



Monday, March 30, 2020

## The Courage to Practice Grace Under Pressure

by Scott Stoner

*This is God's grace for each of us, to be set free  
from our fears, to find the courage to speak our  
truth, to discover that courage is a gift.*

—Sam Rodman

In yesterday's reflection, Sam Rodman shared Ernest Hemingway's words: "Courage is grace under pressure." I have chosen the spirit of this quote as the theme for this week. As Sam describes so well, it takes courage to choose to respond with grace at any time, but especially when we are under the pressure of some stress or challenge.

Everyone experiences pressure, sometimes even extreme pressure, in their lives. The question is not *if* we will experience stress in our lives, but rather *how* we will choose to respond. The keyword in the previous sentence is the word *respond*. Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist, wrote a highly respected book entitled *Man's Search For Meaning*, which includes this quote: "Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

There is a crucial distinction between *reacting* to stress and *responding* to stress. When we merely react, we often blame the stress, or someone or something other than ourselves, for our reaction. Responding is different than reacting in that it involves our thoughtfully choosing the response we wish to make. As the quote above from Sam Rodman reminds us, God has given us the freedom to think and not merely react out of fear and stress, and to have the courage to respond with grace.

**Making It Personal:** Reread the quotes from Sam Rodman and Viktor Frankl. What speaks to you in each of these quotes? Can you think of times when you have handled stress by either reacting or responding? What was the difference when you were able to respond rather than react?