

Meeting the Ups and Downs of Life – Week 8

Lesson 3.2 – When We Wrestle with the Desire for Instant Gratification

We have met a few individuals through this lesson (Rodney, along with Barnabas and Alexis). Their unique situations have given us an opportunity to think about Christian decision-making, planning, and financial responsibility—all through the lens of God’s Word. We will likely finish this lesson today. First, a little review from last time to get the discussion up and running:

1. 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?

2. 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)?
 - a. *For anyone who wasn’t here last week, here’s the background on Barnabas and Alexis: they’re 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 (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.*

3. 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

4. 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.
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5. Recall Rodney's situation. In what ways is he struggling with the desire for instant gratification?
 - a. What about Barnabas and Alexis?
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6. 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.

7. In what ways might the desire for instant gratification have an impact on your family?
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8. 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.
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9. This was said in the midst of recent discussions 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?