

A man with a beard, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, is sitting at a wooden desk in a home office. He is smiling and looking at a laptop. On the desk, there is a large black Acer monitor, a keyboard, a mouse, a water bottle, a glass, and some papers. In the background, there is a kitchen counter with a bowl of fruit and a window.

**Stay-at-Home  
and**

**THRIVE**

**Nancy Virden**

# About the Author

## Nancy Virden

Nancy is a freelance writer and founder of Always the Fight Ministries.

Always the Fight Ministries (ATFM) has been displaying compassion for those fighting mental illness, addiction, and abuse since 2012.

Nancy is the voice of ATFM and openly shares her emotional resurrection from despair.



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Stay At Home and Thrive  
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If you are feeling suicidal over coronavirus stressors or for any reason, or concerned about someone who is, in the U.S. call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or for a list of international suicide hotlines, go [here](#).

If you are suicidal with a plan, immediately call 911 in the U.S. or go to your nearest emergency room. In the EU call 112. (For other international emergency numbers, go [here](#) ). Hope and help are yours!

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# Introduction

Acceptance is sometimes the only (and the better) option.

The daughter and son-in-law of friends need to renew their visa, but the bureaucracy says they must leave the country and apply from outside. The bigger issue is where are they to go? With the world fighting the coronavirus outbreak, this couple in Thailand will have difficulty finding a way out, and perhaps especially, a way back in.

Change is stressful - even if it is for the better - and possibly everyone today is struggling with adjustments. The temptation is to worry and fuel our anxiety with negative what-ifs. Acceptance recognizes disappointment, confusion, sadness, and uncertainty as realities and then moves on with what is needed.

Acceptance says, "I care about the situation and have strong feelings about it but will spend my energy focusing on what I can change." This relaxes our muscles, quiets our fears, allows for joy, and celebrates hope.

The battle in our minds is where we win or lose serenity.



1

# Sense of Purpose, Sense of Hope

We Can Do It!

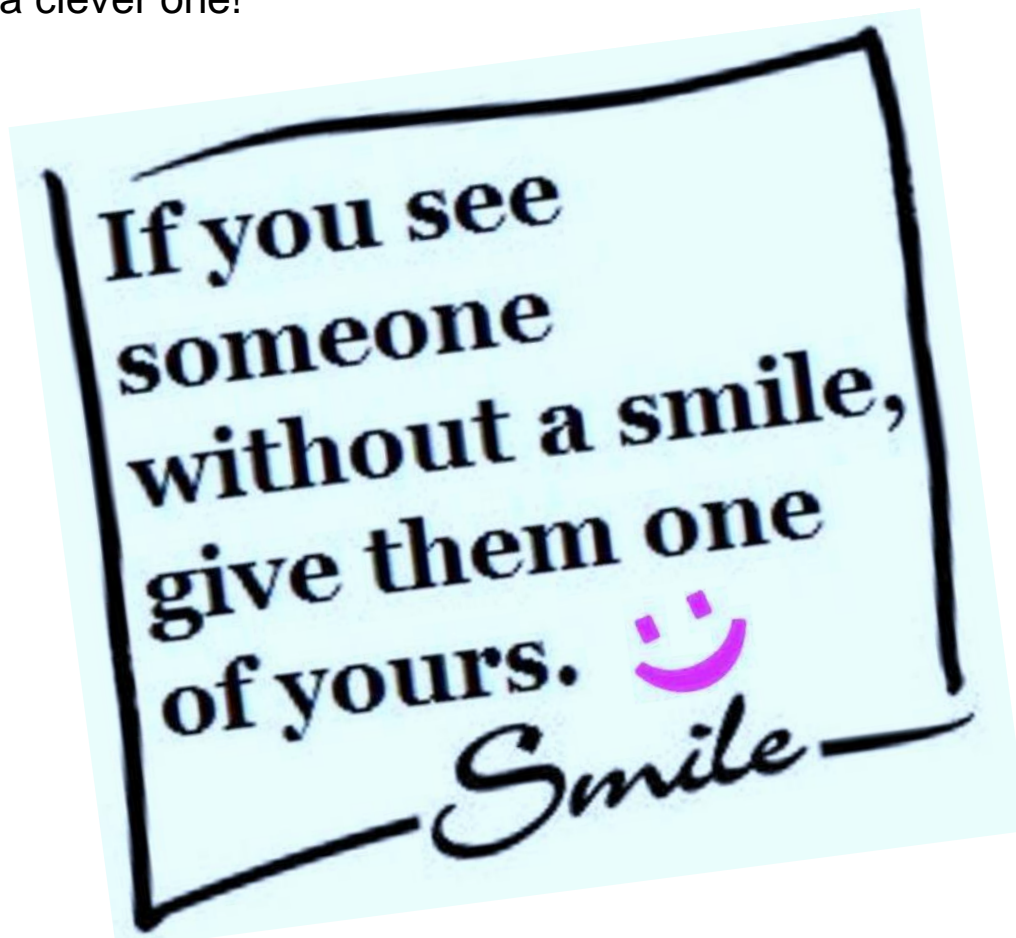


One of the most important foundations of a fulfilled life is the act of giving. From birthday parties to Christmas, giving is better than receiving.

Then, there are public emergencies. We witness the brave stepping up at the worst of times to use whatever they have on hand to help strangers. No hero-worship, no financial gain, not even thanks are expected or often received.

Feel-good giving is what happens when purpose and action meet a need. During this coronavirus pandemic, instead of feeling stuck at home and wasting time, you can experience the joy of helping others while protecting yourself and your family. You can give, and thus attain the fulfillment of genuine purpose and hope.

Ideas fill the next rest of this book. Perhaps you will be inspired to think of a clever one!





## Fliers for Neighbors

My neighbors found a flier taped to their doors last week. The flier is how I distributed offers to help. By using scotch tape to stick them to doors, no handles, or mailboxes were touched. No virus germs were left behind, and none were picked up. My fliers also included a reminder to wash hands after handling the note.

One elderly man and younger woman responded. Occupants of the other eleven homes now know they can count on me. Only God knows when one may need to know that.

The following page is a copy of the flier that you may also use or write your own! Only offer what you can and are willing to do.

**“Love Your Neighbor” - Jesus**

Hello! I am your neighbor (house # \_\_\_\_\_) and am just checking to see if you are ok.

This isolation can be tough on all of us, but you are not alone.

Please feel free to call/text my cell at \_\_\_\_\_ or  
knock on my door if you need anything. I can run to the drug store - restaurants for  
take-out, etc. No charge for making the run!

If you have few people to talk to and would like to add one more, I'm a sucker for  
conversation! Feel free to call for that reason too.

If you want to leave me your phone number, leave a message with your house number  
and your 1<sup>st</sup> name, and I will call you!

we have to stick together!

P.S. Wash your hands after handling this note





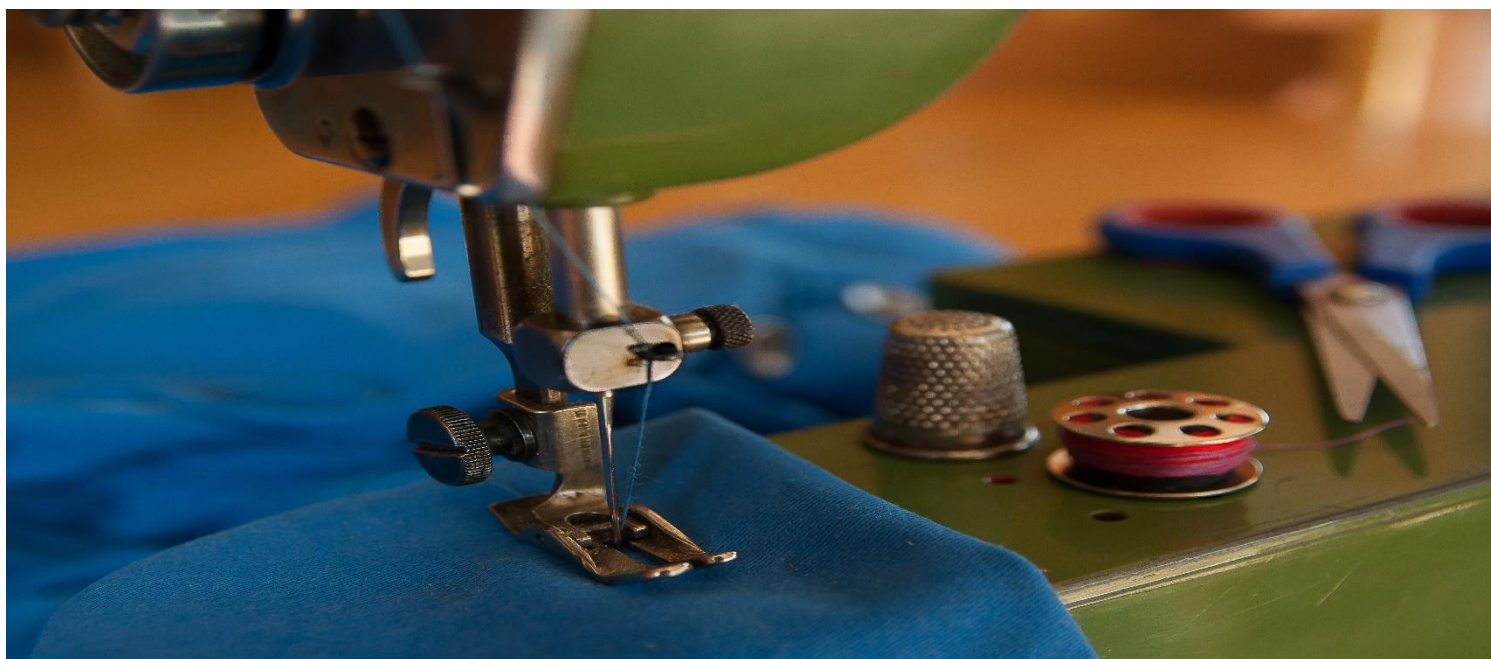


## Signs in Windows, Music on the Streets

What simple and fun ways to share hope and encouragement! Happy and positive signs in your house windows (or car) cheer passersby. Quote your favorite author, poet, or Bible verse. Schoolchildren around the world are taping rainbows to windows as symbols of hope.

Perhaps you have seen videos of musicians playing instruments from balconies, front yards, and porches. If you know how to play an instrument or sing, you too can help bring a neighborhood together.

A daughter of a friend played classical music on her violin in her city front yard a few days ago. Neighbors cautiously appeared, keeping at safe distances. Soon, they were clapping and speaking to one another. One woman's music reinforced a sense of community.



## Face Masks

We are all aware of the great need for masks. Even as supplies increase, there are people who need them desperately. Your neighbors may need them, friends, children, and perhaps you too. What a necessary gift to give!

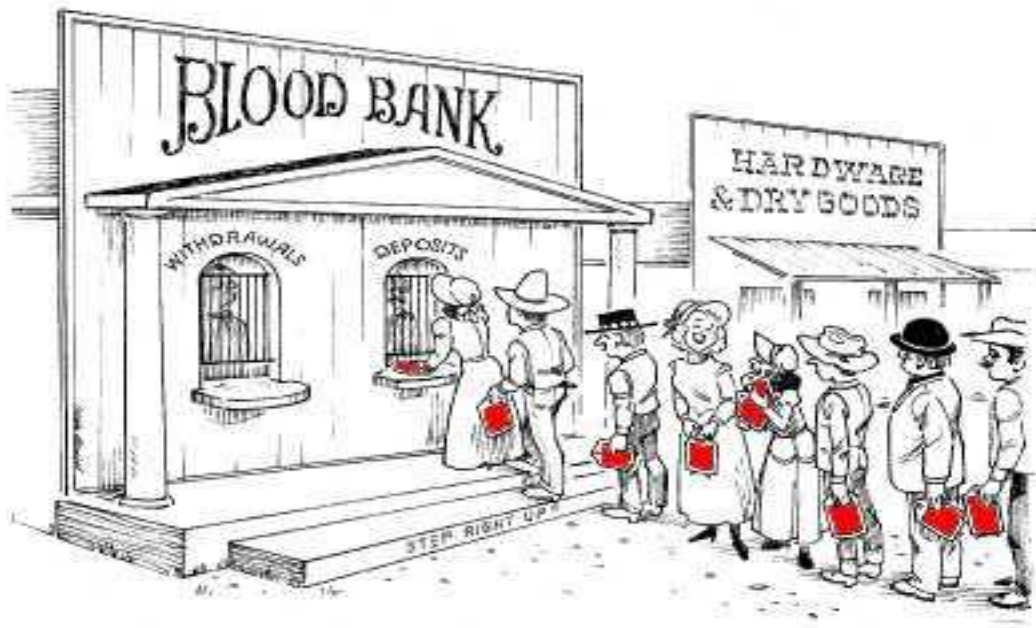
Here is the best pattern for facemasks I've seen yet. Follow this link or copy and paste into your browser. <https://www.craftpassion.com/face-mask-sewing-pattern/>

This pattern features snug fit, comfort, nose wire to prevent foggy glasses, and an extra pocket to add further protection such as a dry wet wipe.

Once you have the process down, each mask can take about 10 minutes to finish. Go for it!

**“I am reminded that every day I have the chance to pick up a needle and some thread and add to the story.**

**— Jerusalem Jackson Greer**



# Blood Donations

Blood banks are in need and your donation may be just what someone needs. As one who has been saved by transfusions, I can tell you with surety, your gift is appreciated.

The American Red Cross is responding to social distancing by accepting appointments. Expect to schedule up to 14 days out. Some of us cannot give blood. If you can, please do.

Many clinics are closing, and the Red Cross is looking for new locations. Do you have a room or building to offer?

Follow this link for details. <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>

“...for the life of the body is in its blood.”  
Leviticus 17:11



## Food and Cash Donations

Visiting a superwoman I will call E, I watched my friend swooping in, solving one mini crisis after the other. She was trying to serve lunch to her two small children; my little sons and I were guests.

About to plate the children's food, she realized the last load of dishes, including child size plates and sipper cups had not been washed. The dishwasher had broken. "Oh well," she said pleasantly as she scrambled for tableware intended for adults. "This is what life is today."

Her shrug and acceptance of life on life's terms still inspires me twenty-five years later.

The coronavirus has damaged the finances of many people likely in every city and town. You may know someone who is affected. This is what life is today.

Due to a growing need for basics, food banks are challenged. If you have eats (or toilet paper) to donate, families in deep need will receive them. Food banks usually accept nonperishable foods. Check with your local one.

Charities everywhere are struggling financially. As an international crisis, the coronavirus offers opportunities to think about money perhaps differently than you have before.

It takes courage of character to rearrange one's priorities in the face of crisis. If nothing changes, and we hoard our goods and money, people may starve and go without necessary medications.

The following responsible charities urgently need cash.

[Salvation Army](#)

[Samaritan's Purse](#)

[Direct Relief](#)

[Feeding America](#)



Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing.

What good does that do?

James 2: 14-17



# Volunteer

The famous first three lines of the Serenity Prayer are this:

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

In America and around the world, people are saving each other. Manufacturers switch their processes and make ventilators; volunteers repair ventilators; families sew masks; churches hold blood drives; and college students make runs to the store for senior citizens.

What can you change? Do you have the courage to do it?

This is not a guilt trip. We are not all able to step up as we wish. That is where wisdom kicks in. The ability to improve life for others ranges from sending cards to mopping hospital floors. No little gesture is too small. It all matters.

What do you have the physical and emotional stamina to do?

- ❖ [Meals on Wheels](#) needs fill-in helpers for absent older volunteers
- ❖ Call your local school district to see about **handing out lunches** to students.
- ❖ Elderly men and women need **check-in phone calls**.
- ❖ [Feeding America](#) is mostly run by volunteers, most of whom are choosing to stay home just as a surge of clients needs help.
- ❖ **Homeless shelters** suffer the same lack of helpers.
- ❖ Do you have expertise in a school topic? You can **tutor students** in your area. Call your school district for information.
- ❖ How about **mowing lawns, planting gardens, clearing gutters, or doing household repairs at low or no cost?**



- ❖ **Mechanical?** Autos still require maintenance. People currently hesitate to go to their dealership or repair shop.
- ❖ Do you do **hair, nails, or facials**? Offer to treat each of your clients to a virtual custom tutorial.
- ❖ **Cook** for neighbors with financial troubles. Charge only for ingredients or nothing at all.
- ❖ **Call, text, send snail mail** to anyone you know who is especially isolated.
- ❖ **Say thank you!** Send thank you notes to police stations, firehouses, ambulance stations, hospitals, postal offices, sanitation departments, government buildings, churches, schoolteachers, and anyone else knee deep in the crisis.

Do you recall when complaints surfaced briefly about the value of sending thoughts and prayers to grieving victims? Truth is, ineffectual thoughts are the ones not followed by decisions. Ineffectual prayers are the ones unprayed. Action and prayer certainly make the difference.





2

# Never Bored



**A**dmit it. You are tired of watching TV and playing solitaire. You are beyond bored and ready to dress your cat like a character from Trolls World Tour.

Boredom keeps us locked in our thoughts without any filters. We tend to believe what we tell ourselves. This can lead to depression or other issues.

Boredom is not laziness. Boredom is simply not knowing what to do. This chapter offers answers to that challenge. The first step is always the hardest, so go ahead! Stretch and stand up. Take a few deep breaths, and dive in. Keep your mind too busy to ruminate or worry.





## Home Movies (Go Viral!)

How funny are you and your friends? You've seen videos of dancers and music groups performing from separate rooms. You have an open window of time to create your performance.

- ❖ **Skits:** Being in the same room is not necessary for a good slapstick or simple comedic skit. Write a funny story with your friends, practice screenshot angles and timing, then it's time for Action!
- ❖ **Jam!** Does everyone have their instruments? Kazoos? Pots and pans? For children and adults, improvised music is a blast. Sound quality will likely be iffy, creating the best excuse for an amateur gig.
- ❖ **Record what you have always wanted to tell the world.** Add music, performance or visuals. Make it interesting and fun to listen to your points.

- ❖ Are you an aspiring **public speaker** with little practice? Prepare by saying your speech in front of the mirror, then make a video and share it with a few people you can trust. Get feedback and accept it.
- ❖ Record a **time capsule**. Describe your life now and what you hope to become. Show off your favorite items and include a selfie. Save it to watch in five years.
- ❖ **Sing!** You have favorite songs – give them a go. YouTube awaits.



Showbiz is just there to give people something to talk about.  
– Penn Jillette



## Get Social

Make the effort to be with others. If you have not yet learned to use your computer or phone to such a degree, do so now. Isolation and loneliness add up to unhappiness. Why suffer when technology is so advanced? Stay close to positive friends.

- ❖ **Exercise:** Walk with your regular group by taking your phones along as you each walk at separate locations. Inside, share an exercise video from your living rooms. If you typically hit the gym with a pal, do home workouts together in real-time or keep track of each other's progress. Compete if it helps with motivation.
- ❖ **Arts and Crafts:** If each crafty friend has their own materials, do it together! From string art to nail art, painting to fashion design, collage to sketching, virtual togetherness makes for a better day. Group projects succeed too. For example, quilters can make squares while chatting over phones and computers and wait for another time to piece it all together.

- ❖ **Board games** exist for players who do not take them too seriously. Invite and play! One household manages the board while another keeps score. If you each have cards, allow game-play cheating for good laughs. (Ok, alright, if you must be serious, skip that last part.)
  
- ❖ **Missing a party?** Have it anyway! Each partygoer can decorate her space, buy or make some cake and party food, and it's on! Using a video conferencing site, you can dance (seriously!), sing, provide entertainment, play a game, talk, and stay up late with very little clean-up! Did I hear someone say charades?
  
- ❖ **Multi-player Video Games:** Games are fun, especially with friends. This site offers a variety of free options. <https://www.freeonlinegames.com/tag/mmo>
  
- ❖ **Fan Faves:** Get in character and watch your favorite TV specials or shows with lots of shared moments over the phone. Wear costumes for extra flare.
  
- ❖ **Visit your friends.** Yes, I said visit. How? Get in your car and go. Keep your windows shut and the two of you can speak over your phones eye-to-eye.



# Git 'Er Done

You will feel much better when those repairs and touch-ups are done. It's a social affair if you have family with you.

- ❖ **Detail your car.** The kids will learn your technique if you help them to detail their bicycles, too.
- ❖ **Chore** races for the young and young-at-heart add friendly competition. Contact a best buddy over the phone. Ready, Set, GO!
- ❖ **Plant a garden.** Window gardens, yard gardens, flower gardens – whatever your heart desires, give it a chance. The worst outcome is you have fun playing in the dirt!
- ❖ **Building projects and repairs** on your home. You will love the door that hangs correctly and the roof that doesn't leak. Family members will also love the new look of fresh paint or a remodeled bedroom.
- ❖ **Mend.** Earn a new wardrobe by fixing an old one.



**There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity  
under the heavens...a time to plant and a time to uproot...  
a time to tear down and a time to build...a time to tear  
and a time to mend...  
-King Solomon**

# Organize

You see them each day – those clutter spots that extract a sigh and sense of futility. Now is your opportunity to conquer and put your life in order.

- ❖ **Photos** and **files**, digital or not are more enjoyable and user-friendly once put in order.
- ❖ The same goes for **drawers** and **closets**. Just imagine how proud you will feel when they are done!
- ❖ How about your **playlist**, **cookbook**, **e-mails** and **apps**? Talk about an accomplishment!
- ❖ Ah, the **attic**, **basement**, or **garage**. Enough said.



**When your environment is clean you feel  
happy, motivated, and healthy.**

**–Lailah Gifty Akita**





## Grow Your Brain

Ah, your dreams and goals seem so far away, you wonder if they will ever come to pass. And then, voila! A stay-at-home order gives you more time and a chance to reflect.

What have you always wanted to accomplish? How can you use your brain to your best advantage instead of wasting these days?

- ❖ What is it you want to learn? **Earn your degree** at a comparatively lower priced and convenient online school. Part- or full-time classes, often accelerated to complete a semester in six – eight weeks, offer degrees from associates to doctorates.
- ❖ Is it Rachel Ray or Gordon Ramsey you wish to emulate? **Cooking classes** abound on the internet. Give [Instructables](#) a try.
- ❖ Learn to play an **instrument**. Free, easy-to-find beginner classes wait for you on YouTube. Type in your browser the name of your instrument followed by lessons YouTube. For example, *violin lessons YouTube* brings up 3+ pages of video lessons and other online options.
- ❖ Whether you are interested in drawing, car repair, basketball, cartwheels, or photography, the same directions apply. Head to the school of the internet and discover your **new talents and skills**. (Um, probably stay away from the circus acts. If you are a minor, have a parent or guardian's permission.)



- ❖ **Write!** Positive journals such as a **gratitude journal** carry your thoughts from troubles to beauty. Start that **memoir!** Your story is worth reading. Steinbeck, Dickens, and Seuss have nothing on you! Maybe you are about to write the next great **novel** or **children's book**. Theater fans await new extraordinary **plays**. Plenty of free online writing classes exist. Find one that meets your needs. Try [study.com](https://www.study.com) for noncredit or priced for credit classes.
- ❖ Add to your friendships by meeting a stranger to **talk about what you have in common**. No awkward silences. Type your favorite topic in search followed by forum. Eager people are out there discussing all kinds of things! Choose a positive group and a positive subject.
- ❖ **Book Clubs:** Reading more or want to? Form a club or use [this site](#) for a chance to discuss your favorite reads. Nearly every conceivable topic and book choice is available.





# Online Therapy

You may be doing fine emotionally. I hope so. It is my belief that socializing is a key to mental and emotional wellness. That is why this book exists and is free. I hope you will pass it on.

Separation from friends and family wears on us after awhile. Lack of physical touch does too. This coronavirus feels scary, and your finances may be tight. It is understandable if you are struggling with despondency or signs of depression. Please reach out for help.

Of utmost importance is saving your life. If you are feeling suicidal, call 1-800-273-TALK. You will be transferred to a person who will listen and help you decide what to do next.

If you are suicidal with a plan and intent, call your emergency number (911 in the US) or go to the nearest emergency room. Help and hope are yours!

**Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. –Jesus  
Matthew 11:28-29**

If you have a therapist already who is willing to video chat or talk to you over the phone, stay with this caretaker who has history with you. If not, perhaps online therapy will meet your need for support.

Before seeking online therapy, what type of connection do you prefer? Depending on the online therapy service, there are video conferencing, live chat, phone calls, e-mail, texting, and messaging including audio messaging available.

Have in mind what you can reasonably afford. You are paying the therapist plus contracting with the company that supports them. Some online therapy is offered free to new clients for a trial period.

Most insurances cover at least some mental healthcare. Prices range from \$40-\$99 per week, usually paid monthly. One online therapy group charges \$1.50- \$3.00 per minute. Another only meets with you for fifteen minutes per session and charges \$150 per hour. Most others have sessions running 30-60 minutes.

A wide variety of services accompany these prices. Some offer 24-hour support while others limit correspondence. Live sessions may cost \$30 - \$50 more depending on the contract. Memberships, annual subscriptions, and group therapy sessions usually cost less per individual.

The online therapy review site I like for its detailed descriptions is found at this link. [Online Therapy Reviews](#)



3

# Family Ties



**W**ith more time to slow down and be intentional about relationships, family walks and talks, entertainment, and appreciation for each other can take on another dimension.

A woman once said she could not wait for her children to go back to school in the fall. I did not get it. I had three years to mentally and administratively prepare for homeschooling my children and had developed a different perspective. Still, I would not want homeschooling thrust on me without warning. Many parents during this crisis are no doubt wishing for school to return to normality.

Perhaps some families are liking homeschool who did not believe they would. The quantity of time together may have come as a pleasant surprise. Then too, parents who are used to leaving for work each day are home with each other 24/7. Hopefully, bonding tightens these family groups.





## Redeem the time

Opportunity to show your children and spouse how deep is your love does not come around often enough with everyone in separate parts of town. Seize the day!

Use this time to talk to each other. If you have questions for family members, avoid interrogating them. Ask one or two pertinent questions and save the rest. Perhaps you would rather share what you are thinking. Ask for time from your family. Wait until they are free to fully listen.

Follow through on ideas from earlier chapters, however, make them a family affair. Hide and Seek, scavenger hunt, board and card games, video games, or a sheet-and-blanket tent in the living room are each a road into your children's hearts.

Small or grown, all they want is time with a patient, involved, listening, non-critical and accepting You.



Redeem the time with your children by inviting them to cook with you, read to you, or create mud pies. Make cookies; go for a walk. The activity is not important, your purpose is to discover your child.

While playing or working together, ask only a few questions, and word them so a yes or no answer will not suffice. For example, instead of *do you like cookies?* Ask, *what is your favorite part about making cookies with me?* Follow up with your answer to the same question. *I like making cookies with you because...*

Teach them to appreciate nature. Better yet, allow them to teach you. If you are in the lights of a city, drive to a country spot to admire billions of stars. Amidst the oohs and ahs, listen to your child or teenager. Ask what impresses them the most and why.

Plant trees on your property or fruit trees on your elderly neighbor's property. Grow a kitchen garden. Hunt for bugs. All the while, encourage your son or daughter to talk. Listen well.



4

# Choose Spiritual Health

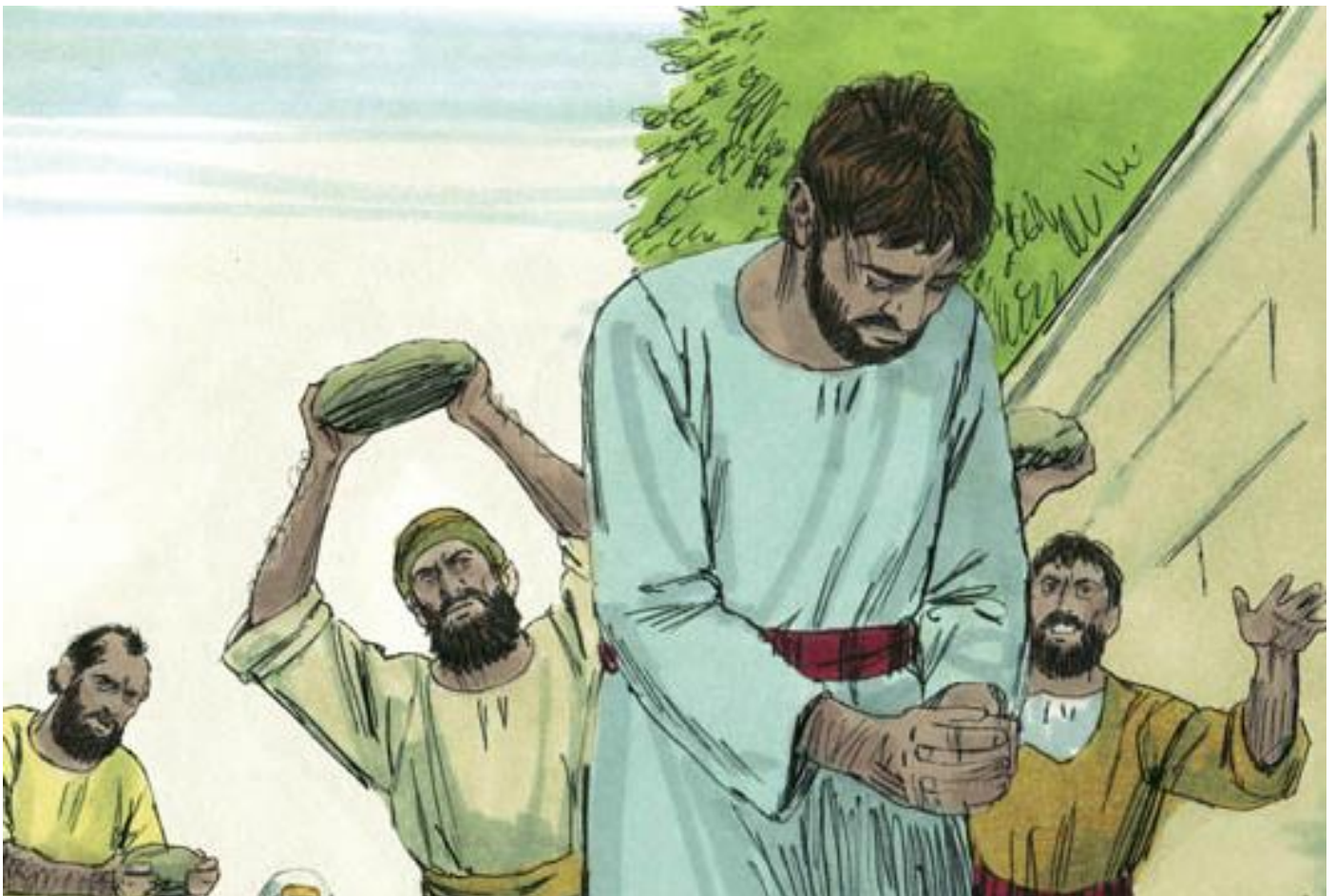


In current times of isolation and danger, one might wonder if there is any hope. The short answer is a resounding YES.

As one who can personally relate to the issues of depression and suicide, addiction, and abuse, I have found every promise by God to be realistic and relevant during my darkest hours.

But how do we know God is good?

Some of the people whose stories feature in the Old Testament are not-so-great humans. The Bible gives accounts of crime, abuse, murder, and slavery. It can seem strange and difficult to understand God's purpose.



In one such example, we see King David who led his country well and honored God with his worship. This same King David abused his power to murder an innocent man and steal his wife. It is tempting to get lost in the whys and perhaps question the nature of God.

The Bible doesn't hide from the messiness of real life. Looking past the surface, we learn that these accounts overflow with evidence of God's unrelenting love. He is faithful even when people fail. In each record of human terribleness, we see God pulling out all the stops to chase evil out and bring light in.

The overall theme of the Bible is threefold: God created people without badness; people sinned (did wrong to hurt God and others) and became separated from God; God sent his Son Jesus to provide a way to return to God as his children. God's mercy reverberates throughout God's Word.

Just as King David had the freedom to choose how to be, we do also. We are free to choose whether to look beyond the surface of the Bible or not. We are free to trust God's process of salvation through Jesus or not.



Galatians 5: 22,23 is a description of who God is. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control..."

God is always good.

It is unwise to look to people's actions or to the suffering in the world and make a judgment about God and His Son, Jesus. This coronavirus is an unlovely, unwanted human tragedy. Since God does not change, we know from the Bible that He is glad to embrace us when we come to Him.





## Do Not Fear

We are free to trust God through the coronavirus crisis or not, too. Has worry ever protected anyone? Sure, no one wants to flirt with potential sickness. Among other issues, today's global panic seems closely related to a fear of death.

Isaiah 8:11-12 was written by a man of God at a time his nation was falling apart. He wrote: The LORD has given me a strong warning not to think like everyone else does. He said, “Don’t call everything a conspiracy, like they do, and don’t live in dread of what frightens them.”

Over 2700 years later, this is one of many examples of the Bible's relevancy. It speaks to us because God never changes, and neither does human nature.

It is helpful on tough days to remember that this is not all there is of your story. It is not the end.

Ancient Biblical prophets knew their home was not earth. They looked forward to a heavenly place and suffered persecution for it. When God sent his Son to live here for a time, Jesus was targeted partly for saying he would return to heaven from where he came.

His torturous death on a cross was one he not only accepted but chose for our sake. It was when Jesus rose to life again that death was defeated once and for all! There is no necessary fear of dying for people who believe on him as their Savior from sin.





## Church at Home

Your church may have online services. For other church services, check these two links. [NOEFC](#) and [Max Lucado](#).

The following options are available and free to the public. Go to <https://join.freeconferencecall.com/nancyvirdenhope> or call 605-313-5981 access code 286081#.

- ❖ This Bible study meets the needs and questions of beginners. It is participatory, which is rather rare in online Bible Studies. Hosted by me, this exploration of the New Testament allows for Q and A. Thursdays 1-2 pm EST



## Stay At Home and Thrive

- ❖ I am also hosting two public prayer groups. Sundays 6-7 pm EST, we pray mostly for the spiritual and health concerns of the world. Personal prayers welcome.
- ❖ Tuesdays 6:30- 7:45 pm EST start with a brief study. The evening has a strong focus on worship and prayer for our cities, neighborhoods, families, schools, healthcare workers, government leaders, and other coronavirus concerns. Worship music is included.

Sit with your children and spouse to read the Bible, beginning with the life of Jesus. The book of John is a good place to start. The [NIV \(New International version\) dramatized audio Bible](#) is available free at [BibleGateway.com](http://BibleGateway.com).

Pray together to Jesus for your region and neighborhood. Ask God to reveal his wisdom as you read or listen to God's Holy Word.

Talk as a family to Jesus asking him to enter your hearts, your home, and your future. The whole reason God sent his Son to earth was to reinstate your relationships with God, the Father. This is where spiritual health begins.



## *AlwaysTheFight.com*

is an excellent source of encouragement regarding mental and spiritual health. I invite you to enjoy the blog, refer to resource pages, and comment.

### Resource pages include:

- what to do/say if a loved one is fighting depression or anxiety
- what to do if you are depressed or anxious
- the truth about abuse
- addiction recovery

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