

Gathering Question – What are some areas of life where you prefer quick gratification, rather than delayed? __ finances __ worship __ health (including eating) __ career __ friendships __ prayer __ other?

Discipline

In various polls the character quality most people admire and would like to have more than any other is discipline. But do we really know what discipline is and how it does its work in our lives? How do you practice real discipline? What are spiritual disciplines?

At the core of discipline is a willingness to delay gratification for some greater purpose. To do so a person must make decisions now, that will affect the future, both near and far, in incredible ways. It demands that we think about the consequences of our action or our inaction. It is a long range plan to achieve the results that we hope to see in our lives in the future.

In many ways it is like building a house. You never start a house with the walls, roof or windows. You certainly don't do the landscaping before the house is done. First, you build a good foundation that can hold up under the most difficult stress and strain and that can hold the weight of the future. It is like the parable Jesus told at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. "Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And anyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a fool man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell—and great was its fall." Matthew 7:24-27.

You cannot build a friendship, a marriage, good moral character, ethics, a walk with God, a bank account, or a body by obeying the world's law of instant gratification. That is simply not discipline. The storms come and eventually you will find that in the midst of the storm payday also comes, if you endure the pain and decide now to be prepared.

Read – Galatians 5:16-26

Reflect –

1. Could you describe verses 19-21 as examples of instant gratification? In what ways?
2. In what ways can we cooperate with the Spirit in bringing about fruit of the Spirit in our lives?
3. Why do the fruit in verses 22-24 require a commitment to delayed gratification?