

Meeting the Ups and Downs of Life – Week 7

Lesson 3.1 – When We Have Multiple Good Options in Decision-Making or Wrestle with the Desire for Instant Gratification

Last week, we met Rodney, an extremely gifted 18-year-old, who was met with three very enticing options for the next stage of his life. He could go to college; he could take an offer for a full-time, well-paying job; he could form a band with his friends and “have a shot” to make it big. We discussed pros and cons that we might share with Rodney and ways in which situations like his might be handled by Christians, all of which was under the umbrella of “God knowing and watching over us, no matter what.” We continue that discussion with this question:

1. What cautions from **1 Timothy 6:6-10** are in order as we make decisions regarding our future?

Life Example

Barnabas and Alexis are a young Christian couple (about 30 years old) with a three-year-old son. Both are college graduates who now have good jobs. They are discussing (note: not arguing about) the subject of sticking to a budget, which they have had problems doing in the past. Barnabas would like to save for their future, but he would also like to take nice vacations. Alexis would like to save for their son’s college education, but she really likes to buy useful products and spend money on meaningful day-to-day experiences. Neither wants to go back to living paycheck to paycheck like they did in college. They agree that they should enjoy the money they have now, but they also know they should save something for the future. With so many things for which they could save, it’s hard for them to decide. So, they put the decision off every time it comes up.

Reflections of Faith

2. What tensions arise as Barnabas and Alexis discuss their budget?
3. Both of them want to save for the future. Under what circumstances would saving money become a sinful abuse of God’s blessings?
 - a. When might a failure to save be a sinful abuse of God’s blessings?

Light from the Word

Turn to **Ecclesiastes 3:1-15**. The inspired writer says that there is a time to do certain things and a time to do just the opposite. The decision about which things need to be done at the moment will create a sense of tension in the decision-making process.

4. Evaluate this statement: It is actually good to experience a sense of tension when we make decisions on how we use what God has given us.

5. Verses 1 through 8 point to a proper balance in life. How might we apply these words to the discussion between Barnabas and Alexis?

6. What truths from this section might help Barnabas and Alexis balance the tension in their budget planning?

7. In the parable of the talents (**Matthew 25:14-28**), Jesus talks about managing the gifts God has given us. What is the significance of the fact that God gave one person five talents, another two, and still another one talent?

8. A number of Jesus' parables, including that of the talents, teach us to be faithful stewards of all God's gifts. What specific implications does that truth have for Barnabas and Alexis (or for anyone who is struggling with a budget)?

9. While we might be tempted to say that God gives us resources for nothing more than to give him the firstfruits and then provide for our families, for what other purposes do each of the following passages point out to us?
 - a. **1 John 3:17** –
 - b. **Romans 13:6-7** –
 - c. **1 Timothy 6:17** (especially the last part) –

Other Application

10. I think it's safe to assume agreement with this statement: People today are consumed more than ever with the desire for instant gratification; they want to have it all, right now, with as little work as possible. List three specific ways you see that show itself, even among Christians.
 - a. Now list three examples that contradict the statement above.

11. Recall Rodney's situation. In what ways is he struggling with the desire for instant gratification?

a. What about Barnabas and Alexis?

12. What are some ways we can teach the next generation about how to handle the temptation of instant gratification?

Imagine you are married with two children (three and six years old). You live in a small house that feels cramped. The house is in a lower-middle-class neighborhood, which is safe, but you also don't allow your children to play outside alone. Dad works full-time and mom works part-time so that, while still earning an income, she can spend more time with the kids. You're able to pay the bills you have, but it's tight, so you have some concerns about the future. You've talked with your spouse about having more children; your current car isn't going to last forever; you'd like to move to a house that gives you a little more room to operate; you realize that Lutheran grade school, high school, and college tuition payments won't go away anytime soon.

13. In what ways might the desire for instant gratification have an impact on your family?

14. Now imagine that you unexpectedly receive a gift of \$100,000. Describe some of the issues that would arise as you struggle with the tension between your desire for gratification and your desire to plan wisely for the future.

15. This was said in the midst of last week's discussion and it's worth bringing up here again—when making decisions, life is not all about money. This discussion should not stop at money either. That's a surface issue of a deeper problem. It can sometimes happen that, no matter what amount of money someone has, they still struggle. Give some reasons why that might happen.

What other comments or questions do you have?

Closing prayer 753 My Worth Is Not in What I Own v. 4 and refrain
**I will not boast in wealth or might, or human wisdom's fleeting light.
But I will boast in knowing Christ at the cross.
I rejoice in my Redeemer—greatest treasure, wellspring of my soul.
I will trust in him, no other; my soul is satisfied in him alone. Amen.**