
A Prayer to Learn Patience – My Personal Story

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally...” James 1:2-5 (NKJV)

I’ve often thought of myself as an impatient person, and occasionally impulsive, with little thought about consequences. However, when my youngest daughter, Emily, was born, I prayed to have more patience. As the proverb says, “Be careful what you ask for as you may receive it”. Having one child was relatively easy but having a nearly four-year-old and a newborn, was much more challenging.

Emily was a beautiful baby and apart from some feeding issues, she was also a relatively happy baby. She made good eye contact and all the little coos and interesting sounds that babies make. However, she wasn’t meeting her milestones. We weren’t too concerned about this early on though, as our eldest daughter had been late to crawl, stand and walk and was diagnosed with low muscle tone. We thought this was the same for Emily.

However, when she wasn’t really crawling or pulling herself into a standing position past the age of 1yr, we took her to the family clinic and worked with the physio to help her accomplish these things.

We did become concerned though, when we didn’t see Emily’s speech or understanding of language developing/progressing and we were waitlisted for a very long time (about 18mths) to have her seen by a speech pathologist. When it was finally our turn, we did not have the confidence that the young lady we were given would be able to cope with Emily’s needs. We instead opted to see a sister in the Meeting, who is a speech pathologist. After working for over a year with Emily, the speech pathologist mentioned to us that she thought Emily might have Global Developmental Delay, a condition where a child has deficits/delays across several areas (gross motor, fine motor, speech, language and/or cognition).

In April 2013, when Emily was about 4½ years of age and still only speaking in 2–4-word sentences, she was assessed by a Child Health Assessment Team (CHAT), which included a medical officer, clinical psychologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and social worker. The diagnoses came back that Emily did indeed have Global Developmental Delay (which meant that there would be a long road of learning ahead of her as cognitive development would remain that of child about half her age) as well as ADD/ADHD (attention deficit rather than hyperactivity).

Over the months following Emily’s diagnoses, we applied for a carers allowance, which would go towards helping with her speech appointments and any other extra expenses needed for her care. We also investigated options for occupational therapy (OT) and Speech closer to where we lived as she would be starting Kindergarten the following year.

We found the next couple of years extremely difficult to navigate, as Emily had already been through her toddler years, but it seemed she had soooo much further to go and so much more to learn. There was also so much to learn for us as her parents. From determining the difference between a tantrum (seeking attention) and a meltdown (stress/anxiety induced) to remembering that even though she was physically 4-5yrs, she was only about 2yrs intellectually and we must

keep this in mind if we thought she was being naughty/disobedient. Maybe she just didn't understand or know what to do.

We had to make sure that when we gave Emily a direction/instruction, we needed to keep it very short and simple, stay calm and if there was any opposition or frustration from Emily, we had to make sure there was no frustration or irritation in our voice. Just stay calm and neutral.

It was extremely emotionally wearing, as we had to make sure to be on the alert (vigilant) at all times and being mindful of:

- Were we talking too fast?
- Had we gotten her attention before speaking?
- Were we "down at her level" and making eye-contact?
- Had she actually understood our instruction (receptive language) or had we used too many words?
- Did she know/comprehend what we'd asked her to do?
- Did she know how to do it?
- Did she have the ability to carry it out?

Our eldest child, Rosie (nearly 4 years older than Emily), had been such a breeze in comparison, speaking so well at the age of 2½yrs that she was once mistaken for a 4yo! When she was 6yrs, I remember remarking to

Nathan that she was "6 going on 16" .

I have to say, today the struggle is still very much ongoing. Emily's still very difficult in lots of ways – a toddler/ 4-year-old in a teenage body. It is often so frustrating, and I often feel like I'm getting absolutely nowhere. I don't feel like we've completed God's plan for us in this yet and there is no real feeling of accomplishment that I've done/am doing a good job. But I know God is with me and I lean on Him. I try to stay calm and learn to be patient.

So, what lessons have I learned so far from the situation God has placed our family in? Mostly, I feel I have become so much more conscious of my relationship with my Father. Having a difficult, distractable, frustrating child without a filter, who can be manipulative and self-centred, who doesn't listen or remember what she's told, makes me think of how God looks at us, His children: the parent-child relationship I have with my Heavenly Father. I expect Him to be compassionate and forgiving of my failings when I'm difficult, distractable, frustrating and don't listen or remember what God has told me. I have learned to have this same compassion and forgiveness for Emily. And not only for Emily, but patience and compassion for other people. It has really opened my eyes to the fact that we never truly know what is happening in someone's private life when we only see a quick snapshot of them in a situation. I have become more aware of the struggles in other people (even if I don't know how to help/offer help), and less judgmental of them. I have become a lot more conscious of what I'm saying and how I say it to people because I

have to be so careful of what and how I say things to Emily. Can she understand me? She has limitations. Have I understood what God is telling me? As I also have limitations.

I have to trust in God – ‘God in everything’ as brother Matt Blewett calls it. There is always something to learn in every situation, no matter how big or how small. Everything I have is from Him and He’s told us not to worry about anything, but to be thankful and joyful about everything. Which brings me to the best part of having Emily in our lives. She has brought so much joy. She can be so funny, and caring, and friendly to people. She will come up to me at random times and say, “I really love you Mum”, or come up to me at the Meeting and say “I’m going to sit with Auntie X. She’s all by herself as Uncle Y is chairing and she’s all alone.” Or she may wander up to someone and ask them questions that shows she’s interested in/curious about them. She is very special and unique in her own God-given way.

I have often found that the words of hymns and spiritual songs will pop into my head and I find myself singing bible verses such as Prov 3:5-6

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths”

Another of my favourites, based on 1 Timothy, by Steph Jamieson is:

Train yourself to be Godly . . .

And fight the good fight as we’re training in patience, training in truth, training to be faithful in the days of our youth. We’re holding on ‘til the end. This is a fight we are in – fearless in our struggle with a firm grip on our faith, training in Godliness.

So, deepen your faith – we’re training to finish this race.

May the God and Father of us all help us to: *Don’t be pulled in different directions or worried about a thing. Be saturated in prayer throughout each day, offering your faith-filled requests before God with overflowing gratitude. Tell him every detail of your life, then God’s wonderful peace that transcends human understanding, will guard your heart and mind through Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:6-7, TPT)*
