

TURNING TO SOMEONE WHEN FRUSTRATED

I am beginning to wonder if I just have one of those faces. I can imagine some of you right now are thinking, **“Dean has finally realized he has one of those faces only a mother could love.”** It is true that my mother loves my face, but she has to because I look a lot like her. What is making me wonder if there is something certain people see in my facial expressions is the fact that recently two complete strangers opened up to me and started sharing what was frustrating them at that moment. I was not wearing my clerical collar in either of these occasions nor dressed in any way that would suggest I am a pastor.

The first time this happened to me last week was when I was at the grocery store. I was in the produce area looking for great deals on marked down salads, and an employee working in that section moved over so I could examine the prices more closely. Whatever he saw in me it compelled him to begin sharing with me some of his frustrations with the wastage he sees happening on a daily basis in the grocery business. He continued telling me about some of his frustrations working at the store and dealing with certain of his coworkers. He vented to me for a few moments and then stopped and said, **“I should not be venting in the way I am to a customer!”** I shared with him that it was okay because I am used to listening to people's frustrations because of the kind of work I am in.

A few days later I happened to stop in for a large double-double at you-know-where. I have seen this one employee many times, but we have never really engaged in any kind of deep conversations prior to this day. Maybe she saw a smile or glow on my face when I was handed my coffee, because before I knew it, she started sharing with me some of her frustrations at that moment. Just like the employee at the grocery store, she too shared with me some of her frustrations at how things operate at times in the store. She also vented about staff not showing up for shifts and causing her to have to work longer. She kept going on with other frustrations, too. Thankfully I was not one of the people she was frustrated with at that moment.

I don't know for sure what led these two employees that I have never had deep conversations with before to open up to me about what was bothering them, but I was glad that I was put in a position at that moment by God to be a listening ear.

Everyone of us needs to have a person we can share our frustrations with when it seems like our feelings are coming to a boil. Hopefully we all have such a person in our life who we can go to in these moments. We see in many instances in the Psalms that David wrote that the person he could be most open with was God. In **Psalm 59**, David described in grim detail his frustrations with once trusted friends and mentors who had turned against him out of jealousy. What frustrated David most was seeing their jealousy start turning into a desire to harm him. David expressed his own feelings of desperation and despair and decided to turn to God in this moment and open up to Him about his feelings:

But as for me, I will sing about Your power. Each morning, I will sing with joy about Your unfailing love. For you have been my refuge, a place of safety when I am in distress. O my Strength, to You I sing praises for You, O God, are my refuge, the God who shows me unfailing love. (Psalm 59: 16-17)

David understood that God's love for him was constant and unfailing. We see here by turning toward God and sharing with Him his frustrations, David was able to change his negative feelings into more positive ones as a result of being reminded of God's faithful presence and love.

Just like David, we all have stresses going on in our everyday lives that may be causing us a lot of frustration and negative thinking. Our strategy in these moments should be to follow David's example and turn to God quickly and share these feelings with Him. It is safe for us to do so, and as David acknowledged we will find refuge and comfort in so doing. Before we know it, we too will find ourselves praising God because of His faithful presence and love.

It was one of those weeks when I was surprised that these employees opened up to me so they could vent their frustrations. I hope my presence helped their feelings in those moments. My feelings were uplifted in both situations because I walked out of the grocery store having saved \$10.00 off my bill, and from Tim Hortons with a large double-double in hand.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean