

Stressed Out – By Thailer Jimerson

What would you count among the most stressful situations? It would come as no surprise to find on that list the recent death of a loved one, job loss, divorce or even a debilitating illness – but moving? Yes, moving. Moving is ranked third on the list of the most stressful situations for Americans, and I'd concur.

Many of you know that our family recently moved on Friday just a jog and skip southward to Avon, and every time I do it I'm reminded, in a very palpable way, why I dislike the entire process. You get the truck, you accost various members of the church to help you do what we all equally hate to do (because, hey, misery loves company) and you go through the logistical hurricane of transferring utilities into your name while cancelling others. Luckily, I'm a preacher and only work three hours a week (wink, wink) so I had plenty of time to move things around. But add to all this the multifaceted ball-dropping of your property (mis)management company (i.e., "you're all set to move in on this date - wait, nope, just kidding – postpone everything until a later time") and you're in for heart attack level stress.

Ever experienced something like this before?

Everyone has at one point or another. Stress is a common factor in our little first-world lives. Balls get dropped. People make mistakes. You get upset. It happens. But do these nearly daily occurrences (of course, not to the stress level of moving) need to result in such spirit-crippling, cortisol-flooding stress?

No. It doesn't. Here's why:

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6.25-34)

Here's the facts, Christian: (1) Your life is more than the various things you can be anxious about; (2) God provides for the lowest of animals – can't he handle your issues?; (3) What does stressing out accomplish – can it make you taller, live longer? On the contrary; (4) You need more faith; (5) Always seek first God's rule in your life, addressing the needs of the day – and let the rest go.

Did I handle every moving day issue with such spirit-filled finesse - inwardly and outwardly - that I've become the expert on the issue? No, far from it. But I can tell you that I wrestled. And when I gritted my teeth against the foaming-at-the-mouth raving of my flesh, eventually the desires for what's right, true, holy won out. Use the Spirit God has given you to long for what's good over the baser desires of your natural self.

Remember, whenever things aren't going your way, that you're not in control – but you know the God who is. So I tell you, like Luther told Melancthon, “Cease ruling the world, Philip.”