

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

THE NEED OF
FORBEARANCE
IN MARRIED LIFE
AND
FAMILY LIFE

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Living Stream Ministry

Anaheim, CA • www.lsm.org

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For a pleasant married life and an excellent family life we need to be forbearing. I hope that all the saints with children will be deeply impressed with the need to exercise forbearance in their daily living at home.

THE MEANING OF FORBEARANCE

The Greek word rendered forbearance in [Philippians 4:5](#) is composed of two words: *epi*, a preposition which means unto, and *eikos*, which means seemly, fitting, or suitable. When the preposition *epi* is added to other Greek words as a prefix, it often bears the meaning of full or extensive. Consider, for example, the word *epignosis* used in [2 Timothy 2:25](#). In this verse Paul speaks of “the full knowledge of the truth.” Hence, *epi* added to *gnosis* gives a word which means full knowledge. The use of this preposition as a component of the Greek word for forbearance in

[Philippians 4:5](#) indicates that the meaning of this word is to be fully reasonable, or fitting or suitable to the fullest extent. We need to have a full and extensive reasonableness and considerateness. Furthermore, we need to act in a way that is fitting and suitable to the fullest extent. All these meanings are included in the Greek word used by Paul in [Philippians 4:5](#).

The Greek word rendered forbearance in [4:5](#) is not actually a noun; it is an adjective used as a noun with a definite article. This use of an adjective as a noun serves to emphasize the meaning of the word. For example, in [1 Timothy 6:17](#) Paul says, “Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded.” This is more emphatic than saying, “Charge the rich man not to be high-minded.” In [Philippians 4:5](#) Paul deliberately uses an adjective as a noun in order to place special emphasis on forbearance.

A RICH SUPPLY

Forbearance requires understanding, wisdom, patience, and many other virtues. If we would be forbearing, we need to be merciful, kind, and compassionate. Furthermore, to forbear definitely requires a certain ability in a number of areas. We need the ability to understand, to be patient,

to help others, and to afford them the necessary supply. In His forbearance toward us, God certainly has given us a rich supply.

God forbears with fallen man for a purpose. His purpose in showing forbearance is to accomplish His economy. If God did not afford man the adequate supply and show forbearance to man, there would be no way for God to fulfill His purpose of accomplishing His economy.

REJOICING IN THE LORD

Forbearance requires maturity and also satisfaction and contentment. Now we need to see that forbearance is also related to rejoicing in the Lord. In [Philippians 4:4](#) Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” Immediately after this he says, “Let your forbearance be known to all men.” If we do not rejoice in the Lord, we shall not be able to forbear. If we would make known our forbearance, we need to be happy and joyful in the Lord. Those who are sad or sorrowful cannot have forbearance. Instead, they find it easy to be upset, to complain, or to lose their temper. Forbearance in [4:5](#) is the issue, the result, of rejoicing in the Lord, mentioned in [verse 4](#). From experience we know that rejoicing and forbearing go together.

A PATTERN OF FORBEARANCE

In [Philippians 4:11-13](#) we see the relationship between contentment and forbearance. In [verse 11](#) Paul testifies, “I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content.” In [verse 12](#) he goes on to say, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want.” Because Paul had learned the secret of contentment, he was able to forbear with all the churches and all the saints. He says, “I can do all things in Him who empowers me” ([v. 13](#)). According to the context, this includes the ability to make His forbearance known to the saints.

Consider Paul’s situation when he wrote the book of Philippians. His circumstances were not at all positive. He was a prisoner in Rome; he was opposed by the religionists; and even the saints, including the Philippians who had been faithful to supply his needs in the past, neglected him for a period of time. In [Philippians 4:10](#) Paul says, “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you caused your thinking for me to blossom anew; wherein you did indeed take thought,

but you lacked opportunity.” The words “blossom anew” imply that Paul had passed through a “winter” in his experience, but now it was “spring” with the Philippians’ concern for him blossoming anew. Although Paul alluded to his “winter” experience and the saints’ temporary neglect of him, he exercised great understanding in writing to them. As he was composing this Epistle, he exercised forbearance. Thus, the Apostle Paul, one who was full of understanding concerning the situation and concerning the saints, was an excellent pattern of forbearance.

THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING AND WISDOM

Often we are not forbearing because of misunderstanding. In the church life often we may not understand the brothers and sisters. In our family life we may fail to understand our husband or wife. This lack of understanding causes a lack of forbearance. Suppose Paul had misunderstood the Philippians. He certainly would not have written them such a marvelous Epistle. Instead, he might have pointed out that when he most needed their help, it was not forthcoming. Now that they remembered him and sent him a gift, it arrived too late. Paul, however, had a full

understanding of God's economy and His move; he also understood the subtlety of Satan's attack. Moreover, he understood the saints in Philippi and their situation. To him, everything was crystal clear. Thus, on his part there was no misunderstanding. He could exercise much forbearance in writing to the believers in Philippi.

In writing to the Philippians, Paul also exercised wisdom. He knew what to say and how much to say. If we read this Epistle carefully, we shall realize that Paul's wording is very exact. Paul wrote in a way that was neither too lengthy nor too brief. Here we see Paul's wisdom.

Paul needed to exercise wisdom in writing to the Philippians, and there is the need for us also to exercise wisdom in our married life. Husbands need wisdom in speaking with their wives, and wives need wisdom in sharing matters with their husbands. Here I would emphasize the need for the wife to have wisdom toward her husband. Suppose a sister intends to talk about a particular matter with her husband. Before she says anything, she needs to exercise understanding, consideration, and wisdom. If she speaks to him at the wrong time or if she says too much to him concerning the subject at hand, she may cause him to become angry not only with her,

but also with others in the church life, even with the elders. Sometimes a husband becomes upset with the elders simply because his wife gives him information without exercising understanding, consideration, and wisdom. Even in passing on information to her husband, a sister needs a great deal of forbearance. For this, she needs a proper understanding of her husband and of his situation. If she realizes that her husband is a quick person, one who reacts hastily to things and who is easily angered or upset, she needs to consider how to help him to be patient and slow down. In particular, she needs to consider how much she should speak to him. Perhaps at first she should share only part of the information. Before saying more, she should consider the atmosphere and discern whether it is the proper time for her husband to hear more. She may share something at one time, something further at another time, and the remainder at still another time. If the sister is forbearing, exercising understanding, consideration, and wisdom, the result of her speaking with her husband will be very profitable both for their married life and for the church life.

PRAYER AND FORBEARANCE

Just as [Philippians 4:5](#) is the continuation of

Philippians 4:4, so Philippians 4:6 is the continuation of Philippians 4:5. If we see the continuation here, we shall realize that forbearance requires prayer. In [verse 6](#) Paul says, “In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” There does not seem to be a relationship between the words, “Let your forbearance be known,” and “Let your requests be made known.” Actually, they are closely related. When we exercise forbearance, we shall realize how much we need to pray. We may be anxious and fearful about many things concerning our family or concerning the church. Furthermore, we may realize that if we talk about our concerns, we may cause problems. What then should we do? After charging us not to be anxious, Paul urges us to pray. If we pray, the Lord will give us the understanding, consideration, and wisdom we need. If a sister prays before sharing a particular matter with her husband, she will know what to say to him and when the proper time to speak would be. Furthermore, if she is faithful to pray, she will also have a rich supply to minister to her husband. Then her forbearance with its rich supply will accomplish God’s purpose in that situation.

If all the saints exercise forbearance in their married life and also in training their children, we shall have the best family life. Then we shall be able to sing about the wonderful, glorious church life. We shall be able to testify not only of a wonderful church life, but also of a wonderful married life.

MARRIED LIFE, FAMILY LIFE, AND THE CHURCH LIFE

First we need to build up the proper married life and family life, and then we shall be able to build up the church life. If a brother does not know how to build up a pleasant married life at home and an excellent family life with his children, it will be very difficult for him to share in building up the church. When he comes together with others for the church service, he may exercise politeness. However, he may not be polite to his wife or children. We may be polite to the brothers and sisters in the church, but be very impolite to our husband or wife or to our children.

Our home life is where we are exposed the most. Do not think that simply because a certain brother is nice, kind, and polite with the saints in the church he is necessarily that way at home.

If you want to know him, you need to see how he lives with his wife and children. Oh, how much we need forbearance in our married life and family life that we may build up the proper church life!

The more we realize the need of forbearance, the more we shall see how difficult it is to be a proper human being. It is not easy to be a wife or husband, a parent, or a member of the church. In our society married life has been severely damaged. Many even live together without being married because they do not want to accept the limitations of marriage. This is to utterly forsake the practice of forbearance.

We need to be fully committed to our married life, family life, and the church life. The ties that bind us together are permanent. In the genuine family life and church life, no one is hired or fired. Can we hire someone to be our child, or can we fire one of our children? Of course we cannot. Neither can members of the church be hired or fired. Likewise, if a servant of the Lord can fire one of his co-workers, then they are not truly working together in the Lord. In the Lord's work there is no such thing as hiring or firing. Therefore, in the family life, in the church life, and in working together for the Lord's interests,

we need forbearance. Forbearance is necessary because we are bound together permanently.

Once again I would remind you that forbearance is an all-inclusive virtue. This virtue includes understanding, wisdom, patience, consideration, and the ability to help and render the adequate supply. If we all exercise forbearance, we shall have a pleasant married life, an excellent family life, and a wonderful church life.

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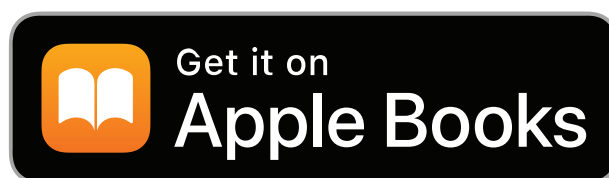
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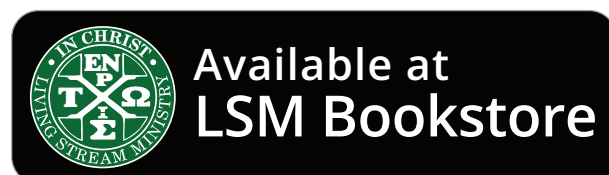
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