

Biblical Counseling Center publishes eCounselor's Weekly guide, to encourage counselors and all believers in discipleship and daily growth.

### All Things Instant

by Kim Cunningham

#### "This isn't what I had in mind, God!"

We ask God for things, but we so often don't want the path He chooses to give us what we have asked for. I have often said that I don't pray for patience because I am afraid I will get it in ways I don't want it. God isn't a fan of our desire to be an "instant society." We want everything to come to us easily, and without us having to do the hard work to change, or to be part of the sometimes-painful process of someone else's change.



I recently watched the movie "Evan Almighty" and there was a very profound statement in it from the actor who plays God: "If someone prays for patience, do you think God gives patience, or the opportunity to be patient? If someone prays for courage, does He give them courage or opportunities to be courageous? If someone prays for their family to be closer, does He just zap them with warm, fuzzy feelings or opportunities to love one another?" God places great value on the process He uses to get us to where He wants us to be.

#### His ways are definitely not my way!

In God's economy, sometimes the point isn't getting to the thing you want, or getting out of a situation you don't want to be in, but rather what He is doing in your heart in the midst of the circumstance He has you in. So many of us (self included!) miss out on the blessings of the process by being obsessed with the goal of relief, or even change, instead. We frustrate ourselves and make the process much longer and harder when we fight God's purpose for the process, which is our gradual change into

His image and character.

We want to just change immediately and to be where we want to be (or where we think God would be most pleased with us), but if that was how change worked with us, our hearts wouldn't be any different in the end. We learn so much more - about God and ourselves - by going through the process of change willingly, with our hearts and minds submitted to God's loving purposes, than we would if God just automatically zapped us with results we desired. We would be tempted to see God as our magic genie and us as the directors of change! Oh, the temptation to be our own gods!

#### He loves us where we are, but too much to leave us there!

I am so guilty of being impatient and frustrated in the process of change, aren't you? A friend recently reminded me that God loves me where I am now, and wants to enjoy this time of growth with me. I can dispense with the notion that God will somehow love me more when I am in the place I should be in or want to be in. God's love is constant, and depends on nothing I think, say, or do (the relationship never changes!). It is my love for Him that sometimes wavers and affects my fellowship with Him, my enjoyment of walking with HIM through the circumstances of my life and growth.

Because His love for us is constant, we can rest assured that God's loving purposes are at work behind the scenes. **And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit** (2Cor. 3:18). Because of His great love for us and His Spirit's indwelling of us, He will never stop working on us while we are here on earth. We can rest assured the process will finally be completed by Him at His return! Only then will we reflect His character and likeness for all eternity (Php 1:6). What a wonderful hope, knowing that His part is the only part that will be truly 'instant' and that's His promise to us!

- What trial or circumstance makes you impatient and irritable with God and others?
- How have you sinfully responded in the past?
- What character quality does He want you to learn or mature in?
- What steps can you take today to begin to enjoy the process of growing in the Lord? (Ex. Repentance of sin - 2Cor 7:10, Ps 51, acceptance of God's plan - Pro 3:5-8, digging in the Word to find solutions or direction - Ps 119, talking to a wise counselor - Ps 1, making radical changes in lifestyle - Rom 6-8).

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