommends and requires (for those who want to be married by a Redeemer pastor) attendance at the Pre-Marital Seminar. Held quarterly, the seminar will be on Saturday, June 29, from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. at the church office, 271 Madison Ave, 16th floor. This is a good time for couples, whether they are engaged yet or not, to evaluate their relationship as they consider marriage. There is a \$25 per couple fee for materials. To register, call the church office at 808-4460 and leave a message with the church receptionist. Registration is required, otherwise the new security guard in the lobby will not be able to allow you up to the 16th floor on Saturday.

All-In-One-Day Membership Seminar June 15

Although Introduction to Redeemer (a.k.a. the membership class) is offered year round at the School of Discipleship following the morning and evening worship services, once a year we try to do the whole course in one marathon Saturday session. This has proven to be helpful to those who cannot get to the School of Discipleship on a consistent basis, or who would just like to get the whole thing over in one fell swoop. The seminar will be at the church office, 271 Madison, 16th floor, from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. B.Y.O. Lunch, or be prepared to sprint across to street to get a sandwich during the break. Although there is no charge for the seminar, you must register with the Redeemer receptionist by June 14 or your name will not appear on the security list in the lobby.

ANDREW FIELD

ORDINATION JUNE 2

Drew Field, who has been a valuable part of Redeemer's staff both before, during and after his seminary training, graduated from Westminster Seminary on June 1. Since his call to the staff was approved at the November congregational meeting, Drew's ordination and installation as a pastor will take place during the regular 6:00 p.m. service on June 2.

Drew and Donna began attending Redeemer in 1990, while Drew was working for Allen and Company and Donna was working for Executive Ministries at the DeMoss House. They had been married in 1989 and now have two children, Timothy 4 and Sarah 1. Shortly after beginning to attend Redeemer, Drew began to think seriously about leaving business and finance for the ministry. He began taking Westminster Seminary courses while still employed in New York, and then moved his family to Philadelphia to complete his Master of Divinity. While still in seminary, Drew continued to serve at Redeemer by working on the budget and church finances.

All members and friends are all invited to attend the ordination to pray for Drew and Donna and their family as they undertake this significant step, and to the reception following in the East Lounge.

Drew's ordination and installation as a pastor will take place during the regular 6:00 p.m. service on June 2.

FINAL PRAYER MEETING JUNE 24

Once a month the officers and congregation meet to pray for one another, the concerns of the church, and the needs of the world. This is usually the last Monday night of the month (although the date sometimes changes in holiday months) and is always at the Church of the Advent Hope, 111 E. 87th Street. Monday, June 24 will be the final prayer meeting of the year. The prayer meeting will resume in September.

ELECTED OFFICERS INSTALLED JUNE 9

At the congregational meeting on May 5 the entire slate of elders, deacons and deaconesses was elected. The new officers, listed below, will be ordained and/or installed at the 6:00 p.m. service June 9.

Elders:

- Jerry Cook
- Chip Peebles
- Greg Zhelezny

Deacons:

- Raymond Hom
- George Merritt
- John Woodford

Deaconesses:

- Andrea Clark
- Donna Eng
- Sonja Kerlen
- Pam Maultsby
- Bobbie Merritt

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HABITAT ENCORE

model (pioneered by Mark Gornik, a PCA pastor who will be moving to join Redeemer's staff in 1997) is the best example of comprehensive Christian community development around.

Along with the Sandtown Habitat, our friends in Baltimore have organized the New Song Community Church, New Song Learning Center, a Christian school, a medical clinic and Eden Jobs (which helps bring jobs to a community and place local people in them.) Redeemerites need to see the "real thing" in action so that when Mark Gornik, Jeff White, and their families identify a neighborhood of need in New York to reproduce the Sandtown model, we will be "on board" and ready to supply their needs.

This summer Redeemer will be sending a team during the fourth week of June and another the third week of July. The best part about this summer is the number of people who are coming to Habitat for the second or third time! If you can't go yourself, but would like to give a donation to support the Redeemer teams, please make your checks out to Redeemer and memo them "Sandtown Habitat." As always, we truly appreciate those willing to give financially to help our teams make a difference.