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Inside:

2 K Power of the Pen

3 K Patient attention to details

4 K Crosswinds: Love is very...

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CHURCH
WRITING
GROUP

Pen & SWORD

TO EQUIP AND ENCOURAGE THE LATENT WRITERS OF THE CHURCH

Patience—Aptitude or Attitude?

By Jan Tickner

Someone once described genius as a “great aptitude for patience.” This might well be true, except by first definition aptitude is listed as “a natural disposition.” If that were the case, it would hardly be included among the fruits of the spirit—fruits revealed and nurtured only by God’s Holy Spirit.

Face it! We don’t come into this world *naturally* patient. Which reminds me of one of Mama’s many truisms, learned at the occasion of my first introduction to patience, or lack thereof, at around age ten.

It was a *bad hair day*. Mama watched as I feverishly yanked out the makeshift curlers of paper and pins she had so painstakingly used rolling my hair. I was a vision of damp, dangling locks.

Finally, with a gentle smile, Mama said, “Patience, Janet dear, no one ever sees the mane on a galloping horse.”

I didn’t get it.

Now, years later, I get it! She had not only addressed my hair-do, but also my state of perpetual motion and impatience. With my mother patience was an “*aptitude*.” With me it was an “*attitude*.”

But that was when I was a child—speaking, understanding and thinking as a child. Now, as one among a worldwide family of Christian writers, I have a different view of things, hopefully less child-*ish*, more child-*like*. According to God’s word, I’m grounded in faith, hope and love, a love that is a part of and akin to the perfectly matched fruit of the spirit.

Once better known as “long-suffering,” patience is no longer the agitating, seemingly unattainable, unripened virtue, but takes its rightful place. Nestled comfortably between peace and kindness, patience is no longer an enemy, but a friend—a friend that upholds and, in time, exhibits God’s presence in every situation, extending from outer unrest to goodness in action.

In the time of Moses, long-suffering was most honored. It earned that position through God’s wonderful patience dealing with sinful man. Second Peter 3:9 reveals God’s long-suffering when it records that He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

It is that very attribute of God that is made a characteristic in our lives by the Spirit. Think of it! We too may exercise divine patience.

But what about the writer’s daily grind?

How are we to tolerate the disruptions, rejections, inevitable delays? How are we to wait unruffled as the wheels grind slowly: writing, revising, slowly shaping our message of hope and, finally, getting published? Paradoxically, the answer lies in the bigger question, “How many times have we prayed for more patience rather than praying for an increased vision of God?”

That, dear friends, brings us to a separation from self-centeredness, to what Oswald Chambers calls “the passion of patience.” ➤

*“For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

—Galatians 5:22-23

Jan Tickner, retired, is a freelance writer, author and speaker. She lives in Conroe, Texas.

These excerpts are recently published letters to the editor. We thank the Lord for the ministry of these authors. If you have been published recently, send us a copy of your letter or op-ed column. Include your name, address and phone number, the full name of the publication in which your article was published, and the date it was published.

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K The builder of all things is God

Which better explains the world we live in—evolution or divine creation? How can you account for 10,000 different species of ants, 7,000 kinds of grasses, 8,700 types of birds, 100,000 species of butterflies and moths, and 250,000 kinds of flowering plants? Did they all originate from a one-celled creature by mutation and natural selection as evolution contends?

And how can you explain the human eye? It's the most perfect camera ever made. There are greater than 300,000 nerves connecting the eye to the brain, and if you dimmed a 100-watt bulb to one million-billionth of its brightness, the human eye could still see it! Can the slow and gradual development of evolution explain something as complex and interconnected as the eye?

For that matter, how do you explain man? How do you explain his creative abilities? Can evolution explain a Shakespeare, a Homer, or a Hemingway?

Or how do you explain the creation of the Internet or lasers or computers or heart transplants?

And finally, there's man's reach into space. We've put men on the moon and sent probes to planets. No other single species of life creates on the same order of magnitude, diversity, or complexity as man. The differences aren't merely qualitative, they're quantitative.

All in all, it takes more faith to believe in evolution than creation. Therefore, I believe the Bible when it says, "For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God." (Hebrews 3:4).

Ed Rehbein

Beckley, West Virginia

The Register Herald

K Evidence of God abounds

In a recent letter to the editor, John Stevens Jr. chastised Clay Stebbins for his belief in the Biblical concept of creation. While Stevens based his belief in evolution on the theories of some physicists, chemists, biologists, anthropologists and astronomers, he offered no evidence to sup-

port his claims.

Those of us who believe in Biblical creation see evidence of God's creative genius all around us. We see it in the beauty of the changing seasons, in the amazing and complex design of the human body, and we see God's hand in the vastness and precision of the very universe itself.

Look around you, Mr. Stevens. What you see is not the result of an energy explosion and years of evolution as you suggest. It is the result of what we read in the very first book of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Living things do not make themselves. No organism has ever been observed to spontaneously assemble itself. Why do some refuse to believe the biblical account of creation? Rabbi Marc Gellman and Monsignor Thomas Hartman, in a recent newspaper column, offered a logical explanation in that not all Israelites who crossed through the parted waters of the Red Sea believed in the miracle God had performed. Why? Because they were only looking down—all they saw was the mud.

Whenever I see birds in flight, watch the animals of the forest, or gaze into the faces of my friends and family members, I see the creative hand of my maker. Look up, Mr. Stevens, look up and behold God's creation. Lift up your eyes from the mud and perhaps you too will see the glory of our creator.

Dave Koy

Rothschild, Wisconsin

Wausau Daily Herald

K If believers obey Bible, ministers won't need union

Do ministers need a union? I suppose some do! But why?

Well, there's the matter of protection on the job; not only safety issues, but protection of basic rights. Any minister who wants to be like the One he or she serves will find that a minister's personal rights are often trampled. If a minister feels that God's ability to provide refuge is inadequate, he or she will naturally seek protection elsewhere. And where

better than the institutionalized breast of a trade union?

It may be tricky, however, to integrate union protection into a life of following Jesus. God's Word says of Him, "...who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6,7). Jesus declared Himself to be the same yesterday, today, and forever—which presumably would preclude His joining a trade union to protect His basic rights.

Ministers join a union? Historically, unions have greatly enhanced the lot of otherwise powerless workers. Good wages, good benefits, social status and self-respect have all flowed from the principled efforts of the trade unions. The minister who looks to a congregation or denomination for these good things may well be disappointed. But the Bible says that "...God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Perhaps it's the congregations that should be exercised by the question. Paul addressed the issue in 1 Timothy 5:17 and 18. He said, "Church leaders who do their job well deserve to be paid twice as much, especially if they work hard at preaching and teaching..."

The Scriptures, both Hebrew and Christian, teach that God's servants should be appreciated, and that regular giving to God's work is part of the mature believer's budget plan. If believers expressed gratitude to their Savior and Lord by obeying these Biblical principles, the question of ministers being unionized may disappear.

Ed Hughes

Winnipeg, Canada

Winnipeg Free Press

K Prayers needed for country

To the editor,

A Call to prayer.

In light of the National Day of Prayer being May 6, with the theme "Let Freedom Ring," we think a con-

k Power of the Pen, cont. from page 2

certed effort to pray for our political leaders and soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan could be our best defense for them and for ourselves.

Just this week we heard on NPR and most other news that Thomas Hamill—a contractor from Mississippi abducted three weeks ago in Iraq—was able to free himself from his captors. Significant to note is that his hometown citizens held a nightly prayer vigil for him throughout his captivity. Others around our nation were praying for his safe release as well.

We are saddened by the tragic events our fellow citizens and soldiers have endured in the past months. But we have an opportunity to do something positive in response to the sad reports frequently in our news and that is to pray—pray for successful efforts of our leaders and soldiers who have died or have been injured every time we hear of them, for their comfort and strength; and pray for wisdom and truth for us all.

Use the media as a stimulus to pray, turning the negative report to a positive result. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16) is a call for everyone who has a personal relationship with the Living God to seek his help on behalf of our country and its valiant soldiers.

*Mr. and Mrs. John Swartz
Allegan, Michigan
Allegan County News*

Attention writers

- Let your voice be heard! If you have never submitted *published* letters to the editor, opinion pieces, or feature articles for *Power of the Pen*, what are you waiting for? We’d love to feature some new authors.
- Although multiple entries are welcome, writers are eligible for Roaring Lambs awards **only once during each six-month period** (maximum two per year).

Excellent writing takes patient attention to details

by *Shaunna Howat*

A good soufflé cannot be completed in fifteen minutes. Nor can it be made by opening a box mix. It takes the right ingredients, careful mixing and preparation time, the right baking conditions, and lots of skill.

Like an expert baker, the writer must also use the right technique and skills to achieve a good finished product. Regardless of his audience, the writer takes time to attend to details. Careful research, rewriting and proofreading—all done with patience—are the key ingredients.

Research is vital to the well-written article, news story, and even the fiction piece. Easier to do these days with the advent of the world wide web, research can often be accomplished while sitting at your desk. Look for reputable, authoritative web sites, such as universities, museums, newspapers, or government pages. (“Dave’s Civil War Page” may have cool photos, but it cannot be relied on for accuracy.)

You may also include interviews with experts or key people. Always double-check your sources, and even balance out the information you find by discovering what an opposing point of view might say. (You are not obliged to include an opposing view unless you write a news story; considering or refuting the opposition may simply strengthen your own points.)

Once you have finished writing,

put it down and walk away for a day or two. The next time you look at it, refreshed and able to think more clearly, you will have a clearer perspective. Ask a friend or colleague to review what you’ve written. Another pair of eyes will help find errors you may have missed.

Rewrite, cutting out whatever is unnecessary. Some writers try to eliminate nearly every “be” verb; this forces them to use more “active” verbs. (“Be” verbs: *are, is, am, was, were, will be, become, will become, sometimes being.*) Some will scan for unnecessary repetition of words: ending one sentence and beginning the next with the same word or phrase, too many sentences or paragraphs beginning with the same word, and so forth.

Proofreading means not only checking your facts, it also means looking for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and typing. Some editors look for reasons to toss out submissions, so a writer wants to give them few reasons to reject his writing. Don’t simply rely on your computer’s spell-checker. The word “form,” for example, is spelled correctly even if you meant to type “from.”

Blended together well, skillful and patient use of research, rewriting and proofreading should produce a credible, appealing and readable piece of writing.

Patience is wisdom

“Teach us, O Lord, the disciplines of patience, for to wait is often harder than to work.”

—Peter Marshall

“Patience is the companion of wisdom.”

—Saint Augustine

“Carry the cross patiently, and with perfect submission; and in the end it shall carry you.”

— Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471)

“Patience serves as a protection against wrongs as clothes do against cold. For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases, it will have no power to hurt you. So in like manner you must grow in patience when you meet with great wrongs, and they will then be powerless to vex your mind.”

—Leonardo da Vinci

“I am extraordinarily patient, provided I get my own way in the end.”

—Margaret Thatcher

lambs who are ROARING!

Roaring Lambs awards...

...go to the writers whose letters are excerpted on page two.

1st prize/\$200:	<i>Ed Rehbein</i>
2nd prize/\$100:	<i>Dave Koy</i>
3rd prize/\$100	<i>Ed Hughes</i>
4th prize/\$50	<i>Mr. & Mrs. John Swartz</i>

We invite you to submit your published pieces for consideration.

Criteria for awards are:

- **Appears in secular publication**
- **Teaches obedience**
- **Includes scripture**
- **Written in a spirit of love**
- **Exhibits skillful writing**
- **Persuades effectively**
- **Addresses a current issue**

Be sure to include an actual clipping, your name, address and phone number, the full name of the publication in which the letter appeared and the date it was published. Only one winning entry per author each 6 months.

THE AMY FOUNDATION

January/February 2005



Church Writing
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Pen & SWORD

TO EQUIP AND ENCOURAGE THE LATENT WRITERS OF THE CHURCH

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Crosswinds by Jim Russell

Love is very...

If the central characteristic of God is love—if the primary quality of the first and greatest commandment is love and the motivating reason God sent His Son into the world is love—it follows, as a Christian who desires to please God, I should ceaselessly pursue the meaning of love. It also seems my highest desire would be for love to become central to my being. If God is love, then as one created in His image, I should be love. A daring thought!

Jim Russell is the founder and president of the Amy Foundation and author of *Awakening the Giant* and *Overcoming Subtle Sins*. In the *Crosswinds* column, he opens his heart to the members of the Church Writing Group family. Your questions and comments are welcome.

How to begin? There is a chapter in I Corinthians called the love chapter. Why not start there? In the Living Bible, I Cor.13:4 says, “Love is very patient and kind...” Wow! The very first adjective is “patient” followed by the word “kind.”

Patience and kindness. Love begins by being patient and kind. Not just patient and kind, but *very* patient and kind. Webster defines “very” as meaning “exceedingly” patient and kind. This is a good start.

How does one become patient and kind? Examining the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit, I find they are biblically listed in the following sequence:

“But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22).

Isn't that fascinating? Patience and kindness are two of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and they are listed in exactly the same sequence as they are found in the love chapter of first Corinthians. Interestingly the verse begins, “But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us”: When we surrender control of our lives to the Holy Spirit, he will produce patience and kindness.

Recently, very early one morning about 4:00 a.m., I thought, “We have total and complete control over the next thought we provide hospitality

for in our mind. We can accept its presence or reject its presence and throw it out.” Further, I thought, there must be a prayer that could help me apply self-control, another fruit of the Holy Spirit, in monitoring those thoughts that should, or should not, come into my mind. The Holy Spirit gave me this prayer:

Father, please stand guard with me at the doorway of my mind and do not permit any thought not blessed by you to enter, and bring those thoughts into my mind that will place me in the center of your will.

Several weeks have passed and I pray this prayer each morning and throughout the day as I have need of it. To me spiritual growth is a process, not an event, and through God's grace I am growing in love and becoming more patient and kind.

I pray you may find this helpful in your spiritual walk in Christ's love, which is first of all being “very patient and kind.” WJR