

# SPIRITUAL GROWTH REVIEW

*The Fruit of the Spirit Is...*

## THE SECRETS OF BEING FRUITFUL

**Memory Verse for this week:** *"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."* James 1:19-20

1. When do you find it most difficult to be patient? *Some of us find it difficult to be patient in traffic. Maybe it is dealing with your family. You might be waiting for God to give you children or provide you with a job. Being patient is an opportunity to be reminded that we must trust in God to bring about His will in His timing.*
2. Take a good look at **Habakkuk 1:1-4** and **3:17-19**. What is a good definition of "forbearance" or patience? Is this about remaining calm in busy traffic or is there more to it? *Forbearance means patiently enduring our current circumstances or bearing with another person while we wait upon God to bring about His will. Yes, being patient includes the small challenges of daily life, but the bigger issues that may require us to wait for long periods of time for God to answer - these are the times that require us to be diligent in our forbearance.*
3. How is Habakkuk using deer as an analogy for our faith in verse 19? What is God enabling us to do? *The deer in this analogy would be familiar to the Israelites as cliff dwellers, agile and incredibly capable of being sure-footed in dangerous places. God helps us to remain grounded in the midst of uncertain ground that we travel throughout life. God's love and power give us strength to trust in His plan for our lives.*
4. So, why didn't God answer Habakkuk's prayers? Consider **Isaiah 55:8-11**. *God has a plan, but His plan is not to make us comfortable and happy. His plan is to bring about His glory upon the earth for the benefit of all mankind. He is at work in the world and in people's lives, and we are called to pray according to His will (1 John 5:14). God may answer with a "Yes", a "No", or a "Not yet." For Habakkuk, God's plan was to discipline His children through judgment, hoping to draw their obstinate hearts back to Him.*
5. If God didn't answer the prayers of His prophet Habakkuk or respond to the petition of Job, why should we expect that He will answer our prayers? *God does answer prayers, but again, it is not according to our will, but according to His. We have a tendency to ask God to answer our prayers according to what we want. Bless us, heal us, provide for us. His plan is to help us to be holy and sometimes He answers with a "No." If a child asked for a candy bar for dinner, it would not be in their best interest to answer them with a "Yes". God doesn't give us what we want, but in His endless love gives us what we need. He will answer our prayers according to His will. It's up to us to accept His will for our lives.*
6. Compare **Habakkuk 1:2** with **Psalms 13:1-2**. Have you ever prayed a sincere prayer to God, asking Him to intervene, only to be responded with silence? How did this impact your faith? *Silence can be so discouraging. We may wonder if we're praying right, if God is mad at us, if He cares at all, or we may doubt that there's any power at all in prayer. It's important for us to cling to the truth when we feel that God is silent. He is good, He cares, and He has the ability to carry out His plan.*

7. How should we respond when God doesn't answer our prayers? Does that mean that the answer is no or that God really isn't concerned about our needs? *When God is silent, we answer with patience. When He answers with a "no", we trust that He is good and that He has better plans in store. God always cares and He never abandons us. He will either answer our prayer or give us the strength to carry out His will in the days to follow.*
8. Review **Habakkuk 1:13**. "The silence of God speaks loudly." What does this mean and what does it look like in our everyday lives? *When God is silent, He may want us to learn through observation or to grow in our trust in Him. It may feel like God is silent, but what God wants to do in us while we wait is as important or more than His answer to the prayer itself. When God is silent, we should ask Him to show us what we need to learn.*
9. Why would God choose Babylon, an evil nation that did not fear God, to punish the nation of Israel? Isn't He allowing evil to "win"? *Evil will never win against God. However, we do see in the Old Testament that God would allow evil people to have victory over the Israelites in order to serve a greater purpose; to show them their need to rely upon Him alone. They had turned to foreign gods for help or trusted in their own abilities to protect themselves from harm. God will deal with all sin, but it's on His timeline, not ours.*
10. How does God allow this still today? How does evil prevail and what is God's purpose in allowing it to continue? Consider **Psalms 94:1-3** (and following verses as time permits). *We live in a fallen world where Satan is still seeking to steal, kill, and destroy (1 Jn. 10:10). Evil will always be present in this world until Jesus returns and God restores heaven and earth. God has given us hope to endure evil by telling us how it all ends; God wins! God uses evil and suffering to cause us to hunger for Him as He draws all people to Himself (2 Pet. 3:9).*
11. Read **Isaiah 55:8**. How does this truth about God affect you? Does this mean that we are incapable of knowing the heart of the Father? (You may also wish to consider **1 Corinthians 13:8-12**.) *The mind of God is infinitely more complex than our minds. But even though we cannot grasp His wisdom in its fullness, He does impart to us the ability to understand enough about Him to comprehend His will for us. We know that He is good and that He cares for us. We know that He has a plan to redeem His children from their sin. We know that He did this through the cross. Why He would do this for His own pleasure seems hard to fathom. His thoughts are greater than ours, but one day we will see more clearly.*
12. Read **Psalms 27:13-14**. What is the key to forbearance while wait upon the Lord to respond? *The key to waiting upon God is to know and believe that He is good and that His plan is best.*
13. Read **Romans 12:12**. What are some helpful tips for growing in the area of patience? How do we take steps in the direction of spiritual growth? *Writing scripture on our heart to remind us of truth can be helpful. Regularly submitting our will to God in prayer. Preparing our hearts to meet the needs of each day in prayer. Seeking accountability and encouragement. Reflecting on successes and failures at the end of the day...*
14. Why is patience so hard for some of us? What is so hard about being content to wait on God's timing? *We are selfish by nature. Some of us are task oriented and just want to get things done. We get concerned that perhaps we missed God somehow and try to take matters into our own hands. We may not believe that God will answer our prayers, so we take matters into our own hands.*

**For this week:** It is hard to be patient when we are in a hurry. Unfortunately, many of us live hurried lives. Consider how you can slow down enough to recognize that the world does not revolve around you! Be patient and wait on God's timing. He hasn't forgotten you.