



HOPE

in

THIS ARTICLE IS BASED ON REMARKS
SHARED AT A BYU LAW TOWN HALL
MEETING ON OCTOBER 27, 2020.

HARDSHIP

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
CHRISTINA CHUNG

Waiting upon the Lord

By Justin Collings, Associate Dean for Research
and Academic Affairs and Professor of Law, BYU Law

John Milton was both blind and bereaved when he wrote this sonnet of despair checked by hope:

*When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent*

*To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
“Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?”
I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent*

*That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need
Either man’s work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o’er Land and Ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.”¹*

◆◆◆

Masks might
mark an
opportunity to

LOOK DEEPLY

into others' eyes—
the windows,
someone said,
to the soul.

◆◆◆

“They also serve who only stand and wait.” Waiting, we have learned this year, can be agonizingly, exquisitely, excruciatingly hard. Many of us have cried, like the young prophet in a prairie dungeon, “How long, O Lord, how long?”²

But that, I submit, is the wrong question. The question is not *whether* we must wait, or *how long*, or *why*. The question is *how*. My message today is that rather than simply waiting for a vaccine or for the pandemic to end, we might use this strange season to learn to wait upon the Lord.

I learned about waiting upon the Lord from my friend Mark Sargeant. In October 2016, Mark was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis—Lou Gehrig’s disease, or ALS. That diagnosis was a death sentence. Mark knew that ALS would gradually rob him of his capacity to move and eventually of his ability to breathe. He didn’t know how long that process would take, but he knew that ALS was a curse without a cure. When I learned of Mark’s diagnosis, I rushed over to his house. But before I could fumble through all I wanted to say, Mark interrupted me. “I love the plan of salvation!” he roared. “I love the gospel of Jesus Christ! I have had a great life! And I’m not done yet!”

No indeed. Mark spent the next three years waiting upon the Lord. He served valiantly as a mission prep teacher, inspiring several young people to serve who hadn’t really planned on it. He loved racing little children around in his motorized wheelchair or raising them up and down on his special stairwell elevator. Later on, he tirelessly ministered to his neighbors at an assisted living center for veterans in Payson, Utah. He constantly checked in on his fellow veterans and warmed their lives with a flash of his indelible, invincible smile.

Mark died on December 29, 2019, just weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived on American shores. As we wait through this interminable ordeal, I want to be more like Mark. I want to wait upon the Lord. I believe we can do that by following the counsel of Sister Michelle D. Craig from the October 2020 general conference. As you might recall, Sister Craig urged us to see one another deeply and to respond to each other’s needs. She taught:

*As with all gifts the Father so willingly offers, seeing deeply requires us to ask Him—and then act. Ask to see others as He does—as His true sons and daughters with infinite and divine potential. Then act by loving, serving, and affirming their worth and potential as prompted.*³

I believe we can do this. Perhaps we can even make a virtue of necessity. Masks might mark an opportunity to look deeply into others’ eyes—the windows, someone said, to the soul. Zoom might offer a precious chance to hear unmuffled voices and see unobstructed smiles. Surely, we can best wait upon the Lord as we find ways to wait upon and serve one another. Great blessings await us if we do.

When I spoke at my friend Mark’s funeral, I closed with these verses from Isaiah:

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? . . .

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. . . .

*[And] they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*⁴

My prayer is that we will not only mask up but mount up. That we will not simply wait for a vaccine but wait upon our victorious, conquering Lord. That we will lift one another with His invincible strength and soar together on His eagle wings.

NOTES

- 1 John Milton, Sonnet 19, “When I Consider How My Light Is Spent” (1673), [poetryfoundation.org/poems/44750/sonnet-19-when-i-consider-how-my-light-is-spent](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44750/sonnet-19-when-i-consider-how-my-light-is-spent).
- 2 See Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–3.
- 3 Michelle D. Craig, “Eyes to See,” *Ensign*, November 2020; emphasis in original.
- 4 Isaiah 40:28–29, 31.

Glowing in the Dark

By Melissa Jo (MJ) Townsend, 3L, BYU Law

When I was little, my sister and I shared a bedroom. Our closet's top shelf housed our abandoned toys, including a Furby—one of those creepy, owl-lemur things with big eyes and funny ears. The Furby had a low battery, or perhaps the thing was just possessed, and would therefore repeat “I'm Furby” at random times throughout the day and night.

I remember waking up one night, troubled. It was early enough that I knew I should try to fall back asleep, and so I tried. But as I was closing my eyes and laying my head back down, “I'm Furby” called out to me from our dark closet's top shelf.

That moment, silly as it sounds, was pivotal for me, for it marked the beginning of (1) my fear of the dark and (2) my obsession with glow-in-the-dark stuff.

After that incident, the Furby mysteriously disappeared from our home, and, better yet, my sister and I got glow-in-the-dark stars for our bedroom ceiling. Together we built our personal constellation, one that we could look to for help and for hope whenever we needed it.

Since then, I have continued to gather all sorts of glow-in-the-dark stuff. Most recently, I even managed to convince the *BYU Journal of Public Law* to print its annual swag in glow-in-the-dark ink! There is just something magical to me about having something that, even when the lights are off or the sun is down, will still shed some light for me.

My favorite glow-in-the-dark stuff is truly out of this world. It comes usually once a summer and turns the coastline near my childhood home in California red by day and fluorescent blue by night. It is the annual red tide—the result of pesticides and other pollutants making their way into the water and triggering explosive growth in the micropopulations in the water. Inside each of these microscopic critters, there is a light-emitting chemical that triggers when the microorganism is disturbed. As a result, every move that a crashing wave or meandering fish makes will be mirrored and traced in perfect light by the microworld around it.

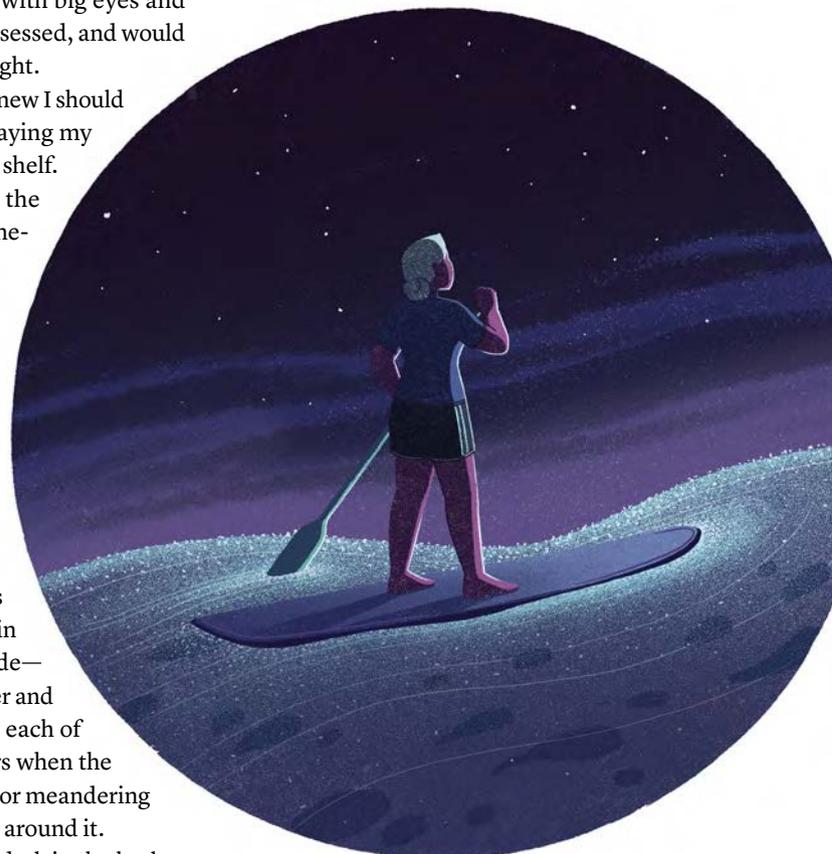
While visiting my parents this summer, I went paddleboarding after dark in the harbor by my house during this year's red tide. Though I don't like dark water, I paddled out anyway with hopes to witness the beauty of the night, and that experience turned out to be one of the most spiritual and exhilarating of my life. In my journal that evening, I wrote:

My time on the water was so beautiful. . . . With every dip of the paddle, the water lit it up—“turning on,” in a sense, and changing to a deep aqua blue that absolutely radiated against the black water. With every movement, I could see the little fish swimming around, each leaving a trail of glowing turquoise behind it. I felt like I was in the movie Avatar—just glowing and beautiful and vibrant and . . . almost too amazing to actually be real, and yet it was. Light and color and beauty literally swimming all around me and somehow seeing fit to include me in its magical dance.

That night on the water combined with the years of joy and safety I have felt wearing my glow-in-the-dark shirts under my glow-in-the-dark stars with my glow-in-the-dark nail polish to convince me that beauty *can* exist in the dark. In fact, I am now of the opinion that some kinds of beautiful can *only* exist in the dark.

I am also of the opinion that the students and faculty at BYU Law are one kind of beautiful.

As your classmate, I have observed, celebrated with, learned from, prayed for, and cried with you. All along the way, I have enjoyed and basked in the light you have so relentlessly given to your causes and friends and families—despite the darkness. In this historic time, you glow in the dark. And as someone who occasionally lives in and is still afraid of the dark, I just wanted you to know that your light has meant something to me.



Succeeding Through Overcoming

By Shannon Grandy, '11, Assistant Dean of Career Development, BYU Law

Elder Richard G. Scott taught:

I know that each one of you faces overwhelming challenges. Sometimes they are so concentrated, so unrelenting, that you may feel they are beyond your capacity to control.

Don't face the world alone. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

... It was intended that life be a challenge, not so that you would fail, but that you might succeed through overcoming.¹

"Succeed through overcoming" sounds like one definition of *resilience*. Here are a few more:

- ♦ Resilience is the belief and understanding that disruptions are opportunities and that opportunities are created rather than handed out.
- ♦ Resilience is embracing the charge to act and not be acted upon.
- ♦ Resilience is having the flexibility and confidence to move forward even when the ground beneath you is shifting. The sooner you can acknowledge that the rules have changed and find a way to move past the unfairness of those changes, the sooner you can pivot. You can adapt yourself and your behaviors to create opportunities.

In watching others "succeed through overcoming," I am sometimes tempted to believe that resilience must come more naturally to others than it does to me. But with Heavenly Father's help, it is available to all of us.

One bit of wisdom that has guided and comforted me is the adage "Sometimes the only way *to* is *through*." Some of the most important things I have learned about myself have come because of experiences I have lived through. I started law school unsure of my purpose, with imposter syndrome, with surprisingly little interest in the law, and with plenty of anxiety and fear. I have since learned that I can

- ♦ make it through law school finals (and more than one round of them!)
- ♦ write a 30-page paper
- ♦ pass two bar exams
- ♦ find a job after graduation
- ♦ take a deposition
- ♦ get a good result for a client
- ♦ be a parent
- ♦ go through a divorce
- ♦ work as an assistant dean at BYU Law

I have learned that the girl who was so nervous on the first day of law school is capable beyond her own estimation.

My hope for you is that you start to see yourself in that light earlier in your life and legal career than I did in mine. I assure you that, as you push yourself toward the edge of your capacity, you will often discover that you are more capable than you imagined.

My good friend Deanna fortifies my faith and speaks boldly about things like

resilience, hope, confidence, and growth. This summer, when I was considering whether to apply for my current position and was weighed down by the effects of the pandemic and my own limitations, she sent me this text message:

I understand the fear of failure. I think you can't forget to factor in the regret you might feel for playing small. [The new job] might take your time, but doesn't your job already take a lot of time? I think the fear of failure doesn't serve you, especially as you can see direct ways in which the Lord has opened doors to help you find a safe and happy life. He does not set us up to fail. It doesn't serve Him when we play small. You are magnificent. You reflect His light when you succeed, especially when you have to take those scary steps into the darkness and wait for the light to show the next step. He has had you and your girls so close and has not missed a breath. Have faith that there is room for you to grow! Your confidence will grow as you keep tackling new challenges.

Everyone needs a Deanna in their lives.

If you need to be reminded that you are capable and that good things are in store for you, rely on my assurance that that is the case. Let me help hold the light while you find your way. You are capable beyond your estimation.

NOTE

¹ Richard G. Scott, "Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, May 1989.



Seeing the Lord's Hand Through Our Trials

By Gary Buckway, IT Manager, BYU Law

After finishing a great first semester at BYU, I flew home for the holidays. Two days before I was to go back to school, my parents, who were self-employed, told me that their business wasn't doing well and that they would not have the means to continue to support me at BYU.

I didn't know what I was going to do, but I had a round-trip ticket to Utah, so I got on the airplane and flew back. I got a short-term loan and found a job—the last one left on the job board. With the help of a lot of people, I made it through school that year.

When I got home that summer, I repaid the \$300 loan that I had taken out for tuition and went to work with my father, who was a commercial drapery installer. His business was picking up, and we traveled to Washington, DC, together to install drapes at a college there.

Partway through the job, my father sat down and told me that something was the matter with him and he needed me to finish without him. I was nervous, but I was determined to do the best I could. I finished the job, and we drove home. My father immediately went into the hospital, and we found out that he had had a heart attack while we were in DC.

My father was in the hospital for 40 days. When he came out, the doctors told us that he was totally disabled. I was supposed to be heading out on a mission, but the stake president suggested that I hold off on my mission for a time and, instead, stay home to support my family. So, at 18 years old, I sought employment to support our family. Ward members helped me out again. I found a job, and for a year I worked and handed over the check to my folks and supported my family with a little bit of help from the Church.

Little by little, things got better. My dad's health improved, and we put the system into place for him to get disability. After a time, I went back to the stake president to discuss a mission. He told me that he knew I was ready and that he had already sent my papers in.

I was called to the Iceland mission. The mission did not exist the year before, when I had originally planned to go. In fact, my companion and I were the first missionaries to go to Iceland, and we worked with the mission president and his family to open up that area to missionary work.

My ward in Dayton, Ohio, supported me on my mission, which was an unexpected blessing. In addition, after about 18 months in the mission field, I learned that the company I had worked for prior to my mission had not paid me enough. I had been receiving \$3 an hour, from which we paid our tithes, but I was supposed to have been getting paid \$4.50 an hour. I received notice that they were going to send me a check for one year of wages at \$1.50 an hour. With that check, I was able to finish paying for my mission and have some money left over to go back to school. The windows of heaven truly opened for us at that time.

From these and other life experiences, I have identified three things we can turn to when we are down. One is our patriarchal blessings. Because of my patriarchal blessing, I knew I was going to go on a mission. I didn't know when it would happen, but I knew I would go. Second, there are others ready and willing to help. People stepped in to help me when I went back to BYU not knowing what I was going to do to pay for school after my first semester. Ward members and others helped me find a job when I needed to provide for my family and then supported me on my mission. Third, each of us is a child of God, and He wants us to succeed. He wants the very best for us, and He has put specific trials in each of our lives to help us do better. Remembering these things will help take us through the present and into the future.

Choosing Joy

By Maureen Holman, Administrative Assistant, Howard W. Hunter Law Library, BYU Law

In the October 2020 general conference, Elder Jeremy R. Jaggi shared an experience that his family had when his brother passed away from cancer. He said, "The year after he died, we felt like a dark cloud overshadowed us. We sought refuge in studying our scriptures, praying with more fervency, and attending the temple more frequently."¹ Elder Jaggi talked about studying *Come, Follow Me* and coming across the counsel in James 1:2 to "count it all joy when ye fall into many afflictions."²

The family decided that 2020 was going to be their year of joy. However, as Elder Jaggi noted, 2020 hasn't always been a year of joy, and it hasn't turned out the way they thought it would. But James 1:3–4 teaches: "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Elder Jaggi made the point "that having patience is the key to letting . . . trials work for our good."³

Becoming more resilient and having hope in the face of adversity is not something that comes naturally. It must be developed over time. I have been reflecting on some of the things that have strengthened my resilience and hope.

Something that has helped me is to follow the example of others. I was blessed with a mother who I describe as an eternal optimist. Even though she suffered many physical challenges, she chose to live her life with joy and to look for the good in any situation. What a blessing that was for me growing up.

The pandemic has brought many challenges to our work in the library this year. We have had to solve many problems, such as where to find plexiglass, how to safely serve our students and faculty, how to adjust work schedules for students in quarantine, how to sanitize study spaces, and more. It has been very stressful at times. In addition, many of our library employees have also faced personal challenges, including cancer diagnoses and other serious health issues, surgeries, loss of loved ones, and

◆ ◆ ◆
Each of us is a
CHILD OF GOD,
and He wants
us to succeed.
◆ ◆ ◆

evacuation due to wildfires. Through it all, they continue to work, often in person, to ensure that we can provide the best service possible. They move forward one day at a time with courage and optimism. I am surrounded by resilient people.

Another thing that helps me face my challenges is to trust in God and have the courage to act. As a teenager I was taught that through His Atonement, Jesus Christ could make up the difference for our weaknesses if we gave our best effort. When I was in high school, I was given the opportunity to be a leader, which was very scary to me. I felt inadequate and unprepared. But I chose to experiment upon the words I had been taught and trust that God would inspire, guide, and strengthen me and make me more than I was. It worked!

I felt His strengthening power and was able to be successful. That experience strengthened my testimony and gave me courage to take on the next challenge. I knew that I could trust Heavenly Father to walk by my side.

I have also learned that I have control over how I face a situation. As a young mother, I heard a quote by Martha Washington:

*I am still determined to be cheerful and to be happy in whatever situation I may be, for I have also learnt from experience that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends upon our dispositions, and not upon our circumstances.*⁴

I put that quote on my fridge, and it became my mantra. I read it every day as I cooked,

cleaned, and cared for my family. It reminded me that my attitude was my choice and that I could make the best out of every moment if I wanted to.

It is my testimony that we can “count it all joy” even when we “fall into many afflictions.”

NOTES

- 1 Jeremy R. Jaggi, “Let Patience Have Her Perfect Work, and Count It All Joy!” *Ensign*, November 2020.
- 2 Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:2.
- 3 Jaggi, “Let Patience Have Her Perfect Work.”
- 4 Martha Washington, letter to Mercy Otis Warren, December 26, 1789, New York, in “Worthy Partner”: *The Papers of Martha Washington*, comp. Joseph E. Fields (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 224; spelling modernized.

Building Community in Challenging Times

By Ruben Felix, 3L, BYU Law

This semester has been unique. The effects of the pandemic have not gone away but have compounded. Things have become even harder and more challenging for many of us.

I have witnessed firsthand some of the burdens my classmates are carrying: loss of family members and other heavy family concerns, mental health issues, significant financial challenges, and trying to figure out how they fit into the community, both at BYU and in Utah. Add to that the taxing academic pressures associated with law school and now a pandemic. Many of these burdens are rarely seen under normal circumstances; they are even more hidden with the move to remote learning and limited in-person interaction.

In a time when we are all struggling to keep our heads above water, it is easy to focus on ourselves and our individual needs. Our time and other resources are precious. The law school environment is one where students typically seek to gain a competitive advantage; it is an environment based on scarcity, where individuals take more than they give.

Although we might believe that this semester has robbed us of the opportunity to

obtain a legal education in a traditional setting, this semester is offering us the opportunity to obtain a more fundamental type of education. This pandemic has allowed us to see a collective challenge—one we face with often-inadequate efforts in times of apparent tranquility—and is inviting us to come up with a collective solution.

The truth is that if something affects some of us, it affects all of us; leadership and discipleship are manifest in fighting the ills we face as communities, not just as individuals. This is a lesson that we can build our careers and our lives around. I believe this experience will significantly shape who we will be as lawyers, judges, prosecutors, and legislators or in any other career path in the legal field.

My invitation in this challenging time is simple: it is to give. Identify one or two people you have not talked to or seen much of this semester and reach out to them. Ask them how they are doing. Establish a connection. We might have to get creative. Do what you can to bear their burdens with them and empower them—academically, emotionally, or spiritually. Change their experience. And if you are in need of help, please provide an opportunity for one of us to help.

I believe that every challenge in life is an invitation to change and improve. In the words of Victor Frankl, “When we are no longer able to change a situation . . . we are challenged to change ourselves.”¹

Crises provide valuable testing ground to measure who we are as individuals, communities, and societies. They invite us to look inward, identify underlying weaknesses, and leverage our collective efforts to learn, grow, and improve together. The question is, will we allow this pandemic to teach us about the power of community, or will we continue on our own way? Let’s find ways to share our time, gifts, and talents for the benefit of our community.

When I think of this law school and the students who have come here, I have hope. I have seen your brilliance and your work ethic. I have enjoyed your sense of humor. I have seen and experienced the relationships that have been forged. I am the beneficiary of friends, professors, and administrators who have lifted me up when I was down and put me back together when I fell apart.

I know that we will step up to this challenge and come together as a stronger, tighter-knit community and show our resilience during these trying times. I know that we will not lose any of the right career opportunities by choosing to do the right things but that the right opportunities will come as a consequence of doing the right things.

NOTE

- 1 Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 112.

God of the Breakthrough

By Bryan Hamblin, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, BYU Law

Three thoughts have stuck with me during this unusual time. Over two decades ago, I stumbled upon the poetry of Nikki Giovanni as a friend and I were killing time before a movie at Barnes & Noble. I pulled her book off the shelf and fell in love with her voice. She has a delightful poem called “Alone” that has come to my mind more than once during the pandemic.

*i can be
alone by myself
i was
lonely alone
now i'm lonely
with you
something is wrong
there are flies
everywhere
i go¹*

Sometimes I look around and joke to myself, “Something is wrong; there are flies everywhere I go.” But mostly I notice that “I was lonely alone [and] now I’m lonely with you.” There is a bit of a paradox to this pandemic where we are all feeling lonely together.

For example, this morning as I left for work, my 13-year-old daughter was in tears. She does not enjoy online school. You probably can’t relate to that. Her first-semester choir grade did not come together for her like she was hoping.

I started by telling her some of the things I tell law students. I asked her, “At this point, have you done all that you can do? Is there anything left with your choir grade that you can control?”

She said, “I’ve done all I can do. There’s nothing else.”

“That’s great!” I replied. “Now we can figure out the next steps. Even if all we do is adjust how we organize your homework for next semester.”

She said, “You don’t understand, Dad! If I get a bad grade in choir, I could get kicked out of student government, and that’s the only class that hasn’t been ruined this semester!”

I said, “Okay. Well, do you remember last month when we were talking about cognitive distortions? What you’re doing right now is called catastrophizing.” Friends, let me tell you, that was not the right “dad thing” to say. She was not in a place where she wanted me to fix things. So I gave her a hug and said we would do something fun that night. We would take care of it together.

Everyone is feeling the weight of this year—students, faculty, staff, families, strangers, everyone. That is my first message: I feel very deeply that we are all in this together.

This year reminds me of 2008, when I graduated from law school. The Great Recession rocked the legal industry. I had friends who got jobs and were then laid off and friends who struggled to find jobs. It was a very stressful year for me and was filled with uncertainty.

I wanted to go back into higher education and had two job interviews lined up. The day before the first one, I got a phone call that said there was a statewide hiring freeze and they



had to put everything on hold. For nine months I was trying to figure out plan B and C and D as I worked odd jobs: I did research and made phone calls for a solo practitioner, I was a long-term substitute teacher for AP history at Bountiful High School, my wife and I volunteered at the gym daycare so we could get free memberships, and more.

Here is the weird part. It was stressful, but I would not trade that year for anything. It gave me the opportunity to reassess and reset. My wife and I talked a lot about what we wanted in life and set new goals. I was able to get back in shape. I read more books for fun than I had for years. It turned out to be a very healthy and productive time. So this is my second message: unexpected opportunities and blessings come in hard times, even if it is just an opportunity to deepen our empathy.

Finally, there is a wonderful moment in 2 Samuel 5:19–20. David had just been crowned king of Israel, and the Philistines were gathered against him. I don’t know about you, but I imagine that would feel fairly overwhelming!

And David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim.

Baal-peraz means “God of the breakthrough.” Sometimes it might take a while, like water breaching rock, but I do know that the breakthrough will come. And that is my third reminder: We are not alone. God is with us, and He is God of the breakthrough. [cm](#)

NOTE

- 1 Nikki Giovanni, “Alone,” in *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni, 1968–1998* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007), 96.