



## JESUS ... THE FIRST SMALL GROUP LEADER GROUPWORDS

Several years ago, I became convinced that I needed to have an on-going, never-ending ministry of leading people through the life of Jesus. Over the years I have used lecture classes, Small Group discussions, one-to-one personal studies, and there are several other methods that come to mind.

As I have studied through the life of Jesus over and over, watching him lead his own “Small Group” of Twelve, one of the most important lessons I have learned, one that always seems to rise to the top, is his patience.

Patience ... what a powerful and difficult word. We all want it, we all need it, but we all have such great difficulty giving it to others. But not Jesus. It has often amazed me that among the many times that we read of Jesus praying, we never hear him saying, “*God ... send me twelve more, these men just aren’t working out.*”

Have you ever prayed for patience? If you have, you might be praying for something you really don’t want. I mean, think about it. If you were unwilling to practice patience earlier, why do you think you will practice it now? Everybody wants patience. But it’s the road to patience that we usually don’t want to walk. This Fruit of the Spirit is not something we pray for, expecting God to drop it down into our lives like a gift-wrapped package. If we pray for patience, if we want patience to grow in our lives, then how do we think it will arrive?

Patience will only arrive as a Fruit of God’s Presence in us. Here’s how it works. We encounter people and circumstances that are difficult. So difficult that only the presence of God will empower us to succeed. Only the exercise of God’s patience will enable us to cope. And this patience grows in our hearts, only in the furnace of trouble.

As a friend of mine once noted, if you pray for patience, you have just asked God to send you a very difficult person.

On my list of Small Group Leader Qualities, I put patience close to the top, and I put impatience so near the bottom that it could be a disqualifier. I guess it all depends on whether we want to learn patience or not.