

Column

We want it now! From fast-food to news as it happens over our smartphones, we demand instant gratification.

It was not always so. It is certainly true that people have always been impatient, as that trait seems to be built into the human species. Nevertheless, that urge was tempered by the reality of daily life.

When I was a boy, for example, if you wanted to take pictures, you did not take out your phone and begin snapping; rather you went to your local drug store, bought a roll of film, loaded it in your Kodak, took however many exposures on that roll, brought it back to the drug store and waited three or four days for it to be developed. I might add expectation built as you waited.

Another example was ordering from the Sears and Roebuck catalogue. This massive book sent out twice a year met a real need for families living in rural areas. Upon its arrival, family members would

pour over the pictures and descriptions of items, determine what they needed and could afford and then someone – usually mother – would carefully fill out the order form, write a check and post the letter. Then the wait for the package to arrive began.

A still third example involved furnishing a house and buying appliances. Before the days of credit cards and even after department stores began offering revolving credit plans, many young couples began married life with the barest of necessities.

In my own family, I remember my mother telling how my father put together two wooden apple crates, adding shelves in the middle of each, to create a place for her to store her kitchen pots and pans. In turn, she lined the shelves with oil cloth. Improvising and waiting was the order of the day.

I wonder if we as a society have not lost something by the sheer speed at which the modern world turns. Perhaps the thought that everything has to be instantaneous has even affected our approach to God. We expect the Almighty to respond to our requests in lightning-bolt speed.

Of course, God can and does at times respond in this manner. I remember receiving a call a week or so before Christmas from a woman in reduced circumstances who was desperate to find money to buy gifts for her young children. As I listened, I looked across my desk at an envelope containing a check from a man who wanted to help a family in need at Christmas time. I told the woman: “God has already provided for your need” and then explained what I meant.

With that said, God does not always respond in this manner. Sometimes, He says wait. When we find ourselves in this waiting mode, we should not think God does not care. Indeed, we are in good company. Abraham in the Old Testament had to wait 25 years for the birth of the heir God had promised him. Waiting seems to be one way God strengthens our faith and puts iron in our soul.

Perhaps you find yourself in the waiting mode at this time. If so, don't despair, claim the promise found in Isaiah 40:31: “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with

wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary;
and they shall walk, and not faint.”

*O GOD of peace, who hast taught us that in
returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness
and in confidence shall be our strength; By the might
of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence,
where we may be still and know that thou art God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (The Book of
Common Prayer)*

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