

How to Respond When Your Plans are Delayed

Written by Bill Perkins

Immediate gratification is a driving force in our lives. We expect pain to go away fast--that's what aspirin are for. We expect immediate success. Of course, such expectations are in keeping with what we see on TV--men get sex whenever they want it, relational conflicts are resolved in an hour, and other men have the trappings of success without the hassles. What a life!

Of course, none of us actually think that way. But we do wish life was that easy. And we hope it will be at least once in a while. Like today. So how do we respond when we hit a delay in the traffic, a snag in our marriage, or a detour on our career path? Most of us become irritable and impatient. Our head pounds with a tension headache and we toss and turn on our bed. While we may seek immediate gratification, life teaches us that most successful men didn't achieve success overnight. They encountered and overcame hardship. They delayed immediate gratification so they could experience success in the future. So how can we become men who delay immediate pleasure for future rewards? First, we remember that God uses all the elements of our lives (positive and negative) to accomplish something good. Paul declared this when he said, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28). This means that while our plans may be put on hold, God's aren't. Several years ago while traveling to a large meeting in India where I was scheduled to speak, three successive cars I was riding in broke down.

Eventually, my host hired a car and driver. What good could come from three disabled cars? How about a driver who stayed for the meeting, trusted Christ and then quit his job to become my host's driver? That man's life would have been very different had one of those three cars kept running.

Second, we remember to wait for God's provision--"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). This doesn't mean we do nothing while we wait. God doesn't expect us to stare at a flat tire and wait for him to place a tire tool in our hands.

But if we don't find a tire tool in the trunk of our car, we don't need to throw a temper tantrum. God's provision may appear in the form of a passing motorist or a call to AAA. Or, a hired car and driver if you don't have tire tool and there is no AAA (There is no AAA in India either).

The Bible is filled with stories of men who achieved great success after years of hardship. Joseph endured prison. Moses lived in the wilderness. Job suffered greatly before experiencing God's goodness. Each man delayed immediate gratification and waited for God's provision. This week when you hit a work or relational traffic jam--look to God. Thank him that he can use even the setbacks of your life to accomplish great good. The next time the sky is clear, go outside at night and look up. Without a black sky you'd never see the North Star.