

Peace Instead of Pressure – Intimacy Instead of Intimidation

The 18 year old freshman stepped to the foul line for two shots. It was the first conference game of his collegiate career but the pressure was on to defeat the #1 team in the country on their home court. The game was on the line. There was one second on the clock and the shooter's team trailed by a single point. The fans behind the basketball goal were doing everything possible to distract the shooter, waving their arms, shouting insults and making unflattering gestures. Someone in the hostile crowd even said things about the player's mother who had tragically died in an accident just two weeks prior. The environment couldn't have been more difficult. And to make matters worse, if the player only made one shot his team was at a disadvantage in overtime because their two best players had already fouled out of the game. It was a modern day David vs. Goliath. The pressure was on. Barely audible over the deafening noise of the crowd, the television announcer said the familiar words: "It all comes down to this."



There are times in our life when everything seems to be stacked against us. We are under unbelievable pressure. Forces around us make it a hostile environment and the odds against us seem unsurmountable. Like the 18 year old freshman we may have never been through this situation before, but our handling of the situation will have a major impact on our life going forward.

In his book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers described Jesus' desire to have an intimate relationship with a disciple named Phillip. "*Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me (John 14:9).*" Jesus' words were not a rebuke but instead, an encouragement for Phillip to draw closer to Him. Chambers said, "Once we get intimate with Jesus we are never lonely and we never lack for understanding or compassion. The Christian who is truly intimate with Jesus will never draw attention to himself but will only show the evidence of a life when Jesus is completely in control." Chambers went on to say that "The picture resulting from such a life is that of the strong, calm balance that our Lord gives to those who are intimate with Him."

Having a strong, calm balance is the ability to handle the pressures of life without caving in. If Jesus is in control of our lives we can live in peace, overcoming the obstacles and pressures that are trying to distract or worse, derail us. It is a goal I am personally working on. Perhaps you are, too. Seek an intimacy with Jesus Christ that can calmly carry you through the difficulties you face. Let God be in control.

As he stepped to the foul line the untested freshman basketball player had an inner peace that helped him block out all the distractions. In spite of the chaos all around him, he calmly stepped up to the line, ignored the crowd and drained both free throws, carrying his team to victory. After the game he shared with the announcer that the source of his inner peace was Jesus Christ. His comments redirected the bright TV lights from him, as "star of the game," to the light of Christ which showed him the way to peace. He reassured the announcer that Jesus didn't care who won the basketball game, but Jesus did care about how he dealt with the stresses all around him. "If it all comes down to this," as you face a difficult situation, block out all distractions by focusing your attention on the One who loves you and wants you to succeed as a person. The outcome of the game isn't as important as the power that Jesus offers you to experience a calm spirit, all because of your intimate relationship with Him. Choose peace over pressure and intimacy over intimidation.

Question: Can you name a time when you have experienced the peace of God in the midst of chaos?

Prayer: Heavenly Father. Our world is full of stressful situations. By being one with You we pray for peace among the chaos of life. Amen.