

Count to Forty

Scripture Reading — Jonah 3:1-4:3

*As God's chosen people ... clothe yourselves with compassion ... humility ... patience.
Colossians 3:12 —*

“Have patience, have patience; don't be in such a hurry!” When our children were small, we often sang that song together. And today we often say to ourselves, “Count to ten!” to avoid doing something unwise if we are upset.

God didn't count to ten when he saw the wickedness of the ancient city of Nineveh; he counted to forty. God sent Jonah to tell the people of Nineveh that they had forty days before being destroyed. During those forty days the people repented. So God did not destroy them. The Lord counted to forty, giving them a chance to change and live.

That made Jonah so angry that he wanted to die! Why? Because he knew that God was “slow to anger” and “gracious and compassionate.” He knew that God might give them a second chance, and Jonah wanted Nineveh destroyed.

God said of himself that he is “slow to anger” (Exodus 34:6). God doesn't have a short fuse; he doesn't suddenly explode when we do something wrong. God is patient with us sinners. That doesn't mean God merely shrugs his shoulders, as if it doesn't really matter what we do. No, God hates evil and will do away with it all someday. But he counts to forty, giving us time to change.

Can we be as patient as God is with others?

Prayer

Patient God, I find it easy to criticize and condemn what others do. Help me to count to forty, or more, if necessary, and to be as patient with others as you are with me. Amen.

Devotion topics: [Bible](#), [Books of the Bible](#), [Colossians](#)

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Printed on May 23, 2019

