

**The Importance of Self-Discipline.**  
**By Dr B Rose Kavitha**

During the 1960s, psychologist Walter Mischel conducted “the marshmallow test” with four-year-olds in the preschool at Stanford University, to assess each preschooler’s ability to delay gratification. Each four-year-old was given one marshmallow. They were told that they could eat it immediately or, if they waited until the researcher returned in 20 minutes, they could have two marshmallows.

Some kids in the group just couldn’t wait. They gobbled down the marshmallow immediately. The rest struggled hard to resist eating it. They covered their eyes, talked to themselves, sang, played games, and even tried to go to sleep. The preschoolers who were able to wait were rewarded with two marshmallows when the researcher returned. Twelve to fourteen years later these same kids were reevaluated as teenagers.

The differences were astonishing. Those who had been able to control their impulses and delay gratification as four-year-olds, were more effective socially and personally. They had higher levels of assertiveness, self-confidence, trustworthiness, dependability, and ability to control stress. Their Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores were 210 points higher than the “instant gratification” group!

A key difference between successful people — leaders — and those who struggle to get by, is self-discipline. As Confucius wrote, “The nature of people is always the same; it is their habits that separate them.”