

Instant vs. Delayed (or Denied) Gratification

“Give me what I want, and I want it right now,” seems to be a message that is prevalent in our world today. In years past it was normal for children to go through the stage of selfishness. It was just as normal for parents to recognize selfishness and help the child through that by taking their focus off their wants and wishes and directing them toward more responsible choices. Unfortunately, the desire for instant gratification is present in many adults.

However, taking one’s focus off their own wants and needs serves at least three purposes: 1) It helps them see the value of patience and hard work. 2) It helps them realize their responsibility to other people. 3) It helps them see that there are things they should not have—ever.

Patience and hard work have long been recognized as virtues. Employers look upon these characteristics as desirables one for current and prospective employees. But when people are not taught these virtues, goals are pursued without them. The results will be decreased quality and productivity.

Beyond the damage to one’s own productivity and worth, is the impact that selfishness has on society. Whether we realize it or not, we depend heavily on others and they in turn, depend upon us. Going into debts which we know we cannot pay will not only hurt us, but our community as well.

Finally, there is the matter of wanting things (more specifically, relationships) we should (morally) not have. It might be reasoned, “*If I can have the things I want, why can I not have the relationships I want.*” Should it surprise us then, that in a materialistic society, fornication and adultery are rampant? Recent societal consequences of such behavior have been minimal at best. The need for companionship can be supplied through seeking someone who is eligible to be in a lawful relationship with us.

Often when we read of Samson, we focus upon his exploits as a strong man—He killed a lion with his bare hands, moved the gates of a city to a hill, etc. We neglect however, a very important statement, made by him, which reflects an attitude of selfishness. He saw a woman he should not have considered as “wife material.” Instead of dealing with his desires, and bringing them into line with what was best for him and the people around him, he told his father, “***Get her for me, for she looks good to me***” (Judges 14:3). Samson’s father followed his wishes, and Samson, and those around him, suffered the consequences. Getting what we want when we want it may seem good, but it is not always best.

—Lance Cordle