

“Love is patient” 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 4

Have you ever noticed how people who know things are astonished or even scornful when someone doesn't know something that they know? “How can you not know that?!” they cry incredulously. Or how some people who are well practised in some field get exasperated with those who are novices. A young person becoming apoplectic trying to reach an elderly relative how to do something on a computer over the phone has become a common theme in comedy.

But, as the saying goes “What you don't know, you don't know.” How often have all of us been impatient when driving behind a learner driver, seemingly oblivious to the fact that we were all once learners too? The fact is that our first reaction when our plans are hampered by the ignorance, stupidity and incompetence of others is often irritable impatience. I'm sure we can all think of numerous examples.

But there can be few more unloving things than to become angry and impatient with another person simply because they can't do something that we can do, or because they are taking too long to do something that we require of them. It is simply demanding that they should somehow contrive to be at our level of knowledge, expertise or fluency. But the most impatient person can also be very quick to object when someone is impatient with them. “How am I supposed to know,” we say, “when I've never been taught?”

Instead of prioritising our own interests, Paul says we ought to “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

In every area of life, in every field of knowledge and expertise, in every family and community, some people are going to be more knowledgeable, competent and able than others. Such people contribute most to the well being of their communities when they make space and time for those who are just learning, those who are not so quick, those who struggle to understand. Patience prevents us from elevating ourselves by diminishing others, and enables us to help others to be more than they were.

If we are truly connected to the love and grace of God, and our attitudes towards others are generated in that loving connection, then we must expect of God that he will expect patience of us, since we are told quite clearly that God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance.

Prayer.

Father, I know that if you want to teach me patience then you are likely to lead me to people and situations where I need to exercise patience. Please help me to be alive to these moments, and then may I truly reflect your divine patience in my own attitude and response. In Jesus' name, amen.

All these devotionals can be found on our website inghamitechurch.org on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.