

Delayed Gratification and Impulse Control Versus Immediate Gratification

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I cannot help but think of Psalm 40:1 where David wrote, *"I waited patiently upon the Lord and He heard my cry."* I hate to wait patiently for anything! Whether on a line in a store, traffic on the Long Island Expressway, or talking myself into buying something that I really, *really* want, I hate to wait. What message do I send out to my children when I cannot control my emotions because things do not happen in my timing, or when situations do not turn out the way that I want them to be?

The Long Island lifestyle is hard. Almost everything one could want is within grasp here; every luxury and convenience is available, but for a price. Many Long Islanders have to work harder than people do in most other places just to keep the roof over our heads, most also needing to have a double-income to survive the ridiculous expenses of where we live. Yet, there are some who choose to work longer hours than needed, or to sacrifice both mother and father to the work force, just to have the second Mercedes in the driveway; accumulating more unnecessary *"stuff"* to add to the pile of things one might easily accrue. The old adage *"whoever dies with the most toys wins"* seems to best express the mindset of twenty-first century Long Islanders.

I am amazed at how easily I get caught up in this web of materialism. I laughed one day as our current president stated on the television, *"Spend money. We are a consumer-based economy, so spending money helps America to recuperate"*. Is this really what we have become? America is one of the few countries that are able to *"afford"* consuming more than it produces.

My father was a product of *"The Great Depression,"* and served in the Army Air Force during World War Two. His life philosophy was very different. He would not purchase anything if he did not have the money at hand to do so. Actually, the only time my parents were indebted was for the note held against their house. Times have change greatly in the past half-century.

Increasingly, over the past few decades, technological advancements and automation have created a culture that refuses to wait. If I want something, I purchase it, even if I do not have the money to buy it, even if I do not need it. Our children have no memory of having to get up to change the station on a television that only had the reception of five basic channels, or having to pull off the road to try to find a public phone, or waiting a week to receive your photographs and love letters in the mail. There was still something magical in those days only a few decades ago, and waiting added to it!

Our technological advancements have come at a price. If our children do not learn the virtue of patience and accepting “no” and “wait” for all of the stuff we accumulate, it will be very difficult to convince them to wait patiently until marriage to have sex. Especially when we consider the strong influence we have allowed Hollywood to play in our homes. Sexual activity is expected from children as young as twelve. I was still playing Army with my friends when I was twelve.

In addition to the media, the World Wide Web has brought sources of unlimited inappropriate material and pornography into our homes, and most of us as parents lack the technical know-how to prevent our children from accessing this paraphernalia. Moreover, the pictures available today are nothing like what aroused men twenty years ago. The graphic visuals are way beyond ones imagination, too embarrassing to discuss further. My final thought on this matter is that those explicit images sear into the minds of our children and change something God created to be a beautiful expression of love within the context of marriage into a perverse, evil addiction that truly destroys peoples lives.

It is never too late to implement change in our families, but as parents, we need to establish the precedent by our choices and lifestyle, and we need to be aware of what our kids are doing. Again, our children will do as we do, in good ways and in bad. Every example covered thus far, and many more, need to be topics of discussion with our kids. Do not allow the culture to determine the direction your child will go.

As King Solomon stated in Proverbs 22:6, “*raise (discipline or train) a child in the way that he should go, and he will not depart from it*”. In doing so, we must be consistent in what we say and in what we do. Otherwise, our children will see the contradiction between our preaching and our priorities. Which path do you thing they will follow? As the old adage says, “*the apple does not fall far from the tree.*” How true this is! Even in the subtlest of ways. Children are amazingly intuitive and receptive to the inflections, attitudes, reactions, comments and interactions we demonstrate continually in their presence day after day. Ultimately, whether we like it or not, they will do as we do, and prioritize what we prioritize.

Now that one of my children is nineteen years old, I cannot help but see some of his flaws in perspective that originated from me. This I regret and seek his forgiveness for as I try to back paddle and change my mistakes. We have a profoundly awesome privilege and responsibility in raising our children that can be scary to think about at times, but think about it we must; do not stop thinking about it, because your influence will bear its fruit in their lives for good, or for bad.