



PRETEEN

APRIL 2024

FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PATIENCE AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

Waiting is a part of life. Thankfully, we don't have to wait on our own. Through the Holy Spirit, God can help us experience the patience we need to wait well. After all, God is patient with us. God is in control and knows what's best for us. Even though God's people had been waiting for years for the promised Savior, at just the right time, God sent Jesus. Because we're created in God's image, we can reflect God's patience in our lives. We can be patient when we remember what God has done. We can lean on God's Holy Spirit to give us the strength we need to trust God and show patience with the difficult circumstances in our lives.

CORE INSIGHT: The theological foundation for PATIENCE

Transformation by the power of God's Spirit. God's Spirit is transforming my unique and imperfect life into the character of Jesus.

It can be difficult to find patience while you're waiting for something important—or even something that's not important. At its core, patience is about trust: trusting people to follow through . . . trusting that a process will run smoothly . . . and most of all, trusting that God has our best in mind and that God's timing is better than our own. Thankfully, as we follow Jesus, the Holy Spirit is helping us grow and transform to become more like Jesus. This transformation includes growing in our ability to trust that God will be with us while we wait. As we follow Jesus and trust God, we will grow in patience.

PATIENCE is waiting until later for what you want now.

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT PATIENCE WITH KIDS

First, areas where people struggle to show patience are subjective. For some, it could be extremely difficult to wait for something that another person might have no problem with at all. It's good for people working with kids not to belittle their experience with patience. We're all on a continuum of growth in this area. Show empathy and lead with love as kids share about their experience with showing patience while they wait. Some kids might even share some very difficult situations where they are waiting for resolution—such as their parents' divorce, unemployment, or illness. Be sure to have a plan for when kids share these sorts of situations. Take time outside of Small Group to have a follow-up conversation, and determine who else needs to know about the situation and how you'll follow up with them.

Patience can also be dependent upon where kids are developmentally. Preteens that are 10 or 11 years old might be able to wait longer because they've had more practice. Kindergarteners can only wait so long before they get distracted, start complaining, or rush to complete whatever they're waiting for. Have . . . patience with kids as they learn patience at their phase of development.

One last thing to keep in mind when it comes to patience: you may have kids in your environment that experience ADHD and struggle with impulse control. You may have other kids with a neurodivergence for whom waiting and demonstrating patience is extremely difficult—or perhaps even impossible. The way you talk about patience and what it means to show patience should be filled with grace for kids in situations where this will be a lifelong struggle. Don't equate a lack of faith as the reason they have difficulty waiting. This is not a faith issue, but rather a neuro-physiological issue over which they have little control.



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GETTING READY

HERE'S EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET READY FOR THIS WEEK

WEEK 3

Key Question: **What can you think about when it's hard to wait?** Having a strategy when it comes to waiting is a great way to have patience. We pray that as kids discover more about trusting God with patience, they'll consider all of the truth of Scripture and think about the ways God has helped people throughout history. We pray that this will give them hope as they trust that God will help them in the future. Waiting might be hard, but God's Holy Spirit can help us wait well.

In week three, we head to **Exodus 32:1-35**. Moses met with God on Mount Sinai. He left his brother Aaron and the rest of the Israelites to wait. Rather than waiting patiently for Moses to return, the entire nation of Israel rebelled. They built a golden calf and began to worship it instead of worshipping God. If only they had remembered how God rescued them from Egypt and trusted God while they waited!

Bottom Line: **When you have to wait, remember what's true.** We can't avoid having to wait, but we can choose how we respond. A good way to discover patience is to think about what's true about God: God loves us and knows what's best for us. God cares for us and is with us. We can trust God no matter what. We pray that kids remember what's true about God when they have to wait.

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

I Keep Forgettin
Golden Calf
Exodus 32:1-35

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What can you think about
when it's hard to wait?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

When you have to wait,
remember what's true.

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"Wait for the Lord. Be strong
and don't lose hope. Wait
for the Lord."
Psalm 27:14, NIV

MONTHLY VIRTUE

Patience—Waiting until later
for what you want now

BASIC TRUTH

I can trust God no matter what.

STORY: COMMUNICATING GOD'S TRUTH IN ENGAGING WAYS (25 MINUTES)

1. WELCOME/OPENER

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Host
- 5 kid volunteers
- 5 blindfolds
- Skittles - at least 5 different flavors
- Snack cups

3. COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Communicator
- Bible
- 1 package of yellow Peeps
- 1 bag of giant marshmallows
- 1 bag of small marshmallows
- 1 adult volunteer



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10 MINUTES

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LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS ENTER.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP

Host enters . . .

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME

WELCOME

Host has lots of energy as he or she welcomes everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that happened culturally throughout the week like a big sports event (Boston Marathon), National High Five Day, movie opening, a viral video on YouTube, etc. Host tells them how excited he or she is that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening.

OPENER

HOST: "Welcome, one and all, to [Name of Environment]! This is the very best place to be on this particular day. It is full of great people, fun and, most importantly, candy.

"We'll tackle the candy in a minute.

"Anyone like to cook out? Grill burgers, hotdogs, maybe even some foil packs with those delicious vegetables? (Pause) Me too! You can never go wrong with food on the grill and hanging with friends. However, one thing to watch out for while at any cookout are the suspicious side dishes. You know exactly what I'm talking about, don't you?

"Macaroni salad. Green bean casserole. Some orange thing with JELL-O and nuts on it. And *always* be wary of a dish called pink fluff. If you get this wrong, let's just say it can have . . . explosive consequences . . . later in the day.

"I'm here to help you sniff out any suspicious side dishes! I'll test and train your taste-testing senses. It's critical for each of you to distinguish between the subtle differences in flavors, spices, and staleness. Let's get some volunteers!



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Select five outgoing kids and bring them to the stage. Once they're up there, hand out blindfolds to each one.

"Oh, sorry, did I mention the blindfolds? (pause) Oops. Anyway, thanks so much for joining me on stage! We're playing a game called 'Guess That Flavor'!

SLIDE: "GUESS THAT FLAVOR"

"It's pretty simple and straightforward. In each round, blindfolded volunteers will be handed the same flavor of Skittle. It's your job to quickly identify the flavor *and* color. When you think you've got it, raise your hand. First one up gets called on, and if you get it right, you get 50 points.

"After five rounds, the person with the most points wins! If there's a tie after the five rounds, we'll do tie-breaker rounds until someone misses. Any questions? (pause) Great! Let's do it!

AUDIO: UPBEAT GAME MUSIC

Play the game. Kids should be directed to eat the candy at the same time. Use a variety of Skittles flavors like lemon (original), pineapple (tropical), watermelon (tropical), cherry (wild berry), or sour orange (sour). If no clear winner is going into the last round, consider making the last Skittles worth more points.

After all rounds, count the points and declare a winner, then applaud all volunteers.

"That was an incredible display of tasting skills. Each of you should be proud of your efforts. I know I am proud to have helped prepare your taste buds! While you are all sugared up, let's stand and get ready to worship our amazing God!"

Host exits as Worship Leader enters.



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WORSHIP

Worship Leaders enter as Host exits.

WORSHIP LEADER: "Yes. I am ready. It's always the right choice to put our focus on Jesus. I love how worship helps us do that. This first song is about putting our trust in Jesus. Give it all you've got. Sing with me!"

AUDIO: "JESUS I WILL TRUST YOU" / TRACK 2 FROM THIS LOVE

OPTIONAL VIDEO: "JESUS I WILL TRUST YOU" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

"We can put our trust in God with everything we've got. God is always faithful. As David wrote in Psalm 138:8: 'Lord, you will show that I was right to trust you. Lord, your faithful love continues forever. You have done so much for us, so don't stop now.' (NIV) I know God won't stop! Come on—let's celebrate God's goodness as we sing.

AUDIO: "OVER AND OVER" / TRACK 8 FROM EVERYTHING TO ME

OPTIONAL VIDEO: "OVER AND OVER" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO

"Yes, we will keep on putting our trust in God. It's a daily choice we make. As we sing in worship, it's a way that we can say to God, 'I need You. I choose You. I want You in my life above any other thing.' Today, let's go all in and choose God above anything else. Let's give God our worship. Sing this."

AUDIO: "WHAT I CHOOSE" / TRACK 8 FROM MAKE A MOVE

OPTIONAL VIDEO: "WHAT I CHOOSE" LIVE LYRICS OR DANCE MOVES MUSIC VIDEO



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COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator enters as Worship Leaders exit.

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: "Welcome to [Name of Environment]! It's great to see all of you here, some back for more and some here for the first time. Welcome!

"Before we dive into the story for today, I've asked a talented Small Group Leader to help demonstrate something. If they're successful, everyone in this room will receive a fantastic treat!

Call up the Small Group Leader who you spoke to beforehand and who can catch a marshmallow in their mouth.

For this illustration to work, have the Small Group Leader miss several marshmallows "accidentally" before catching one.

(hold up bag of small marshmallows) "Oh, yeah. We've got marshmallows.

(to the Small Group Leader) "What do you think? Think you can catch one in your mouth?"

Pause as the Small Group Leader responds.

"If you do it, everyone in here will get a giant marshmallow. No pressure. Who thinks [Name of Small Group Leader] can do this? *(Allow response)* Me too! Let's see what happens!

Start a good distance away from the Small Group Leader as you toss marshmallows toward them.

After a few failed first attempts, build tension in the room by making each additional attempt even more critical. When they successfully catch the marshmallow, make it a big deal.

"Let's go!! Amazing catch! Someone get some trick-shot YouTubers on the phone; I think you have a career in the making!"

Lead the group in applause for the Small Group Leader, then hold up a bag of large marshmallows.

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: "Who's ready for some marshmallows?!"

Let the crowd respond, then hold up one finger to tell them to 'hold on one second.'

"Now, as promised, each of you will receive your very own marshmallow . . . but you'll need to wait until we head to Small Groups.

There might be some disappointed responses, but that's okay. Let them be disappointed.



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"I know, I know. Waiting isn't very fun. Some of you were thinking you'd get one right away, but we have to wait just a little bit.

"Let's be honest in this moment—waiting is the worst. In life, though, you'll have to wait for stuff. It's inevitable.

"When our family goes to an amusement park, we have to wait sometimes for hours before getting on a ride. We wait for food to heat up in the microwave. We even wait for our video to load on YouTube.

"Without responding, just think of times you have to wait. Think of times when you want something now, but you can't have it yet. At school, on the playground, with family, getting food, downloading things, logging on . . . you can probably think of a long list!

"Regardless of how long the waiting takes, your reaction is important. There are good and bad responses to these situations. How do we make sure we respond well?

"Great question! And when we have great questions, we need great answers. And the best place to start is this book right here—the Bible! Remember, the Bible is a collection of books, letters, poems, and prophecies written by real people who had real experiences with God. And God inspired them to write all these things down so people like us could experience God for ourselves all these years later! Let's dive into our story for today."

TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: "To help tell this story, I need help from a willing Small Group. Anybody's group want to join me on stage? (*Allow response*)

Ask a Small Group to come up to the stage. Give each volunteer a marshmallow on a stick.

"No, we're not roasting these. These marshmallows represent the Israelites!

"Our story is recorded for us in Exodus, the second book of what we call the Old Testament. The Israelites had been in Egypt for over 400 years and enslaved for a large part of those 400 years. But then God sent Moses to lead the people to freedom. You there! (*point to one volunteer*) Your marshmallow is now Moses! Can you lead these other marshmallow people to the other side of the stage?

The Small Group moves from one side of the stage to the other with the Moses marshmallow on a stick leading the way.

"On this long and dangerous journey, God provided for the Israelites time and time again. When they needed to escape from Pharaoh and his army when he decided to chase them after the ten plagues, God parted the Red Sea. When the people grew hungry, God gave them manna every morning and quail every evening. At a time when water was scarce, God provided them with something to drink right out of a stone!

"Now that they were free, the Israelites set up camp near Mount Sinai. Remember, there were thousands and thousands of people—this wasn't just some small camping trip. This was a mass exodus, a massive caravan, with tents and kids and families and animals.



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"These thousands of people needed leadership. They needed to know what to do and how to do it. They needed to learn what it meant to be 'God's people.' God gave Moses specific instructions and laws for the Israelites to live by. This special set of rules would help the Israelites stay connected to God, remain civil with one another, and keep them all safe. After the people heard the Lord's words and laws, they all agreed to follow God's instruction. Here's the story of how they received those laws:

(point to volunteer) "You there! Moses-mallow! I've got a job for you.

"God's presence descended on the mountain in fire and cloud, and God called Moses up on the top to meet with him. (To the volunteer) Go on, hop up there! Pretty sure the real mountain was taller than this chair, but you get the idea.

Have the volunteer with the Moses marshmallow walk back to the other side of the stage alone and stand on a chair to represent an ascent up the mountain.

"While on the mountain, God gave Moses those specific instructions. Commandments, you might say. These rules and edicts were important for the Israelites' relationship with each other and with God. It was a pretty important trip.

"Moses didn't say how long he'd be gone, and the Israelites didn't know when he'd be back. And instead of waiting, the Israelites grew restless. Moses was gone a week. Then a week turned into two. Then three. Then four. Then five. They thought Moses was taking too long, and they were starting to get really impatient.

"They gathered around Moses' brother, Aaron, and said:

Open the Bible to Exodus 32:1b (NirV) and read.

"Come. Make us a god that will lead us. This fellow Moses brought us up out of Egypt. But we don't know what has happened to him!"

(To the volunteers who aren't Moses) "You there! Get impatient! Wave your marshmallows around! Kick up a fuss!

Pause while the volunteers do this.

"Barely weeks later, God's chosen people—who had been miraculously fed when they were hungry, who had seen a huge sea part before their own eyes—were now asking for a new god because this one who had done all of these miracles was taking too long.

"Aaron started listening to their pleading and whining—a little too closely.

"He responded to their request by saying,

Open the Bible to Exodus 32:2 (NirV) and read.

"Take the gold earrings off your wives, your sons, and your daughters. Bring the earrings to me."

(To the volunteers) "Gather around in a circle, let's collect all of the gold!



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Direct the Small Group to huddle together. Then sneak a stick with yellow peeps on it into the group, handing it to one to hold up high.

"The Israelites followed his direction. All the gold was gathered, melted down, and made into the shape of a cow. Specifically, a baby cow. A calf!

"Once complete, people began to give the golden calf credit for their escape out of Egypt. An altar was even built, and people started worshipping this golden statue! Wild dancing and celebrating all took place in front of this false god!

AUDIO: UPBEAT PARTY MUSIC

Optional: Turn the lights down, add strobes or chase lighting, and dance with the volunteers to the ridiculous music.

After about 30 seconds, everything to normal.

"God was well aware of what they were doing and became angry. I mean, wouldn't you get mad? You were the one who set them free, cared for them, watched out for them, and now they were giving all of the credit to a peep on a stick?! I mean, another god.

"Moses pleaded with God to take pity on them, which God did. So, Moses journeyed back to camp to set them straight. *(To the Moses volunteer)* Moses-mallow! Let's set things straight! Get back to your people!

Have the Moses volunteer walk back to the other side of the stage to join the Small Group.

"As Moses descended, his frustration grew. When he arrived, Moses took the golden calf and burned it in a fire! Moses took what was remaining in the fire and ground it into a powder. He dumped it into the drinking water and instructed the Israelites to drink it!

Have the Small Group on stage eat the yellow peep on the stick.

"Moses called Aaron out. He wanted to know what the deal was and why the people couldn't just wait patiently. Furthermore, he had left Aaron in charge . . . and Aaron had led the worship! What was the deal?!

"Aaron didn't take responsibility and blamed the people.

Open the Bible to Exodus 32:22-24 (NIRV) and read.

"'Please don't be angry,' Aaron answered. 'You know how these people like to do what is evil. They said to me, "Make us a god that will lead us. This fellow Moses brought us up out of Egypt. But we don't know what has happened to him." So I told them, "Anyone who has any gold jewelry, take it off." They gave me the gold. I threw it into the fire. And out came this calf!'

"Like the statue was somehow magically formed. Aaron knew better. So did Moses. Moses knew the truth. And unfortunately *(collect the marshmallows and sticks)* the impatience of the Israelites led to some terrible consequences. *(pause)* Can we please have a round of applause for our volunteers!"



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APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: "This is such a wild story, isn't it? Even after seeing miracles, the Israelites still wanted a new god because they didn't want to wait.

"The Israelites could offer no excuses for their poor choices. When the Israelites had been freed from slavery, they had witnessed signs and the power of our God over and over! But at the foot of Mount Sinai, they grew impatient while waiting for Moses to return from the mountaintop. They forgot that God was with them and they could trust God to lead them.

"Instead of turning to God, they created a false god made of gold. Their impatience came with consequences that could have been prevented. But still, even when the people turned away, over and over, God remained faithful and continued to provide for them on their journey in the wilderness.

"It's no different with us. I'm sure at some point in your lives there have been great things that have happened. Maybe even things that you can't explain other than by God's favor.

"Then why, after these great things that have happened, why are we still impatient, trying to figure things out on our own, forgetting all about God and not asking for help?

"When we follow Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us in times like these. In fact, in the New Testament of the Bible, we read that patience is an actual gift that comes from God's Spirit and is evidence that the Spirit is working in our lives. This doesn't mean we'll be patient in every situation. But it *does* mean we can choose patience as we follow Jesus. For us, it's important we work on becoming more patient. Every day, people end up in places or situations they never dreamed they would be in! They got there by focusing on what they didn't have instead of thinking about what is true and what they did have . . . which is God!

"When you find yourself waiting, take time to focus on what's true. Think of the ways God has helped you in the past. Remember what you know to be true about God—like how God loves you no matter what and never abandons you."

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: "The moments in life when we will have to wait are coming. Many of these situations will be hard. I want you to consider a question today as we get ready to head to our Small Groups.

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

"What can you think about when it's hard to wait?" Each of our minds can begin to wonder in those seasons when we have to wait. When we start to feel that happening, we need to pause and think. If you're not quite sure how to answer that, don't worry! You're about to spend some time with Small Group Leaders who can help you navigate that. Before we head to groups, let's pray together and thank God for being with us during the times we have to wait."

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group. Kids should be rewarded marshmallows in their Small Groups.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS THE KIDS EXIT.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP