

MONDAY MANNA

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IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION OR LONG-TERM GAIN?

By Ken Korkow

Looking back over my life, I see many times when I wanted it all. And most of those times, I wanted “it” – whatever that was – NOW! So, I stayed focused, concentrating and dedicating all of my time and energy toward achieving what I wanted. I pushed – and pushed hard. Much of the time I got what I wanted. But what I did not get were peace, satisfaction, or contentment. I found that instant gratification came – and left – quickly, leaving me to decide which “want” I should pursue next.

How about you? Do you find yourself happy, content with where you are and what you have? Or are you always striving for the next thing, determined to gratify whatever objective occupies your mind at the moment?

There is an alternative, you know. We do have an option – a personal choice. Instead of seeking to find instant gratification for our desires, whether they are personal or professional, we can invest our time, talent, and treasure in achieving things that really matter for the long run.

For example, I spent a couple years and many thousands of dollars to get a post-graduate college degree in business, because at the time I thought that was important, even essential, for professional success. But many years later I realised I would have been further ahead to have invested the same amount of time and effort in searching the Bible to gain God's wisdom about money, business and relationships, the things I falsely believed could be obtained with a university business degree.

I also spent too much time on materialism: buying things I did not need, with money I did not have, to impress people I did not care about. If only I had learned earlier what Jesus Christ said about the futile pursuit of money and the tangible things it can buy. In what has been called His “sermon on the mount,” Jesus said: *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust can destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Matthew 6:21-21).

Yes, I now find myself sorry for and regretful for my wasted efforts, wasted time, and wasted money. However, as they say, that is “water under the bridge.” The time and resources have passed. What I can do is redirect my time and energy and redefine my priorities. So now I seek to invest my “prime time” – the best hours of each day – in seeking to know Christ intimately, building my relationship with Him by reading the Scriptures and praying, and to live for Him more intentionally.

Money, even if you have a lot of it, can disappear very quickly. Even the richest people I have known, and I have known a lot of them, have discovered the value of money can be very overrated. It cannot buy happiness, peace, contentment or fulfillment. It can bring enjoyment, but that is only temporary – things we acquire, even if brand new when we get them, will eventually become old, damaged or worn out.

On the other hand, TIME can bring us any and all of these things – it just depends on how we use it. Time is our most essential asset, and your clock (and mine) is clicking away fast. When we consider how short our lives are on earth, it becomes important to realise that how we live NOW prepares us for ETERNITY.

Every day we are faced with choices – instant gratification, or long-term gains. Which will you choose? How will the decisions you make today affect the quality of your eternity?

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

How would you define instant gratification? How do you typically see this demonstrated, whether in your own life or in the lives of others?

What, in your opinion, are the pitfalls of the impulse for instant gratification? What are the benefits, if any, of the "I want it – and I want it NOW!" attitude?

By comparison, what would you consider to be the benefits of focusing on long-term gains? What could be the pitfalls of this approach?

At the end of this "Monday Manna," we are asked how the decisions we make today will affect the quality of our eternity. What comes to your mind when you read that? Do you think daily decisions can have an eternal impact? Why or why not?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 22:4

Matthew 6:33, 16:24

Luke 14:28, 16:11

1 Corinthians 15:58

Galatians 6:9