

Teaching the Way of Love



Circle of Virtue

Parenting
with the Heart
of Christ

Let me talk to you as one parent to another. Life is tough. It is rarely a cakewalk. Difficulties happen every day. Regrettably, we often lose our temper and civility when we are provoked or tested under fire. Instead of holding it together, we blow. And that only makes life more trying.

Have you noticed, though, that some parents navigate the inconveniences of life without getting rattled? They maintain a sense of calm as if to say that they know the difficulty will eventually end. No matter the issue or event, some parents remain patient and unruffled. Why is this?

For the skeptics reading this, you might say that undisturbed parents do not care. That is one possible answer. But another possibility is that the unruffled parent chooses to endure the hardships of life. They choose to keep it all together, even when provoked or under trial. They choose to demonstrate the virtue called longanimity.



Longanimity, also known as 'long-suffering', gives you extreme patience. It allows you to be patient with your spouse, your children, your neighbors and co-workers, bad drivers on the highway, slow clerks at the store, people of a different political party... You get it. Longanimity helps you to keep your cool and maintain a peaceful demeanor no matter what comes your way.

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It is likely that you have never heard of longanimity before. Perhaps it is because society holds instant gratification more important than waiting. For example, fast food is everywhere. Fast delivery service is expected. Fast checkout lanes exist in most stores. Express services are a mainstay in business and industry. One might assume patience is no longer fashionable, important, or necessary.

But longanimity is more urgent today than ever and here is why. Knowing how to wait, especially in the face of difficulty, results in improved mental stability, physical health, and personal relationships. It helps you act rationally rather than react emotionally. Extreme patience gives you the time to reframe situations, think more clearly, and be more creative in finding solutions to the issues you face.

Consider this. You are driving to a meeting and you are late. To make matters worse, traffic slows to a crawl. Another driver (who also seems to be in a hurry) drives on the shoulder and cuts in front of you. For the next 10 minutes, you follow this impatient driver. What is your reaction? Do you lay on the horn, crowd the car's bumper, flip obscene gestures, and swear? Or do you take a deep breath, say a prayer for the driver and accept that you are going to be late?

Impatience leads to the emotional reaction. Longanimity results in the kinder action because it allows God to work through you. It cultivates God's full nature in your heart, calms you down, and gives you the strength to love despite your suffering. Longanimity helps you resist the temptation to roll your eyes, lose your temper, or pitch a fit. It frees you from the pull toward anger and allows you to act in love.

One more point. Long-suffering helps you accept the trials and frustration that occur as you wait for your child to mature and become the person that God created them to be. It keeps you balanced and charitable when they make life inconvenient with their tantrums and outbursts. It inhibits your desire to lose it when they want instant gratification. It is the key to maintaining peace in your heart when they provoke or push you to your limit.

Clearly, longanimity can help you do a better job raising either a son or daughter to be a faithful and loving person in today's world. It equips you with a calm readiness so that you act not react. It helps you pursue the good that might be a long way off. And, it gives you restraint in the face of anger, even when justified.

Now that you know more about longanimity, what can you do to increase your capacity to practice extreme patience in your daily life? Why not start with this prayer.

*God, teach me to be patient, especially when provoked.
Teach me how to stop and think before acting.
Remind me that You will see me through until this suffering ends.
Amen.*

This newsletter series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, creators of Teaching the Way of Love. Teaching the Way of Love is designed to help you become a faithful, joyful and confident parent. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies on how to become the best parent you can be. Consider becoming an annual member of the Teaching the Way of Love program. Members receive practical and timely parenting resources. Go to twl4parents.com/membership for more information.



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