

# Reflections

## As We Journey Through COVID-19

 **St. Luke's**  
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The Ten Commandments  
for Coping with COVID-19  
September 2021

*Dedication*

*We dedicate this book of spiritual reflections to the little ones in each of the chaplains' lives  
and in each of your lives.*

*We pray their tomorrows will be a little brighter  
because of our hard work, dedication, and resolve today.*

*May they find energy and inspiration  
for the challenges they face,  
just as God has given us strength for ours.*

Ainsley	George	Violet
Maggie	Taylor	Eli
Brady	Cameron	Harlow
Naomi	Katie	Anna
Lindsay	Payton	Carly
Cora	Roxanne	Dallan
Shane	Cary	Josephine
Josephine II	Ella	Benita
Jude	Albert	Francis
Avariella	Anya	Gabe
Henry	Lucy	Lizzy
	Brandon	

# Introduction

Emily Rosencrans  
Director, Network Spiritual Care Services

The Ten Commandments are as timeless in their truth today as they were thousands of years ago. They provided the Hebrew people coming out of slavery and oppression with basic laws to help them create a safe, sane, and orderly society. Approximately 1300 BC, some 3321 or more years ago, Moses received what we call “The Ten Commandments” from God on Mount Sinai. He brought words written on stone tablets to the people of Israel, their first set of laws, divinely inspired laws. Moses had delivered these people from their bondage and slavery in Egypt through a series of events known as the Exodus. With freedom and liberation came challenges as they learned to live and survive as a new society of about two million people living in the wilderness. God’s law provided a structure to enable his people to not only survive, but thrive.

The first four commandments set forth the proper way to be in relationship with God, the last six commandments set forth the proper way to be in relationship with each other.

Dr. Sandra Bloom wrote a book entitled, “Creating Sanctuary: Toward the Evolution of Sane Societies.” It describes a hospital-based treatment approach for people who have experienced trauma. If we followed the Ten Commandments as God prescribed, we might not have as much trauma or trauma- informed care.

As we continue to fight this pandemic, we are somewhat like the people of Israel. Our world and our lives have changed dramatically. We are coming out of a form of oppression created by a deadly virus, and we are struggling to find our footing and know how to survive and thrive in this new reality.

As the challenges of this pandemic continue to impact our work and our lives, this may be a critical time to recall and renew our commitment to God’s Top Ten. It is also time to think about what guides us as we live today, in light of the challenges we are currently facing. This devotional book focuses on things that are important for us to remember, based on what scripture teaches and what we know about God. God is near to all who call upon him. God wants to help, to bring healing, to bring wholeness to our lives, to our nation and to our world. God does not change. The earth and everything in it may change, but God remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. What follows are timeless truths to help us as we continue to live through this pandemic.

Take a moment *for you* each day to reflect on each of these spiritual devotions. May they speak life to you.

## The Ten Commandments for Coping with COVID-19

- I. Remember Why We Are Here**
- II. Love God**
- III. Love One Another**
- IV. Take Time to Rest**
- V. Take Time to Worship, Pray and Nurture Your Spirit**
- VI. Have an Attitude of Gratitude**
- VII. Give**
- VIII. Receive**
- IX. Let It Be**
- X. Keep Your Eyes on the Prize**

# **Speak Life**

Song by TobyMac

*Some days, life feels perfect  
Other days, it just ain't workin'  
The good, the bad, the right, the wrong,  
And everything in between.*

*Yo, it's crazy, amazing  
We can turn our heart through the words we say  
Mountains crumble with every syllable  
Hope can live or die*

*So speak life, speak life  
To the deadest, darkest night  
Speak life, speak life  
When the sun won't shine and you don't know why  
Look into the eyes of the brokenhearted  
Watch 'em come alive as soon as you speak hope  
You speak love, you speak  
You speak life, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh  
You speak life, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh*

*Some days, the tongue gets twisted  
Other days, my thoughts just fall apart  
I do, I don't, I will, I won't  
It's like I'm drowning in the deep  
Well, it's crazy to imagine  
Words from my lips as the arms of compassion  
Mountains crumble with every syllable  
Hope can live or die*

*Lift your head a little higher  
Spread the love like fire  
Hope will fall like rain  
When you speak life with the words you say  
Raise your thoughts a little higher  
Use your words to inspire  
Joy will fall like rain  
When you speak life with the things you say...*

Songwriters: Ryan Stevenson/Jason L. Moore/Kevin Michael McKeegan  
Speak Life lyrics @ Universal Music Brentwood Benson Publications  
Jammu Publishing, Songs of Emack, Achtober Songs

## I. Remember Why We Are Here

Emily Rosencrans

*Why were you attracted to the “helping” or “healing” professions?*

*Why are you in healthcare?*

*What is your “WHY?” What is your purpose in being here?*

*How is God at work in you and through you right here, right now?*

*If you are a patient or family member, what do you think God wants from you?*

I truly believe most of us who are in healthcare are here because we have a deep and abiding passion for something that is bigger than we are: healing, helping, making a difference in a human life, providing care and compassion at some of life’s most significant moments.

For me, chaplaincy is a sacred privilege. I believe I walk with the angels as I minister to God’s people. I believe the care we provide for the human spirit is equally important to the care we provide for the body and the mind. I believe all of us who work in healthcare work with God to bring healing, as we listen, as we help, as we care, as we offer treatments and surgeries and interventions of various kinds. We usher life into the world and we provide comfort and hope as lives leave this world.

I believe what we have done and continue to do to fight this pandemic is nothing short of miraculous.

### **Why We Are Here**

Renita Heinzl

A friend shared a story about one of her daughter’s nighttime rituals. This child loves stuffed animals and cares for them well. Among them, she has a few who are in need of “repair,” each with its variety of stains, rips, and holes where stuffing is coming out. She names her concerns each night for her stuffed animals in her bedtime prayers, asking that God will heal them. She then goes to sleep, trusting and hoping all will be well in the morning.

One definition of hope is this: “Hope is the feeling you have that the feeling you have will not last forever.” Whatever situation we face, whether in times of peace or times of pandemic, we pray for healing, hope for a brighter future, trust that all will be well, and then work to make it happen.

Why are we here? Because the Holy One is “repairing” this world in and through us, bringing healing and peace to those we serve. People come to us because they trust in the transforming work that the Spirit has done and continues to do through our hearts, minds, hands, and feet at work in this sacred place called life. Amen and may it be so.

## A Blessing by Diann Neu

Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One.  
Blessed be these hands that have touched life.  
Blessed be these hands that have nurtured creativity.  
Blessed be these hands that have held pain.  
Blessed be these hands that have embraced another.  
Blessed be these hands that have tended gardens.  
Blessed be these hands that have planted new seeds.  
Blessed be these hands that have harvested ripe fields.  
Blessed be these hands that have cleaned, washed, mopped, scrubbed.  
Blessed be these hands that have become knotty with age.  
Blessed be these hands that are wrinkled and scarred from doing justice.  
Blessed be these hands that have reached out and been received.  
Blessed be these hands that hold the promise of the future.  
Blessed be the work of your hands, O Holy One.

*“The love of God is the healing remedy.  
The Name of God the Lord is the healing remedy.”  
—Sikhism*

*“Thy Name is my healing, O my God,  
and remembrance of Thee is my remedy.  
—Baha’i”*

*“Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged  
in this ministry, we do not lose heart.”  
—II Corinthians 4: 1*

*“But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this  
extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.”  
—II Corinthians 4: 7-9*

*“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you, I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”  
—Isaiah 41: 10*

*“...but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel’s mourners,  
Creating praise on their lips. Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the Lord,  
“And I will heal them.”  
—Isaiah 57: 18-19*

*“God sent out his Word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.  
Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for all people.”  
—Psalm 107: 20-21*

*“I am the Keeper; I am the Creator and the Maintainer; I am the Discerner;  
I am the most Beneficent Spirit. My name is the Bestower of Health.”  
— Zoroastrianism*

## II. Love God

Amelia McCown

I am a cradle Christian, but for a long time I struggled with this commandment of Jesus. I have come to believe that God does not need my love or yours for ego purposes. Instead our love for God is truly good for us in the same way that loving all of our caretakers is good for us. The wellbeing of each of us is boosted when we are humble enough to know that we owe our caretakers a lot and by showing reverence and gratitude for what they have given to us. This is why the healing garden, the pond and the walking trail are my favorite places at St. Luke's. Faithful and generous caretakers are responsible for these healing spaces. Look at how the grass grows without any help from me or you. How amazing the molecular processes that tell the trees when, where and how to grow, then drop, then grow again their leaves! If loving God is your goal then practicing humility, reverence and gratitude are good places to start. Worship God in the plants, in the people, in the places of healing and restoration, every event caused by goodness and mercy.

Loving God in places of pain can admittedly be a challenge. Yet even in the midst of all of this darkness, I see reasons for praise since God is the source of all goodness and light. God's hands and feet are around us in masks sewn and worn, in the donning of every bit of PPE and in every act of grace that has held us up this year. Let us recognize with reverence the processes that save lives and grant wellness. Even when COVID wins, even when the outcome is not what we had hoped for, we can give thanks that healing and hope are possible in the midst of sorrow and grief. Take time today to hold your sadness, stress and fear plus the awareness of so much goodness that is happening all around you. Take time to love God with your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy. Love God who is reflected in all places and acts of beauty and righteousness.

*"Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is One."  
— Deuteronomy 6: 4*

### ***The Shema Yisrael***

*This is an affirmation of Judaism and a declaration of faith in one true and holy God.*

*"Shema Yisrael Adonai eloheinu Adonai ehad."*

*Jesus affirmed this when he was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He replied, "The first is this, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'"*

*—Mark 12: 29-30*

*Jesus said, "The first [commandment] in importance is, 'Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.'" Mark 12:29 (The Message)*

*“Jesus said, ‘The second (greatest commandment) is this,  
‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’  
—Mark 12: 31a*

*“A new commandment I give you: Love one another.  
As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”  
—John 13: 34*

#### ***“A new commandment I give you”***

Jesus didn't issue many commandments so it's important that we pay attention when he does. He says, “A new commandment I give you” He didn't make it a suggestion. Just in case we missed the importance the first time, He reinforced the imperative nature a second time in the last phrase by saying, “you **must** love one another.” Nope, definitely not a suggestion, that's an order!

#### ***“Love one another.”***

Today our understanding of love is mixed with and sometimes overshadowed by strong feelings or emotion. The focus tends to be on me and how I feel about someone else. For a moment let's set that aside and examine two additional components of love: our will and our actions toward others. Choose a few of these admonitions from the list and think about them for one minute each.

- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:13)
- Be patient with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)

Notice how the focus shifts from you to the other. This perspective of love focuses on what I choose (my will) and what I do for others (my actions). We will always have feelings to sort through, our emotions are significant, but it's also important to engage our will and act in love toward others.

As you read through the list did anyone come to mind? Someone who has loved you? Someone who you can love? If not reread the list with this in mind. Pick one and just do it!

#### ***“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”***

Jesus made it easy to understand! He was saying you don't have to overthink this, just do what I did. He issued this this new command just after showing his disciples how to do it. He showed them by serving them and washing their dirty feet before a meal. The master became a servant and then told them to do the same for one another.

## IV. Take Time to Rest

Emily Rosencrans

*“For six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work. For in six days God made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.” —Exodus 20: 9-11*

When Moses gave this commandment, it was the first time in human history that a deity commanded his people to rest, to take time to care for themselves. What an amazing piece of humanitarian legislation! Rabbi Abraham Heschel has defined “Sabbath” as a break in routine. If you work at a desk all week, resting might mean riding a bike or taking a walk. If you are working long hours and long days, resting might mean taking breaks when you can to recharge and renew your spirit. Rabbi Heschel also said, in his book, ***The Sabbath***, that when we do not rest one day out of seven, we embezzle from ourselves. We were created in the image of God. God created the heavens and the earth. Then he rested. Our owner’s guide says we need to rest on a regular basis.

When we have had a serious illness, or surgery, or given birth, one of the ways we heal is through rest. If you cannot take one full day out of seven to rest, which is recommended by the Almighty, find ways to take an equivalent amount where and when you can. We function better, and we are less likely to burn out, or to become ill, when we rest.

*For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:  
In returning and rest you shall be saved,  
In quietness and trust shall be your strength.”  
—Isaiah 30: 15*

*“Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”  
—Matthew 11:28*

## V. Take Time to Worship, Pray and Nurture Your Spirit Fr. Godwin Olugbami

This sounds cliché in so many ways. Truth is that this has never been more urgent in recent history. An African proverb says, “a child that forgets his home (origin) while on a journey is likely to forget his destination,” In a digital world where we have relied on a GPS to get us to places we have never been, how lost do we get when this contraption fails us? We have decimated silence and we thrive on a culture of noise, hyperactivity and dependency. We may have become so afraid of silence that we always find some form of activity to fill the void. A friend once said, “*we have totally tilted from the axis of the nomenclature ‘human-beings’ to ‘human-doings.’*” The great theologian, St Augustine, recognized this when he said, “*You have created us for yourselves O God, and we shall remain restless until we rest in thee.*” (The Confessions of St. Augustine). This indicates the presence of a void that seeks and cries out with longing and yearning for God’s presence innate within us.

The crisis of our world rides on the precipice of the exaltation of secularism and humanism that treats humanity as the ultimate measure and sum of creation. We could not be more distant from the truth. We understand the need to daily charge our smartphones and watches and demanding social contraptions. We update our Facebook, Instagram and snapchat status to keep abreast of current events. Ironically, while these are tools are to keep us socially active, we have never been more truly socially distanced!

As humans we are gifted with three inseparable components that must be graciously integrated—the mind, the body and the spirit. Taking care of just the body and mind leaves the spirit of God in us to atrophy. This is why the reality of “the walking dead” is more extant than we realize.

As Jesus invites us to a special place to pray with him (Mark 1:35), we recognize the need to come away from the noise that assails our hearts and to embrace God’s peace and presence especially in these unprecedented times. The pandemic in all its ramifications envelopes our hearts constantly, leaving us with untold levels of anxiety and unease. John 14:1-3 admonishes us – “*Let not our hearts be troubled,*” with the fears and worries of today because God has the whole world in His hands.

*Prayer:* Eternal Father, teach us to trust in your providence and manifold blessings. Sustain, strengthen and protect all caregivers who are weary from toils and hard work. Teach us to rest in you and be revitalized and nourished as we offer compassionate care and show selfless courage in the face of risk. Remind us each time we wash or sanitize our hands to keep everyone safe, that in our Baptism you call us to let go of our fears and live in joy, peace, and hope. Amen.

*“Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.”  
— Exodus 20: 8*

*“My child, receive my words and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding, cry for discernment, and seek understanding, if you seek wisdom as silver and search for her as for hidden treasure, you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God.”  
—Proverbs 2: 1-5*

*“Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life...”*  
—Deuteronomy 4: 9-10

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*  
— Philippians 4: 6-7

*“Call to me, and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”*  
—Jeremiah 33: 3

*“Enlarge our hearts, O God, that we may do battle against evil and bear the sorrows of the weary, and seek and serve Thy will. Great art Thou, O Lord. There is naught that is a match for Thee. O my Lord, enlarge my heart.”*  
—Islam

## VI. Have an Attitude of Gratitude

Emily Rosencrans

*“I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches stored in secret places so that you will know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.”*  
—Isaiah 45: 3

*“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s Will for you in Christ Jesus.”*  
—I Thessalonians 5: 16-18

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, God’s steadfast love endures forever.”*  
— I Chronicles 16: 34

Focus on the successes each day brings, not the failures. Focus on the blessings, not the challenges. No matter how dark it seems, how tired you feel, or how insurmountable the problem appears to be, there are treasures and gifts as well. There are, indeed, treasures even in the darkness and wisdom stored in secret places. In the place where we care for those with COVID, we see the skill and compassion of our co-workers, we find new ways to treat patients, and we have discovered and produced a vaccination in record time.

In the darkness of death, I see the love family members have for one another as they grieve the loss of someone precious to them. In the darkness of disease, I see faith and courage to fight. In little and big ways, each and every day, I see treasures even in the darkness.

Many people have shared with me the blessings of slowing down, doing less, going less, and of how much they appreciate what they once took for granted.

Look for the treasures even in the darkness. Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened, ask and it will be given to you.

## VII. Give

Amelia McCown

“Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.”  
—Simone Weil

“If you can’t feed a hundred people, then just feed one.”  
—Mother Teresa

“There’s a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”  
--Leonard Cohen, “*Anthem*”

I saw some tears trying to make their way into the nurse’s eyes. She was trying very hard to not to cry right then. All she said was, “I’m tired and burned out.” I heard her and I saw her struggle. Then I gave to her from my emotional well because others have given to me from theirs. When you are empty, let others see your need. Let them give to you. When you have enough to share, do so generously. In the face of what looks like scarcity, it can be tempting to hold back for fear that we will have enough for ourselves. Fight any urge to close yourself off or become miserly with your time, your kindness or your finances. Joyful people know their boundaries and limits, but they give what they can even in the face of adversity. Each of us will have what we need to make it through this if each of us shares what we can.

Thank you to those who have practiced generosity throughout this pandemic. Your gifts have made a difference.

*“Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation in which you shine like stars...Even if I am being poured out as a drink offering over the sacrifice and offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.”*  
—Philippians 2: 14-17

*“This point is this: those who sow sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.”*  
—II Corinthians 9: 6-8

*“We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—  
and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.”*  
--I John 3: 16

*“In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak,*

*remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said,  
'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*  
—Acts 20: 35

*"You often say, 'I would give, but only to the deserving.' The trees in your orchard say not so,  
nor the flocks in your pasture. They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish."*  
—Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

*"With gentleness, overcome anger. With generosity, overcome meanness.  
With truth overcome delusion."*  
—The Buddha, Verse 223, The Dhammapada

## VIII. Receive

Fr. Godwin Olugbami

*"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your  
heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you  
by worrying add a single hour to your life?..."*

*"And why do you worry, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we wear?'" For everyone  
runs after these things, and your Heavenly Father knows you need them. But seek first God's kingdom and  
God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."  
— Matthew 6: 26-27, 31-34*

Recently, a video went viral about Amy, a nurse from Texas, who was exhausted after a 16-hour shift of working in the Intensive Care Unit filled with COVID patients. She had bloodstains of three dying patients from COVID on her pants. In her words: *"I hate my job right now, I just held three people dying in my arms. One didn't want to let go, and cried I don't want to die, please help me. Another said please just let me go, I can't go on anymore."* She continues, *"people want to argue about masks and vaccines and freedom. I just don't want to watch anyone else die, I see their faces in my nightmares. And it feels like it is never ending."*

The truth is that she never really hates her job. She is kind and compassionate. The essence of her calling streams empathy to the very core. Nevertheless, that kind of a resolve amid constant attrition gives way to a daily dose of misery. Her mettle is daily withering under the severe weight of the pandemic, as stress, burnout and despondency inexorably set in. She has given all she is and has, her reserves emptied. Her story is relatable, ringing true in our common experience. We are often flying on fumes as we return to our families and loved ones. The pandemic is doing its utmost to break us down, but our common resolve has never been stronger.

While it seems this constant barrage cannot be attenuated, our determination has somehow managed to bring out the best in many, a bastion of strength never imagined before now. As we all struggle to survive, we thrive on the very comforting words of scripture that predispose us to receive from the enrichment of our generosity in Christ- *"Being enriched in everything, to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant in all richness unto God"* (II Corinthians 9: 11-12).

Friends, there is a time to give, and a time to receive. Amy and so many of us today stand in the need of receiving prayers, support and empathy. As we continue to stand in the gap in intercession, we will always remain grateful for our staff, especially doctors, nurses and first responders who have

gallantly responded to critical needs in the communities we serve here in St. Louis. I have never been more proud and honored to be a part of so great a selfless dedication to God and humanity.

*Prayer:* Gracious God, as we strive to contain this pandemic and respect the guidelines of social distancing, help us to find ways to reach out to those who need our support. Kindly bless our resolve, our faith, and our undying hope to conquer the adversities that befuddle us, as we receive of the plenitude of your grace and healing. Amen.

*“You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.”*  
—II Corinthians 9: 11-12

## IX. Let It Be

Nathan Burgell

*“The Angel Gabriel said to Mary, ‘Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you.’ Mary was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God, and now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ Mary said to him, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy, he will be called Son of God...for nothing is impossible with God.’” Then Mary said, ‘Here I am, the servant of the Lord, **let it be** to me according to your word.’”*

This past year has been a time of many great losses. It becomes easy for us to believe that all we do is futile to the greater needs of the world. We can easily fall into the trap of believing that by doing more we are actually doing something. This frenetic energy can sometimes feel good, but eventually it will be our downfall. Sometimes we cannot work our way out of all the problems of the world.

When I was younger, I used to enjoy fishing. There was not much work involved. You put bait on the hook and toss the line. Then you wait. I used to be very impatient when nothing happened. I believed that working harder would make me better at fishing. I would reel in the line to check that the bait was still there. I would cast it out again in a different spot. I would get bored and just give up all together and look for something that was a bit more active. Eventually I learned that the best way to fish is to remain idle. When I cast the line out, I have to let it be. The point is not to overwork. Let the line remain and wait. Maybe a fish would bite. But sometimes it wouldn't. No matter the outcome, I let it be.

Sometimes the best thing we can do is to follow Mary's example and let it be. We are fighting a pandemic. Let it be. We have experienced social isolation. Let it be. We face new recommendations every day. Let it be.

As the Serenity Prayer says,

*“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,  
and the wisdom to know the difference.”*

**LET IT BE**

*Song by the Beatles*

When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me,  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be

And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be  
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be

When brokenhearted people living in the world agree  
There will be an answer, let it be

For tho they may be parted there is still a change that they will see  
There will be an answer, let it be  
And when the night is cloudy there is still a light that shines on me  
Shinin' till tomorrow, let it be

*“All things arise, suffer change, and pass away. This is their nature. When you know this,  
nothing perturbs you, nothing hurts you. You become still.  
—Hinduism*

**X. Keep Your Eyes on the Prize**

Jim Eckhardt

*“Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal;  
but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.  
Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but this one thing I do:  
forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,  
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”  
— Philippians 3: 12-14*

*“For this light momentary affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory beyond  
compare, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.  
For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”  
— II Corinthians 4: 17-18*

In the first commandment for health care workers, you were invited to reflect on the reason you are working in healthcare. I am sure it is nuanced for each of us but we all sense satisfaction and fulfillment when we help people who are in crisis. I hope a bit of what motivates me will encourage you to keep going.

When God called me to the ministry, His general instructions were “to strengthen the brothers (and sisters).” Over the past 30 years, I have had the opportunity to fulfil that calling by serving in the roles of church staff member, senior pastor, global worker, professor, and administrator.

In recent years, I have helped people as they grieve loss or cope with difficult circumstances. I am often humbled. My ability to strengthen others rarely comes from my education and preparation. Most often, it comes from the losses I have grieved and the difficult circumstances I have endured.

*“For this light momentary affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory beyond compare, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”*

*— II Corinthians 4: 17-18*

When I was a pastor, there were many times when I wanted to call it quits. When I served overseas, the challenges were even more difficult. Each one made me a bit stronger, a bit more patient, a little more understanding. The difficulties were not enjoyable but my calling to ministry was such a powerful moment in my life; it gave me courage to forget what was behind and press on to what I felt called to do.

What is your motivation for doing what you do? What gives you strength to keep going? Focus on that! This pandemic has stretched us in ways we didn't expect both professionally and personally. Some days I feel like “I've got this” and other days not so much. On those difficult days, Paul's words give me encouragement:

*“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do:*

*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,  
I press on toward the goal to win the prize  
for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

*— Philippians 3:12-14*

## PRAYERS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

*“Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed; save us, and we shall be saved; for it is you we praise. Send relief and healing for all our diseases, our sufferings, and our wounds, for you are a merciful and faithful healer. Blessed are you, O Lord, healer of the sick.*

*—Judaism*

*“God, remove the hardship, O Lord of all, grant cure for you are the Healer.  
There is no cure but from you, a cure which leave no illness behind.*

*—Islam*

*“Thy name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope and love for Thee is my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succor in both this world and the world to come.*

*—Baha’i’*

*“O you who believe, seek help with patience and prayers,  
as God is with those who patiently persevere.”*

*—Islam*

*“It is under the greatest adversity that there exists the greatest potential for doing good.” —Buddhism*

*“The prophets and messengers from God have been sent down  
for the sole purpose of guiding us to the straight path of Truth.”*

*—Baha’i’*

*“The Lord tests us, and blesses us with a Glance of Grace.”*

*—Sikhism*

## A PRAYER FOR PHYSICIANS

“Lord, Thou Great Physician, I kneel before Thee. Since every good and perfect gift must come from you, I pray: give skill to my hand, clear vision to my mind, kindness and sympathy to my heart. Give me singleness of purpose, strength to lift at least a part of the burden of my suffering fellow human beings, and a true realization of the rare privilege that is mine. Take from my heart all guile and worldliness, that with the simple faith of a child I may rely on Thee. Amen.

## PRAYERS FOR HEALING

*“Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed; save us,  
and we shall be saved; for it is you we praise.”*

—Judaism

*“O God, remove the hardship, O Lord of us all, grant cure for you are the Healer.  
There is no cure but from you, a cure which leaves no illness behind.”*

—Islam

*Thy name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy.  
Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion.  
Thy mercy to me is my healing in this world and in the world to come.”*

—Baha’i

*“Lord, look upon me with eyes of mercy, may your healing hand rest upon me, may your  
life-giving powers flow into every cell of my body and into the depths of my soul, cleaning,  
purifying, restoring me to wholeness and strength for service in your kingdom.*

—Christianity

### Wisdom

In the silence of our hearts we listen for wisdom, O God, that we may learn again that we are born of you and that all people are bearers of your everlasting image. In the silence of our hearts we listen, that we may know once more that the earth and all its creatures are sacred and that within us and among us is your wisdom and your delight.

### Strength

You have been our strength, O God. At the beginning of the day you brought us from darkness into light. At the ending of the day, you lead us from busyness into stillness. In earth’s cycles and seasons you offer us new life and fresh beginnings. Be our strength this day and the strength of new beginnings in our world. Be our help, O God, and the help of those who cry out in need.

### Grace

You have shown us, O Lord, that grace changes life, that grace can turn the ordinary into the festive and emptiness into fullness. When we find ourselves in you, we find that we, too, are bearers of grace and that we, too, can be part of changing the world.

## **Adaptation of a Traditional Irish Blessing**

*May the blessing of life be on you, light without and light within.*

*May the blessed sunlight shine on you and warm your heart.*

*May the light shine out of the two eyes of you,*

*Like a candle set in the windows of a house.*

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*God has no body but yours...*

*Yours are the eyes with which He sees compassion in this world,*

*Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good,*

*Yours are the hands with which He blesses all the world,*

*You are His hands,*

*You are His feet,*

*You are His eyes,*

*You are His body...*

*Anonymous*

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