



In my opinion...

DEAN SAYS:

I'm Trapped! Is There Any Way Out?

On Saturday, March 13th, a deadly storm struck the east coast of the United States. Wayne Moore's Irish luck held, as it usually does. A mad, cross-airport dash on Saturday morning in Houston netted him a ride home just in time to watch them close Logan Airport in Boston. He even got an upgrade to first class.

I did not fair as well. I hip-hopped from Houston to Dallas to Cincinnati, where my trip home to Hartford ground to a halt. I tried to call Jeff and Patty Moore, hoping for a quick trip to the Montgomery Inn for some mustard-shrimp appetizer and an order of world-famous ribs, but I got their voice mail. So much for making the most of a bad situation: "trapped in Cincinnati."

It's now Sunday, March 14th. I'm still in Cincinnati. They keep scheduling me for the next flight out. Then, as the time to depart draws near, they cancel the flight. "I'm trapped! Is there any way out?"

From my *Delta Crown Room* vantage point I can see lots of activity outside by the planes. Yet over in a corner

across the room a woman sobs quietly. I overheard her tell an agent she was rushing to the side of her dying mother yesterday, when the storm stopped her. She got word early this morning that her mother had died. "I never got to say good bye," she whispers through her tears.

In another corner, a frazzled young mother on her way to her parents in New York with two toddlers and a babe-in-arms talks exasperatedly on the telephone to her husband. He's safe at home in sunny California. She's stuck here in Cincinnati, and has almost run out of diapers for the littlest of her brood.

Most likely a hefty percentage of the people who share my "stranded in Cincinnati" plight have some story to tell. "I was on my way to see... Now I'm trapped! Is there any way out?" A verse of Scripture comes to mind: "And God is faithful; He will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear. But when you are tested, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up to it." (1 Corinthians 10:13b)

Now my particular plight hardly qualifies for a serious bout of spiritual warfare. After all except for my unshaven face—they couldn't find my luggage in the thousands of pieces stranded by the storm—I am little the worse for wear. Even my legendary short temper and virtual lack of patience has not erupted, yet. But, I can't help comparing this "slice of life" with life itself.

Maybe you are one who feels a

steady pressure in your day-to-day existence that gives you the ominous sense that you are trapped and there's no way out. Maybe your job has begun to get you down. Or, maybe it's your personal life that seems to be going nowhere.

Let me reassure you from my mini-crisis vantage point that even your mega-crisis has a solution. You will find that solution in making a determined effort to give your life roots that go much deeper than the circumstances in which you live. In other words, don't let your environment govern your sense of well-being. Rather, give yourself a meaning for your life that has purpose beyond the ebb and flow of your daily existence.

Whether you manage a fire alarm service provider, or pull wire through conduit all day; whether you have a backlog of jobs that you must inspect, witness acceptance tests for, and approve for your jurisdiction, or sit most of your day waiting for the bell to hit so you can respond to yet another emergency; whether you can't imagine dating another person, or can't take another day of the kids screaming at home; you don't have to allow your circumstances to govern your sense of well-being. You can choose to develop a purpose in your life that will carry you above your norm.

Nearly thirty-nine years ago as a seven-year-old boy, I responded to the stern words of a visiting preacher and turned my life over to God. While my basic selfishness has not always allowed me to keep on the path God provides, He has always provided the path. This basic spiritual dimension—which has turned from its stern beginnings into one of great joy and abiding peace—has given my life a reason to live above my circumstances. In the midst of times of crisis, or in the midst of times of great calm, a faith in certain "unshakables" has served me well.

So whether you find yourself "trapped in Cincinnati" or trapped in the work-a-day lull of your life, I urge you to find a way to rise above the day, fix your eyes on that purpose, and press on. When you feel you are making the least forward progress, just turn around and look back. You will be absolutely astonished at how far you've come. □

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Page 12