

When you go for it, and things don't go

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 is a driving force in our lives. We expect pain to go away fast—that's what aspirin are for. We expect immediate success. 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 wish life was that easy. And we hope it will work out that way, occasionally. Like today.

A Snag, a Delay, a Detour

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 in bed.

Not Overnight

While we may seek immediate gratification, life teaches us that most successful people 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 people 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 tool in our hands. But if we don't find a 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 people who achieved success after years of hardship. Joseph endured prison. Moses lived in the wilderness. Job suffered before experiencing God's goodness. Each person 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.