

THE DIFFERENCE A DAY CAN MAKE

This past weekend we had to drive to Thornhill for basketball games on both days. Saturday was a very stressful day to say the least. The stress began when it seemed like we were hitting every red light in Brantford making our way to get onto the 403. It was raining very heavily at times on Saturday morning which made the drive a bit more stressful. Traffic seemed to slow down at spots along the way putting us a little behind schedule. Then as we transitioned from the 427 to the 401 everything slowed down as traffic had to merge due to construction.

Usually, I try to get to games one hour before tipoff but by 11:00 a.m. we were still at least 15-20 minutes away. Then we started receiving texts from my players that they were caught in traffic and would not get there until 10 minutes before the game. It was a stressful half hour before the game having players, parents, officials, and even the opposing team question me as to whether we would have enough players to start on time. All 8 of my players finally arrived but with less than 10 minutes before the start of the game.

I talked with many of the parents after our first game and they too shared how stressful the trip was for them. Our second game was very stressful as well. We had the lead late in the game but let the other team back in to tie it in the final minute. Then in over time it became even more stressful as we let another lead slip away and found ourselves behind by 1 with just 15 seconds left. After a timeout one of my players was fouled and went to the line for two free throws. I was stressed watching her take each shot, but she was successful at both attempts and we won by 1 point. It was a stressful game, but an exciting one, too.

After a stressful drive to the gym, and two intense games it was time for us to drive back home. I was hoping the drive home would not be as stressful, but it was. There were several accidents along the way which added another 60 minutes to our drive home. Saturday was a very stressful day.

Sunday was a very different day. Thankfully it was not raining on Sunday morning as we travelled to Thornhill again. The traffic was heavy, but it flowed nicely. There were no accidents and we actually arrived 75 minutes before the start of the game unlike the day before. It was nice to be more

relaxed and less anxious prior to the game than we were 24 hours earlier. We had ample time to warm up and played very well against a team that had been undefeated in our bracket. We were supposed to play two games on Sunday but our 3:00 p.m. game got cancelled due to injuries our opponents sustained playing their Saturday games. This cancellation proved to be a blessing in disguise because my players were very tired and bruised after three hard played games over the past 24 hours. I don't know if my players had anything more in them to play another game on Sunday. The drive home was just as smooth as the drive there. It truly was a difference from one day to the next.

We all have our share of stressful days just like Saturday was for me. We do not have to be driving through Toronto to experience a stressful day. Day to day life brings its fair share of stress our way. When we go through these kinds of days it can affect us physically but also emotionally. We may begin to believe at the end of a stressful day that tomorrow will be just as intense for us. These thoughts were going through our minds as we wondered on Saturday night whether we should leave even earlier on Sunday morning in case traffic would be just as bad. Instead of becoming anxious at that moment, God reminded how new mercies would be in store for us on Sunday. He reminded me of these words found in **Lamentations 3:21-23**:

Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each morning.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote these words during a very stressful time in his life and Israel's history. His ray of hope at the end of each stressful day was to believe God would faithfully show His love afresh by blessing him with new mercies tomorrow. This was the source of Jeremiah's hope at the end of each stressful day. Obviously, this is what he saw God faithfully do for him each new day.

It was this same hope that I held onto Saturday night after a very stressful day. I already mentioned how things were so different for us on Sunday. His mercies began afresh for us that day by providing better weather for us to drive in; by allowing for a less stressful drive for all of us to get there; by having that second game cancelled which would have been too much

physically for my players; and by helping it to be a quicker drive home for us afterward. God also blessed us by providing the opportunity for us to go to a nearby restaurant for lunch after the game with a couple of the players. There would not have been time for this to have happened if we had to play the second game on Sunday so close after our first game. Saturday was stressful. Sunday had stress too at times, but God made it a better experience by giving us some much-needed mercies.

I share this because I feel we need reminders after stressful days that God is aware and is preparing mercies and blessings for us to experience the next day so that we can see just how faithful His love is for us. I hope my story reminds us about this truth, but if not, perhaps remembering to sing the words from the hymn "***Great Is Thy Faithfulness***" on those stressful days will be this reminder:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father, Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided, Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.

Just a couple of times singing these words on a stressful day will give us the same ray of hope that Jeremiah had of a better tomorrow.

Keep safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean.