

Stress – 1 of 2

Former *Colorado Avalanche* ice hockey team player, Patrick Roy, thrived on being a goalie. I have convinced myself that tending goal would make me a nervous wreck, even though I've never tried being a goalie and even though I spent a lot of enjoyable time playing hockey while growing up in Canada.

I believe it's impossible for a situation *itself* to carry any degree of stress; rather, the stress is in a person's *perception* of a situation. What one person dreads, another person relishes. Some people are energized when speaking to a large live audience; others panic just thinking about it. Same circumstance, different reaction.

Or what about Jesus and his disciples in a boat in the middle of a stormy sea? The disciples are stressed; Jesus sleeps. A situation is only as stressful as we imagine it to be, depending on how much apprehension or fear or worry or anxiety we contribute to it. Generally speaking, the degree of stress depends on our personal assessment of and reaction to a given situation.

I also think that, all too often, stress is directly related to *control*. We do not get stressed when we are obviously in comfortable control of a circumstance.

We allow ourselves to become stressed when we feel overwhelmed.

We say the *situation* has become stressful when we have little or no control over it. But our seeming *need* to be in control is the real reason.

And that's OK when it has to do with assuring our protection and our safety – be it physical or emotional or whatever. But if something is *beyond* our control, it can be turned over to God's control.

Another time, we will talk about why it is so hard for some people to trust anybody, including God. But, at some point, it's helpful to be convinced that the Lord is totally trustworthy and competent. Whether we realize it or not, he is looking out for our best interests. So, we can commit our ways to him and cast all our cares on him, because he really does care for us.

That doesn't mean we become complacent or irresponsible; it just means we put *him* in charge, let *him* have control. The more we surrender to him the things *over which we have no control*, the less stressed we will be. And God himself will decide how much control – if any – should be exerted. Some of the stress is caused by our reluctance to wholly agree with God's solution to a problem.

Our anxiety could be a sure sign of unsure faith in God's ability to control a situation. Apostle Paul tells the Philippian Christians not to worry about anything and trust God about everything. The more we trust God, the less we worry.

A good idea is to take ourselves a little bit less seriously. Everything does not depend on us. The world rotated before we arrived on the planet, and it will continue to rotate after we're gone – maybe not as efficiently, but I'm positive it will manage somehow. God invites us to work with him, but only he is indispensable.

We are too fragile to endure sustained stress by constantly trying to control every last thing, person and event. Our delicate makeup wasn't designed to tolerate stress. Stress is a pitiless antagonist over which we must and can get the victory. It distracts us, it saps our strength, and it discourages and destroys us.

So, I believe that stress is self-generated and self-administered. After all, the Lord does promise us perfect peace in all of life's circumstances. We experience God's serenity in proportion to the amount of stress we produce due to the amount of control we think we need but don't have. What complicates this whole subject is that we are not fully aware of what is going on. If that is not enough, the word "stress" has multiple meanings: pressure, strain, anxiety, tension, trauma, hassle, worry.

Take your pick. ◇◇◇