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The Power of Delayed Gratification

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We're taught to travel fast and light. On the freeway we drive in the fast lane. If we want something we're told to, "Go for it!" Or, "Just do it!"

Immediate gratification is a driving force in our lives. We expect pain to go away fast. We expect immediate success. Our expectations are in keeping with what we see on TV--men get sex whenever they want it, relational conflicts are resolved in a hour, and other men have the trappings of success without the hassles.

A Snag, a Delay, a Detour

And 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.

Not Overnight

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 — God Uses It All

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.

Second — Wait for Provision

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*.

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.

The North Star

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. By God's grace--if enough of us do this we'll see revival come, one man, one day at a time.