



PEARLS OF WISDOM

by Cliff Neill

Some time ago I heard someone declare: “I’m as patient as an oyster!” This inspired me to spend some time and take a closer look at the lowly oyster and ask the question: “How is it patient?”

Pearls have been treasured for many centuries. They come from oysters far below the surface of the sea. A gemstone needs to be cut and polished to bring out its beauty, but pearls have no need of this treatment to reveal their loveliness. They emerge from oyster shells complete with a shimmering iridescence, an amazing lustre and a soft inner glow unlike any other gem on earth.

A natural pearl begins its life as a foreign body; a piece of grit or shell that enters the oyster’s shell and accidentally lodges itself against its soft inner body, where it cannot be expelled. To ease this irritation, the oyster takes defensive action to protect itself and begins to secrete a smooth hard crystalline substance called “nacre” or mother-of-pearl around the source of the irritation. This is a very slow process, but with great patience and determination the oyster will continue coating the irritant for many years and

the pearl inside will get larger and larger. The result is a lovely lustrous thing of beauty, a great prize for pearl fishers. These are termed “natural pearls”.

There are also “cultured pearls”, the result of impregnating oysters with a foreign body by hand and farming them to make money.

How something so beautiful emerges from an oyster’s way of protecting itself is one of nature’s loveliest surprises! But whether they are natural or cultured they all go through the same process—pain and patience!

Patience is an amazing asset in all kinds of situations. It suffers long and is kind, it doesn’t fly off the handle or get angry, it deals with difficult situations in a very gentle way, always deferring to others. Actually, the gift of patience is a pearl, a pearl of wisdom, a treasure well worth seeking out. Just imagine how much better this world would be if every human being was patient: no more road rage, no more checkout queue rows, no

more family arguments, no more pub fights. The list is endless.

How can we get more patience? An oft repeated aphorism says: “God give me patience, but do it right now!” Humorous, but also apt, in that it recognises the source of patience as God. The Bible reveals that patience is a gift from God, one of the fruits of his Spirit.¹

An oyster patiently produces pearls all by itself. With help from the Creator of everything, we can produce patience and other excellent fruits, such as joy, peace, love, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.²

Notes

¹ Galatians 5:22.

² Galatians 5:22.



If every human being were more patient, there would be no more road rage!