

Grade 1 Lesson 23

Patience

Li Xin was very fond of peaches. They were one of his most favorite foods. Every day, he would bring a peach with him to school and eat it during his lunch break. He enjoyed every bite, but he always threw away the pit, with the seed inside.

One day, Li Xin's class was learning about seeds. This gave Li Xin an idea. He would plant a seed from his peach and help it grow into a tree! At lunchtime, he saved the pit from his peach and wrapped it in a piece of paper. When school ended, he raced home and asked his father to help him find a place to start growing his tree. His father reminded him that he would have to wait for the pit to dry before he could get the seed out. Still, Li Xin wanted to plant the pit right away. "Li Xin," said his father, "if you don't have the patience to dry the pit, how will you have the patience to wait for the seed to sprout?" So Li Xin set the pit out to dry.

A few days later, Li Xin was finally able to crack the pit and pull out the seed. His mother showed him a corner of the yard where the tree could grow big and tall. Li Xin dug a small hole and dropped in the seed, then covered it with a mound of moist earth. He grinned with excitement. His tree was finally on its way!

Every day, Li Xin would visit the mound, hoping to see some sign that the seed had sprouted. But no sprout appeared for weeks, and Li Xin grew disheartened. Seeing Li Xin's concern, his mother asked him what was wrong. "My seed is not growing," Li Xin said. "I wonder if I will ever have a tree."

"Well," said his mother, "this seed has a lot of growing to do. In that way it is very much like you. When you were born, you were just a tiny little thing and all you did was eat and sleep. And now look at you! You are a young boy, walking, talking, and thinking for yourself! This tree may take many years to grow, but, if you care for it well, then someday you will be able to sit in its shade and enjoy its fruit."

Thinking of this, Li Xin grew hopeful again. He knew from his class that a seed had to go through many changes before it could even become a sprout.

Then, one spring day, Li Xin went out to visit the mound, as he always did, and to his great excitement he saw a tiny green sprout poking up through the earth! His tree was growing! He ran to his neighbor, who was a farmer, and told her the exciting news. She gave him advice on how to care for the tree while it was so young and vulnerable, and he listened to her every word, eager to nurture it as best he could. "Soon I will have many peaches to give you as thanks for your good advice," said Li Xin. But the neighbor just smiled.

"Li Xin, do you remember how you had to be patient while you waited for the pit to dry?" Li Xin nodded. "And do you remember how you needed even more patience while you waited for your seed to sprout?" Li Xin remembered this, too. "Well," said the neighbor, "it will take even longer before your sapling becomes a tree and some time after that before it gives fruit. It could be years before the tree is ready to produce any peaches for you to enjoy."

And so Li Xin cared for the tree and tended to its needs as it grew from a sprout to a sapling and from a sapling to a tree. Little by little, it grew taller and broader, just as he did. And then one day, as Li Xin returned from school, he saw the tree's first peaches beginning to emerge where only blossoms had been before. Once again, he felt the joy that filled his heart when the seed had first sprouted. And once again he knew that he would have to exercise patience. For it would be some time still before the peaches would be ready to eat.