

What Do You Do When Life Stops?

Written by Bill Perkins

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!"

Immediate gratification often drives our life. We expect pain to vanish fast and success to arrive faster. Such expectations align with what we see on TV and the Internet. People get sex when they want it, conflicts resolve in an hour, and success arrives faster than a book from Amazon.

When Life Stops

So how do we respond when a pandemic brings life to a stop? How do we respond when that stoppage changes our world and we can't go where we used to go in the way we used to travel? How do we respond when it surfaces problems in our marriage, career, and family? Understandably, we become irritable and impatient and our head pounds with a tension headache and we toss and turn in bed.

While we may seek immediate relief, life teaches us two aspirin, Tylenol, or Ibuprofen don't provide quick relief.

A World That Stopped

On March 14th Cindy and I flew back from a vacation in Mexico to a world that had stopped. Today it feels like we've been stopped for longer than five months. And it could last much longer. If you're like me, you're ready for football and school and the rest of life to get going. So as followers of The King, what do we do when life stops?

I've got two suggestions today. And they deal, not with actions, but with attitudes. And in today's stopped world, attitude is everything.

First — God Uses Stoppages

First, we believe God uses every element of life, even slow-downs and stoppages, 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 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.

This stoppage has just about halted face-to-face meetings for me. But it's opened a huge door of discipleship with Zoom. Fact is, I'm discipling more men more strategically now than ever before.

The Bible is filled with stories of men and women who achieved success after setbacks and stoppages. Joseph endured prison. Moses lived in the wilderness. Esther watched an evil man try to destroy her people. The great men and women of the Bible suffered setbacks that brought their life to a standstill. But they waited for God's provision. And he always came through.

Look at the Star

Today as you deal with this odd year, when life stopped, look to God. Thank him that he will use the setbacks of this year to accomplish good. As a reminder, the next time the sky is clear, go outside at night and look up. Without that dark sky you'd never see the North Star. This week, and throughout this stoppage, focus on the star of God's grace, not the darkness of the stoppage.