



What does LONGANIMITY / FORBEARANCE mean as a fruit of the Spirit – including in the context of work – and what can be done to make it actionable?

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the signs and actions that the Holy Spirit is alive within us and helping us live by faith in our daily lives.

“What does LONGANIMITY / FORBEARANCE mean as a fruit of the Spirit – including in the context of work – and what can be done to make it actionable?”

This was the focus of the 5th session of the 2022 BELIEVES season held on Tuesday, May 10, 2022, with reflections shared by Ross Mason, Founder of HINRI, and Co-Founder/Managing Partner of The Aurora Forge.



Mason began by sharing about the origins of HINRI, a Christ-centered organization started 17 years ago, which stands for the High Impact Network of Responsible Innovators, and bears the same root as “INRI” (a Latin abbreviation for “Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum” – Jesus Christ, King of the Jews), which Pontius Pilate ordered to be placed on a sign and nailed to the cross.

“I created HINRI to combine my experiences volunteering in a hospital in Africa with my experience as an entrepreneur and angel investor in Silicon Valley,” Mason stated.

HINRI officially started on June 24, 2004. On that day, Mason got up for 6-8 hours to pray, feeling that bringing hope, health, and healing to others was what he was being called to pursue. As the organization evolved, it became more focused on social enterprise, meaning it would partner with innovative businesses as well as venture capital and private equity funds to employ vulnerable populations and create charitable annuities. For example, Mason is a co-founder and managing partner of The Aurora Forge, an early-stage venture fund focused on health tech and gov tech which is committed to giving a large percentage of the founder’s incomes to charity.

“HINRI’s been completely led by prayer,” said Mason, which he would continue to touch on throughout the session. This has even included how others who are now working with HINRI have been encountered through the organization’s prophetic prayer ministry.”

When asked what Forbearance / Longanimity meant to him, Mason defined it as “trying to have an eternal perspective despite circumstances.”

One of the most pivotal moments in Mason’s life that shaped this perspective was when he met Corrie ten Boom at the age of 7.

ten Boom and her family were very active in the Dutch underground during World War II, including opening their home to Jewish refugees and members of the resistance movement. Ultimately, in 1944, a Dutch informant told the Nazis of

the ten Booms' efforts, and they were arrested. ten Boom, who had been working with people with mental disabilities, was ultimately sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp, where she shared her faith and hope in God while she was with others in the concentration camp.

"She, her family, and her ancestors had all been praying that God would use them to be a blessing to the Jewish people for over 100 years prior to the outbreak of WWII," Mason related to everyone. "When I heard her speak at an event when I was 7, she talked about how her sister Betsy praised God for all things, even the lice in their barracks."

Why thank God for lice?

Mason explained ten Boom realized much later that because of the lice, the guards wouldn't come into the room when they were in the prison camp. As a result, Betsy and Corrie were able to have Bible studies with the other prisoners in the barracks with the Bible that Corrie miraculously smuggled into the concentration camp.

Later in her life when World War II had ended, ten Boom continued serving those with disabilities and was given facilities that had been concentration camps during the war to be used to serve Germans who now had disabilities from the war. Ironically, the Nuremberg Laws in 1933 first started exterminating people with disabilities which eventually led to the Holocaust. Corrie was now using the facilities constructed for the Holocaust to serve Germans with disabilities who would have been exterminated under the Nuremberg Laws.

Another person who exemplified Forbearance / Longanimity for Mason and had a formative impact on him was Etta May Budd.

"Etta May Budd was an art teacher at Simpson College and is an example of how a little act of kindness can change the world," said Mason. "One day during lunch, she noticed a young African American man drawing some biological and agricultural sketches."

Recognizing his talent for biological drawings and ability in the sciences, Budd encouraged him to switch from art to horticulture. She then helped him switch from Simpson College to Iowa State and went to her father, an administrator at the school, to get him a scholarship.

The young man?

George Washington Carver.

"Later George Washington Carver mentored Henry A. Wallace (a 6-year-old at the time, whose father was on the Iowa State faculty). Henry Wallace later became FDR's Secretary of Agriculture and Vice President of the United States."

Mason then shared that Henry Wallace funded Norman Borlaug's agricultural work, for which he won the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for weather-resistant and rust-resistant corn and wheat which saved the lives of over one billion people.

Mason went on to state, "It is very important and impactful to be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to serve the people God puts on our right and on our left. The smallest acts of faith and obedience can have an inconceivably powerful impact. In this case, Edda Mae Budd's one act of kindness ultimately saved the lives of one billion people."

Continuing with a focus on prayer, Mason then told of some moments he has experienced in life by simply asking people "How can I help you?" and "How can I pray for you?"

"In Silicon Valley, angel investors are like air traffic controllers directing resources," he said. "When I got back to Georgia, it was such a different culture, so I decided I would not say no to a meeting and would ask 'How can I help you?' and 'How can I pray for you?' in each meeting."

As a result, Mason disclosed that every one of HINRI's projects has been an answer to prayer. These would include the free clinics established when he was on the Georgia State Health Board, and HINRI's 2nd project that came about when he bumped into a friend's mom in the gym.

“During an elevator ride at 303 Peachtree I spoke to a stranger and that conversation led to a donation of five acres for a school,” Mason recalled.

Several years later, Mason broke his neck in a bicycle accident on the Silver Comet Trail on August 2, 2007.

Despite the accident, Mason’s work through HINRI continued, including engaging with the Veterans Administration and asking how he could help them. One “fruit” that resulted from this was the formation of a non-profit called the Warrior Alliance in 2015.

“This came from 7-8 years of just getting up off the mat after one closed door and rejection after another,” Mason explained.

Mason’s continued efforts via HINRI, which he’s done for free for 17 years, have also led to him getting involved in issues he previously knew nothing about, such as sex trafficking.

“In 2012, I had tried to help someone, and this led me to be at a meeting where I encountered Vernon Keenan, the Director of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI),” shared Mason. “Shortly after being introduced to Mr. Keenan, he told me, ‘I am going to be speaking to the White House this afternoon. I am going to ask them to give you a call and encourage them to partner with you on the fight to end sex trafficking.’”

Mason said he forgot about the conversation with Director Keenan until he got a call from the White House and was invited to attend a meeting one week later focused on addressing sex trafficking.

“I knew nothing about sex trafficking,” Mason mentioned. “This was just helping someone without an agenda and God leading from there.”

Mason was then asked by Mike Cosentino, who was attending the session, “What were those habits that preceded what you’re sharing?”

Mason answered, “I can always tell it will have the greatest impact when I feel prompted and I don’t want to do it but I push through my feelings of hesitation, discouragement, and inadequacy anyway.”

The other thing Mason highlighted was the importance of just being available.

He illustrated this by sharing a story about what one of the nurses who cares for him, Alex, did for him.

“Twelve years into my injury, I had a nurse that really pushed me to swim,” he recalled. “We’d get up every morning at 3 AM and swim 2 miles each morning from 5 AM to 9 AM. Ultimately, I swam 420 miles in 10 months.”

On the first morning at the pool, Alex told Mason, “Please don’t go past that little yellow marker but I ignored her. So you will understand, I only have 30 seconds of lung capacity if I go under. A lifeguard can’t get to me in time. Seven weeks later, Alex told me the reason she did not want me going past the yellow marker when we started was because that was where the pool started getting deeper and she could not swim. For those 7 weeks, Alex had been my lifeline. I now understood why she had been using 4-5 kickboards to swim each day. Prior to Alex, I had worked with over 40 other caregivers and I am sure all of them could swim. However, despite her limitations, Alex was the one who encouraged me to swim, showed up each day, and made it happen. God just wants us to show up – including in prayer with all our inadequacies – just show up and be present.”

Then Monica Bosco, a parishioner at CTK, asked “What do you do to push through that?”

“I do it very imperfectly,” answered Mason. “Kind of like Christian in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, I try to listen but I make lots of mistakes.”

He added that he does get to the point where he just doesn’t want to talk to people at all.

“There are times when you need to say ‘no’ and do a better job with boundaries,” Mason told everyone.

He expounded on his answer further, sharing that the type of prayer he's most uncomfortable with is prophetic prayer.

When he ends up in situations where he's doing prophetic prayer, Mason asks people he has just met for the first time the names of their spouse, children, and other family members or colleagues.

"The Holy Spirit will then show me very intimate things about their family and friends in prophetic prayer and they often break down and cry," he said.

The most recent example of prophetic prayer came through an introduction his brother made to a man named Andy.

Mason asked Andy the names of his spouse and children and began to pray. He then shared, "Like several other situations over the last 18 months, Andy asked if he could fly to Atlanta and stay for several days with me in my home in Atlanta. He stayed for 3 days. For some reason, it is always 3 days."

The three-day encounter that came from the prophetic prayer situation with Andy led to an introduction to David Robb, the incoming Chairman of Forbes. After praying with David, Ross had the opportunity to partner with Forbes on a number of social enterprise initiatives.

In all these moments, Mason turns to God and prays, "God, show me my gifts, and what You made me to do to glorify You. I want to hear 'well done' when I stand before You face-to-face."

With respect to how this ties to the foundational things that HINRI does every day, Mason explained, "The underpinnings of HINRI are four-fold – Prophetic Prayer, Miracles of Healing, Connecting People, and Social Impact."

He added, "I can't overstate the value of Ekklesia. My family has sacrificed more than you can imagine, financially and otherwise, to make my work with HINRI possible."

Mason also said he can't overemphasize the power of the body of Christ coming together in prayer.

"It's the engine."

When asked a further question about prayer and his ability to empathize with people when praying, he said, "Personal suffering allows a greater intimacy and understanding that facilitates the healing of others."

Citing the reference to God's strength in our weakness in 2 Corinthians 12:9, Mason added, "From our perspective, God's Kingdom is an upside-down kingdom."

Mason was then asked to share more about his faith-work balance, and how people can connect philanthropic passions with their professional lives.

"In my case, there were parallel paths that merged: venture capital, impact investing, and philanthropy," said Mason when reflecting about his work. "You first have to determine your personal values, and then make decisions based upon those values."

Turning to HINRI as an example, Mason spoke of HINRI's five values:

- Commitment to Innovation (*"If you are not living on the edge, you are taking up too much room."*)
- Collaboration (*"If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."* – African Proverb)
- Contribution (*"We seek strong partners that allow us to outgrow our ability to contribute as quickly as possible."*)
- Credit (*"There is no limit to what God can accomplish if you don't mind who gets the credit."* – Robert Woodruff)
- Compassion (*"A focus on Compassion, Love, and Service ... NOT brand money, or ego."*)

Expounding a bit on the last value, Mason told how HINRI was able to provide housing to the people of Haiti following the devastating earthquake that struck their nation in recent years – helping far more with far less than many well-publicized efforts claiming to do so.

“It easy to find brand, money, and ego,” he added to illustrate how HINRI’s focus on compassion, love, and service differs in impact. “Praying about these values enables us to labor with God in joy.”

To close, Mason was asked what can be done to make Forbearance / Longanimity actionable.

“It’s all about your perspective,” he responded before sharing a story about his grandfather. “My grandfather would often reflect on how so many people in the world don’t have water or something to eat. He would then ask, ‘What did I do that was so special to be in a position to have all I need?’”

And the takeaway?

“You can always choose to be grateful.”