

*Carrot, Egg, or Coffee*

A young lady was complaining to her mother one day about the pressures of life. Without saying a word the mother put three pots of water on the stove. When they each began to boil she placed carrots in one pot, an egg in another and coffee in the third. After a period of time she put the carrots in a bowl, the egg on a plate, and poured the coffee into a cup. Curious, the daughter asked what this was all about. The mother explained that when the carrot went into the water it was hard and unbending, but was now soft and weak. The egg had a fragile shell that protected its contents but now the inside of the egg was hard and the shell was cracked. The coffee, however, was unique because it changed the water. She then asked, "Which are you? When adversity comes your way do you let it make you weak like the carrot, hardened on the inside like the egg, or do you have a positive effect on the environment around you?"

Many years ago, the medical industry was surprised that so many teenagers were developing stress related conditions usually associated with adults such as ulcers and high blood pressure. The conclusion of the study was that stress in life was coming in earlier stages than in the past. While there were many factors to this, the top two were the substantial increase in latch-key kids and the push for children to "grow up" faster. One would hope that adults have the faculties to appropriately handle stress. Knowing this is not the case, how can we expect children who are not even academically prepared to face life be able to handle the bigger issues? One factor in life is that there are always ups and downs. I was in my forties when my mother passed away, yet I know people that were very young when they lost one of their parents. Their experience at the loss of a parent is very different than mine. Life gives us experiences no matter what age we are. The real question is the effect we allow these experiences to have on us.

The Lord knows life is not always easy. Hebrews 4:15 tells us, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin." Although he was the Son of the God, Jesus grew up in poverty and was most likely viewed by his neighbors as being illegitimate. (Luke 2:5) Before his arrest and execution, Jesus felt such great pressure and anguish that his sweat was like drops of blood. (Luke 22:44) This is the same man that taught us the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10), gave us the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12), and said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28-30) Christ conquered Satan and has brought us into the glory and protection of his family. It does not take the stress of life away, but we know we will be victorious because we do not face the battles of life alone. I am firmly convinced only as children of God can we have the eternal strength to be like the coffee and not like the carrots or egg. So the questions is, "Do you let situations make you weak or hardened, or do you effect the environment around you?"

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 3:13)