**7 Reasons We Must be Patient with Church Members**

**By Chuck Lawless**

I’ve heard pastors jokingly say that they would love ministry more if they didn’t have to deal with people. There are days when I understand that perspective, but I also know that most of us have to learn to be patient with church members. Here are some reasons why:

Jesus, our role model, was patient with His disciples. That’s not to say that He didn’t get righteously exasperated with them (He did), but I suspect He was much more patient with them than we might have been.

Patience is a witness of the Spirit in our lives. We model the long-suffering love of God when we extend that ongoing, persistent love for others. One scholar even describes this trait as, “the quality of ‘putting up with’ other people, even when one’s patience is sorely tried.”[1]

In many cases, somebody’s also been patient with us. Of course, God has been patient with all of us. We also have Christian friends, pastors, and spouses who’ve been more patient with us than we deserve. Some of us are where we are because somebody didn’t give up on us quickly.

Many church members are themselves undiscipled. We’ve now raised generations of believers without an intentional discipleship strategy in many churches, and the result has been stagnant believers. Sometimes no one’s ever personally led them to growth in Christ.

They are often under stress unbeknownst to us. Perhaps they’re simply private, and they haven’t shared their burden. Maybe it’s embarrassing. It might be so new that they haven’t had time to process it. The point is that we don’t always know what they’re facing when we get frustrated with them–especially in these most unusual days.

Sometimes they’re not truly believers. Jesus had a fake among His group, and we will, too. We can’t expect unregenerate church members to act any differently than other non-believers do.

We occasionally expect church members to quickly buy into something we’ve been considering for months. We’ve usually had time to consider things before we take them to the church, but we don’t often give them much time to prayerfully consider their response after we’ve told them. Trusting leaders is important, but so is helping church members understand decisions and directions.

What would you add to this list?

The above article, “7 Reasons We Must be Patient with Church Members,” was written by Chuck Lawless.

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This article may not be written by an Apostolic author, but it contains many excellent principles and concepts that can be adapted to most churches. As the old saying goes, “Eat the meat. Throw away the bones.”