

Session Two



Bear with One Another

Pet peeves. "He gets under my skin." "She gets on my nerves." "He is such a pain in my neck." These phrases about our pet peeves reveal who actually suffers.

Whose skin? Whose nerves? Whose neck? Ours!

Every pet peeve writes a check on our joy account. How can we help people smile if our happiness account is overdrawn? We can't. For this reason, the apostle Paul said, "Be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

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Opening Reflection

We are called to accept one another even when we have major disagreements on big issues. But we are also called to accept one another in the little things. When someone rubs you the wrong way, cuts in line, or laughs too loud. Even when someone commits your *worst* pet peeve—whatever that may happen to be—you are called to “be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).

Bearing with one another can be more difficult than accepting one another. It can be easy to make sweeping statements such as, “I am a Republican, but I respect Democrats.” It can be far more difficult to continue to love your spouse even when he’s left the toilet seat up for the umpteenth time. But letting your pet peeves get to you is a sure path to unhappiness. When pet peeves rule the day, so do annoyance, anger, and unnecessary grudges.

On the other hand, when you commit to being patient and bearing with one another, you strip your pet peeves of their power. Patience allows you to give your loved one a second chance . . . and a third . . . and a fourth. A smile comes to your face more easily. You are free from your pet peeves and free to accept others in the big disagreements and in the small.

And here’s a secret about bearing with one another: people have to bear with you too. Yes, *you*. You have quirks. You leave

your shoes all over the house. You drive under the speed limit in the left lane. You commit someone else's pet peeve on a daily basis. As you work to bear with the people around you, remember, they are also working to bear with you.

Jesus left a prime example of how to bear with one another. He took things one step further. He didn't simply tolerate others but *loved* them and *encouraged* them to be the best versions of themselves. Pay attention to the words and actions of Jesus in this session and see how the One who accepted you—sin and all—can teach you to do the same to others.

Talk About It

If you or any of your group members are just meeting for the first time, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves and share any insights you have from last week's personal study. Next, to get things started for the group time, discuss one of the following questions:

- What is your biggest pet peeve?

—or—

- Why are pet peeves so annoying?

Hearing the Word

Invite someone to read aloud Matthew 7:3–5. Listen for fresh insights as you hear the verses being read, and then discuss the questions that follow.

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³ Why do you notice the little piece of dust in your friend's eye, but you don't notice the big piece of wood in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your friend, "Let me take that little piece of dust out of your eye"? Look at yourself! You still have that big piece of wood in your own eye. ⁵ You hypocrite! First, take the wood out of your own eye. Then you will see clearly to take the dust out of your friend's eye (NCV).

What is one key insight that stands out to you from this passage?

In what ways did that represent a new insight?

Do you tend to focus on your faults or the faults of others?

Video Teaching Notes

Play the video segment for session two. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

We all feel there is a certain way people should behave . . . and when people don't act that way, we call it a "pet peeve."

Bear with One Another

Paul's word for *patience* is a term that combines *long* and *tempered*.⁶ In other words, patient people are not quickly overheated.

The next time you find it difficult to live with others, imagine what it is like to live with you.

We have eagle-eye vision when it comes to others but can be blind as moles when examining ourselves. So before you go pointing out the specks in the eyes of others, make sure you aren't sporting a sequoia limb in your own.

You would want any constructive criticism you receive to actually be *constructive*. Bearing with one another is thus best accomplished by mixing in some encouragement about what the person is doing *right*.

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Jesus did with Peter what encouragers do. He called him out. He built Peter up. With the skill of a rock mason, he stacked stones of affirmation and inspiration upon his disciple.

Jesus gave his full attention to the desperate woman who came to see him. In spite of the pressing crowds, an errand to heal a sick girl, and questioning disciples, Jesus stopped what he was doing and listened. And then he *affirmed* her.

Ask to hear other people's stories. Resist the urge to interrupt them. Give them the rarest of gifts: your full attention.

Group Discussion

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. How do you typically react when someone does that one thing that *really* gets on your nerves? How does this affect your mood and overall happiness?

Bear with One Another

After all the hard work we had put into our home, it was suddenly gone. It was literally under concrete. The situation was unbearable, but once we got settled into our new lives, we quickly realized we had been so worried about the foundation in our house that we hadn't understood the foundation that really needed work was our marriage. It was like God's little joke, saying, "Okay, your priorities are messed up. Let's get you refocused." I remember when the contractor called and said the home was ready. We walked in, and it didn't even look like our house. It was the greatest thing that's ever happened to us, because we were renewed, we were happier than we had been that whole first year we were married. And we got this brand-new house that looked exactly how we envisioned.

— JESSICA & CHASE, FROM THE VIDEO

2. In Ephesians 4:2, Paul instructed us to be “patient” or “long-tempered” with one another. What does it mean to be long-tempered? Would you say this type of patience comes naturally for you? Why or why not?
3. In Matthew 7:3–5, Jesus instructed us to examine ourselves before we examine others. How would examining yourself first help you to bear with others? What are some of *your* quirks that might get on their nerves?

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4. Do you think Jesus had to be patient and bear with his disciples? How do you think Jesus—who was God made flesh—was able to be patient with those around him?
5. Read Matthew 16:17. How did Jesus encourage Peter in this verse? How do you think this made Peter feel?
6. Read Mark 5:25–34. How did Jesus encourage the sick woman? Have you ever felt encouraged by someone who listened to you? How did that person encourage you?
7. How did Jessica and Chase ultimately turn their marriage in a healthy direction? Does any part of their story resonate with you? If so, which part and why?

8. Think of someone in your life with whom you need to be more patient. How could you exercise more patience with that person this week?

Closing Activity

To apply today's study, complete the Scripture exercise below:

- *Fill in the blank with the name of someone with whom you have difficulty being patient:* "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with _____ in love" (Ephesians 4:2).
- *Fill in the blank with the name of someone you need to encourage this week:* "Let us consider how we may spur _____ on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).
- *Fill in the blanks again with the name of that person:* "Therefore encourage _____ and build _____ up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
Consider how you could deliver this encouragement to that person this week (for example, by sending a text message, going to coffee, or mailing a handwritten note).

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If you feel comfortable, share with your group what this experience was like for you.

Closing Prayer

Close your time by spending time with your heavenly Father. Have three different people in the group read one of the prayers below:

- **Gratitude:** God, we thank you for giving us this time together to be in community with one another and with you. Thank you for showing us patience. Thank you for giving us a fresh chance every day to start anew.
- **Petition:** Lord, help us be more patient this week. Give us your Spirit to calm us and remind us that we need to be shown patience as well. Forgive us when we are short-tempered. Help us to be long-tempered.
- **Worship:** We praise you for being our creator and our redeemer. We worship you for who you are, for what you have done, and for what you will do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.