

NO SUCH THING AS ROUTINE SURGERY

In February I came down with an upper respiratory illness with flu-like symptoms. Although I usually don't go to the doctor, I was sick enough to disregard my own policy about doctor visits. That was my first mistake. While I was there, the doctor had the nerve to tell me that because of my age I needed to have an EKG and possibly a Stress Test to determine any heart problems. After failing the EKG, I was scheduled to take the Stress Test at a Cardiologist's office. Apparently I failed that test too, because before I knew it, I was off to get an Angiogram (also called a Arteriogram). The Cardiologist informed me of two artery blockages, one 50% but the other 75%. While I was trying to remember how I moved from flu-like symptoms to heart trouble, he recommended Angioplasty to insert a stent in the artery with the most blockage. Two weeks later my wife and I found ourselves at Norman Regional Hospital checking in for the stent procedure.

I was not concerned about the stent, because as a pastor, I had sat through dozens of them with other people. Minor surgery at best. I discovered, though, the truth of the statement that minor surgery is something done on other people, not you. The only time I became concerned was when I signed a form before the procedure giving the hospital permission to do an immediate bypass surgery if for some reason the angioplasty failed. Do not pass GO and do not collect \$200.

Fortunately the Angioplasty and Stent Placement was a breeze. The worst part of it was being tied down in bed flat on my back for 22 hours. Didn't they know I always sleep on my side and get up to go to the bathroom at will. Not for 22 hours, though, Rats!

Heart problems run in my family like expanding waistlines. My father died of a massive heart attack at the age of 62. I'm only ? number of years away from that myself. So I'm grateful my blockage was discovered before I had a heart attack. I'm also grateful to my local doctor who insisted I get a checkup even when I still felt good. I'm grateful to the Cardiologist who knew what he was doing. I'm grateful for the prayers of my church and friends. I'm very grateful to my wife who supported me during the entire experience. And most of all, I'm grateful that God was with me and kept this average preacher alive to preach again. By the way, I was back in the pulpit two days after my procedure. It was a very special Easter Sunday.