FCN Thoughts: A New Frame

My mother was an artist. Oils and watercolor were her medium. Unfortunately, many of her paintings that grace my walls are framed by dark, heavily carved frames that were popular in the 1970s—not my favorite décor era. I recently determined I would appreciate her artwork more if I were not so distracted by the unattractive frames.

I concluded this is also applicable to life in these COVID times. COVID is a fact. The need to mask, social distance and wash hands frequently are facts. How I feel about this COVID picture depends largely on the frame I choose to put around it. Am I grieving not being able to spend time with friends and family? Yes, but how I feel about that grief changes when I think about how I am protecting them and doing my best in decreasing opportunity for the virus to spread. Do I wish I could just get on with activities I love, such as dining out, going to museums, and traveling? Yes, but how I feel about not being able to do those things now does not negate my need and duty to follow “the rules”. If I choose to reframe those losses as a time to reflect on all the good times I have had in the past with those family and friends and to look forward to the time we can be together again, I keep from wallowing in sadness and loss. If I think with joy about the great places I have been and things I have done and realize I finally can do those things at home I also love but have not made time for, I can reframe what COVID precautions looks like to me.

“The essential idea behind reframing is that a person’s point-of-view depends on the frame it is viewed in. When the frame is shifted. the meaning changes and thinking and behavior often change along with it.” A. Morin. There are many factors that make up our thoughts and ways of being, though we often have some control over where we allow our thoughts to take us. When I notice my thoughts and find myself sliding down that slippery slope of sadness, loneliness or despair I try to put on the brakes and look at the frame I have wrapped around the situation. Most often, in those cases, I have not included God in my thoughts. Asking God to help me put a new frame on the situation helps me to view my picture in a new light, giving me greater peace.

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Phillipians 4:7 NIV