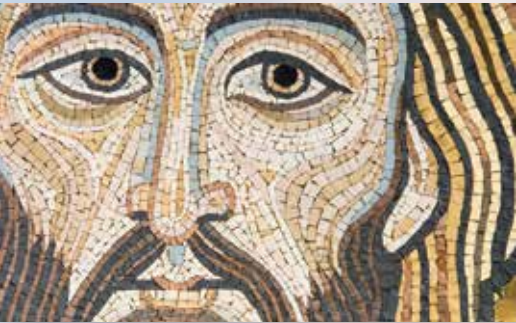


# LAWYER ALERT

Stopping Medical Injustice

## What Would JESUS Do?



During dinner with 2 Jewish friends, one happens to casually mention to the other, “What if we’re wrong [about Jesus]? There was no response; it was a quiet and slightly awkward moment for a few seconds. I should have spoken up, but I held my tongue. This is what I wanted to say.

First, let’s throw away the labels of who Jesus was. Instead, let’s focus on the life that Jesus lived. When you study Jesus’s life, there’s only one conclusion: Jesus was a radical. Radically different, yes, but that alone would not be completely accurate. If only two words could be chosen to describe Jesus’s life they would be **RADICAL MERCY**.

Jesus did not come to judge others. Rather, Jesus lived to take care of the poor, disabled and weak and his compassion and love focused on those who needed it the most, namely, criminals, tax collectors and prostitutes—the outcasts that society despised. Jesus knew that material possessions meant nothing and instead, he lived a life devoted to serving those most in need.

Jesus returned violence and hatred with love, compassion and mercy. Jesus’s mercy was so radical and bizarre that it seemed un-human. Even in the final moments of his life, Jesus displayed radical mercy. The final words out of Jesus’s mouth were, “Forgive them father, they know not what they do.”

If you study Jesus’s life and try to emulate his lifestyle, you would live a life of unimaginable riches. For those who have attempted to live a Christ-like life, their lives have focused on service to the poor, sick and disabled.

History is full of examples of those who attempted to emulate Jesus’s life of service and compassion. Mother Teresa took care of the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, India—not to convert them to Christianity—but because she was emulating the life of Jesus.

Just for a moment, let’s throw away the labels (e.g., messiah, prophet, fraud) and try to imagine how Jesus would live if he was by our side right now. Why? Because if we disregard the labels, we can focus on a way of life that can transform our lives. And that, in my view, is a special gift for all of us.

This is how I believe Jesus would live today.

### The Disabled

Jesus would celebrate the uniqueness of the disabled. No one gets to determine the worth of those with disabilities—that comes from God alone. When asked why a man was blind since birth, Jesus responded that it is “so the works of God can be seen.” (Reading from John).

All people are children of God. Persons with mental disabilities, such as Down Syndrome and cerebral palsy, are compassionate and loving and their hearts are as full as they come. The disabled have unique gifts that others don’t have. For outsiders, it is hard to comprehend the problems faced by the disabled and as a result, they are often misunderstood.

*“You are exactly what God had in mind when he made you.”*

**Father Gregory Boyle**

Our worth is not determined by what others say about us. Similar to the disabled, Jesus’s worth was not determined by the opinions of others. Our worth comes from God.

*(continued on page 2)*



*Father Scott hiking outside of Jerusalem.*

## The Poor

Jesus was from a refugee family. Jesus told his disciples, “I will not leave you orphans.” Jesus goes to be with the poor—he doesn’t send someone else in his place. You can’t send someone else to be with the poor. Sending a check is not enough. Jesus says, “I am asking you to go to the poor.”

The poor connect us with God. The poor don’t just remind us of God, they have the presence of Christ in a substantial way. If you want to be close to God, you should be with the poor. The poor help us love God better.

*“Whatever you did for the least of my brethren, you did for me.”*

**Reading from Matthew**

Jesus made himself a servant of all. We have to get our hands dirty—helping the poor must be personal, e.g., spending time at a homeless shelter. When we face God, we will need a personal letter of recommendation from a poor person.

## Listen to Your Heart

Jesus says that we are in him and he is in us. Most of the commandments don’t come from Moses—they come from the little voice inside of us. This little voice will guide you—this is the voice of divine guidance. You are always free to ignore the voice—it sometimes tells us things we don’t want to hear.

Give the master key of life to God. We let God into parts of our life, but deny access to other parts. This requires surrendering to the will of God and placing our trust in God.

*“The little voice inside you is like having divine GPS in each of us.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

In every decision, we should ask, “God, what do you think I should do?” There is one rule of thumb: Do the next right thing. Not the easy thing, but the next right thing. Maybe it’s making a call to someone that you know you should really call. If we listen to the voice inside of us, you will know how to do the next right thing.

## Joy is an Inside Job

The top regret of the dying is that they didn’t allow themselves to be happier. Let’s not make that mistake. Choice is a component of happiness--no one makes us

mad. We are in charge of our emotions and our emotions are our responsibility.

On his deathbed, a dying man wrote his obituary: “In lieu of flowers, go out and make people laugh.” If you want to have a happy life, sharing and generosity create happiness.

None of us live without regrets—we are not perfect. But we can turn the page and write a new chapter.

## Setting the Bar Too Low

When we comply with the 10 commandments, we are setting the bar real low. We should be aiming so high that it would be impossible to be that good every day. Jesus wants us to reach for a high standard, even if we fail a lot.

*“We should be living our lives for an audience of one and God is the audience.”*

**Matthew Kelly**

God gives us an opportunity to serve every day. Jesus gave a simple commandment: “To love one another as I love you.” (Reading from John). This is an extreme commandment because we are called upon to love those who are against us.

## Your Unique Destiny

Our call from God is not just to be nice people. We are called to be saints—that is the potential we are called for. God has a specific mission for each of us. Mark Twain said that there are two most important days of your life: the day you are born and the day you find out why. You answer God’s call by going one step in the direction of what you are called to do.

We resist God’s plan for us, even Jesus wanted to avoid his crucifixion. Be open to the Lord’s disruption in your life. The path the Lord wants for you is so much better.

*“No one would be here on Earth without a calling from God.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

Jesus did not reveal a big plan—he just took the first step and then took the next step. What are you called to do by God? Can you name the moment when God called you? You do not need to be 100% ready for your call from God, just willing.

## Time Spent in Prayer

What God wants most from us is quality time

with us. Attending church is an hour that God has given us for our growth and no one can take that from us. Our desire to praise God is, in itself, a gift. Jesus’s prayer was, “God, use me—use me however you want.”

Listen in silence to God. Be alone and let God talk to you. There can be no prayer without time, just a minute. In silence, God asks us, “What do you want me to do for you?”

*“Prayer is our best way of speaking with God. God dares us to have a constant conversation with him.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

Spending time in prayer is time that God has given to us for our growth and no one can take that from us. How much time are you willing to give to your soul because that is what prayer does.

Are we praying only for our own needs? We are told to forgive one another. Are we praying for that? We should pray for forgiveness and mercy.

## Perseverance and Struggle

There is nothing we can go through that Jesus did not experience. There is no one to blame for hardship and struggle. This is so the works of God can be revealed through struggle. The works of God will be visible through us.

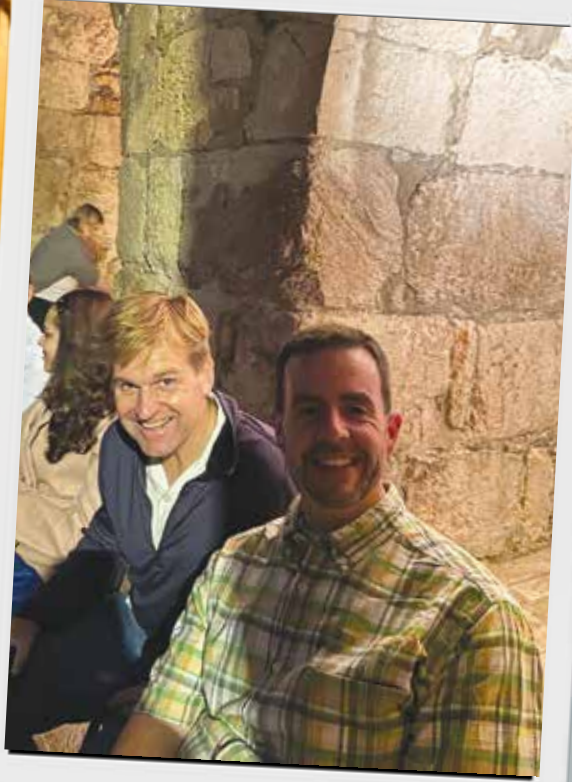
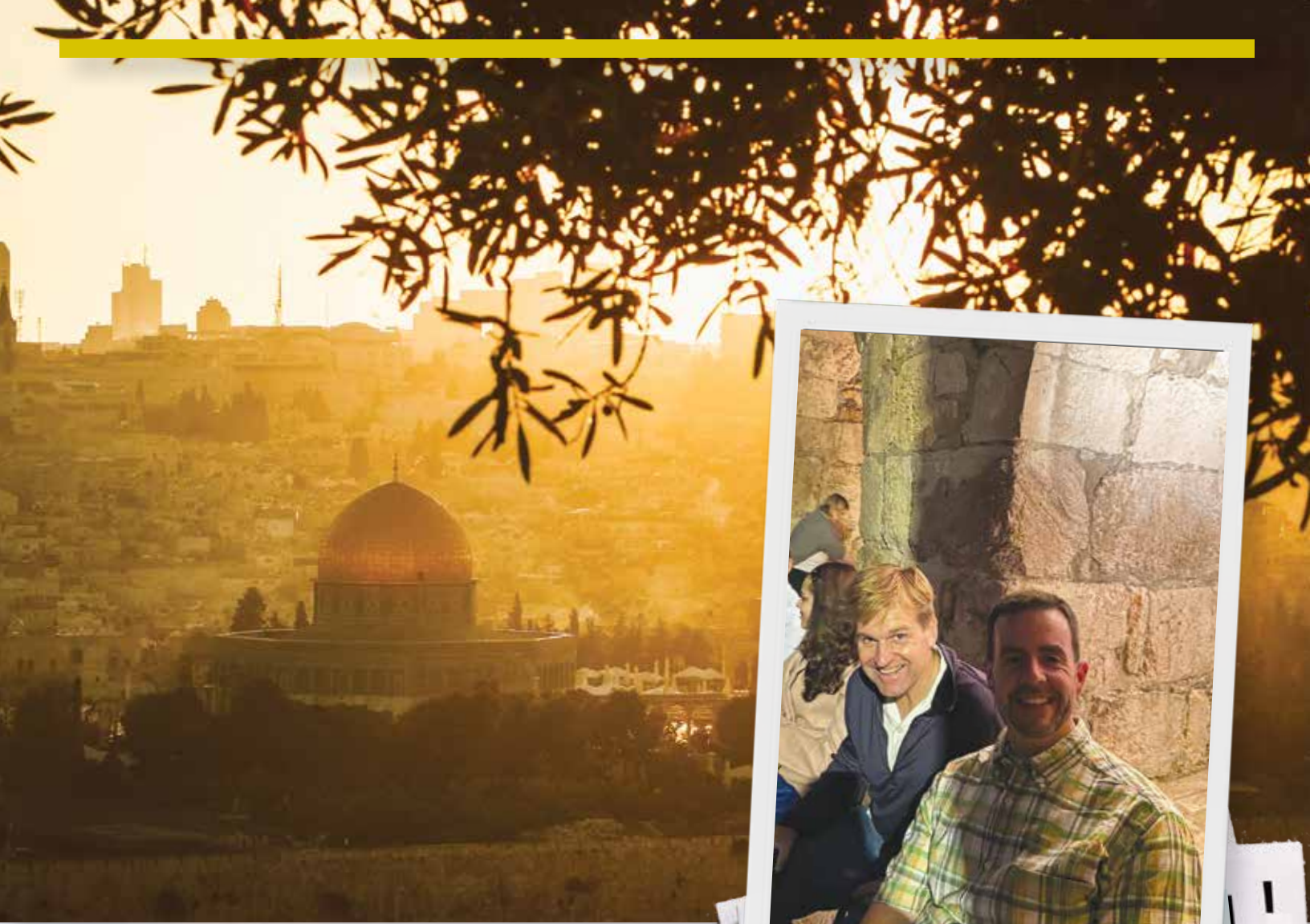
Life has struggle, even Jesus was not spared this experience. We have to believe that difficult times are temporary and if we hold on, the future will be bright. Jesus can’t take away the challenges, but he can be with us through them. We have to be a people of hope. We have to persevere in hardships and turmoil.

*“There is no cross that is not followed by a resurrection.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

We will never go through something that God can’t handle. There may be many things in life that we cannot handle, but there is nothing that God can’t handle. We have to make the decision to turn our lives over to God. The will of God will never take you where the grace of God will not sustain you.

There is nothing worth doing that does not involve struggle. Find a way to offer it up—pay it forward—as a gift.



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## Do Not Be Afraid

Jesus's disciples left their homes with no money or possessions and were told that God would take care of their needs. When we are tired, God will support us. If we trust in God, he will provide for our needs.

*"You are the light of the world.  
Your light must shine upon others."*

### Reading from Matthew

All growth happens outside of your comfort zone. Being uncomfortable is a sure sign that you are growing.

## Radical Forgiveness

There is no limit to God's forgiveness. Peter had a lot of sins. Peter cut off the ear of a guard with a sword (even Jesus's disciples could be violent), he couldn't stay awake for one hour when Jesus needed him and he denied Jesus 3x on the day of Jesus's crucifixion. No one else sinned as

much as Peter, but no one loved Jesus more.

We have a clear picture of how far Jesus would go to show love. Peter sinned frequently, but he also loved all the time. Love cancels all sins. We are not defined by our sinfulness, but by our love. We are supposed to forgive everyone.

Jesus's willingness to forgive gave us a formula for life. As Jesus was dying on the cross, he said, "Father forgive them. They know not what they do." Jesus taught us, "sometimes you just need to love the hell out of people." Father Scott VanderDerveer. Love cancels a multitude of sins.



*Father Scott, floating in the salty waters of the Dead Sea.*

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*The real value of a pilgrimage is that you get to explore your faith and belief in God. You face your doubts and questions and spend time with God in prayer.*

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## Mercy and Grace

Everyone who is incarcerated is a child of God. Persons on Death Row are children of God. God's grace is greater than our flaws and character defects.

*"God's mercy is more powerful than any sin you could have committed."*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

"Mercy is when God doesn't give us what we deserve. Grace is when God gives us something we don't deserve."

## God's Love for You

You don't have to spend another moment worrying about how to get God to love you. God's love forces us to be better than we want to be. God's mission is to save us, like Jesus went out of his way to save a tax collector (Reading from Luke). "The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost." (Reading from Luke).

*"When Jesus thought of you, he thought you were someone worth dying for."*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

Our life is the only thing we can give to God. We may become a living sacrifice to God by the life we live. Focus on sculpting our lives into a worthy masterpiece.

## The Journey of Life

What matters is the preciousness of the journey. If you focus on the destination, you miss the journey. The journey of life is the gift. A 106-year old put it aptly, "The secret is to live just one moment at a time."

Forget the past and focus on what you can do now to change things. What are you being called to do in this moment? Are you prepared for what God is about to do, right here and now?

*"That will always be our choice. What to do in the moment."*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

The destination is not where we need to focus. God walks with us on the journey of life. God is here with us, right now and in this moment, we have everything we need.

## Give Your Life as a Gift to the World

Whoever is willing to share and give away their life, will find it. We are supposed to be giving away our lives. A giver helps people who can't pay them back.

*"In God's eyes, you are the most precious thing in the world."*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

Jesus is our model—not to be served, but to serve. Jesus pours himself out and shows us the way of a disciple. Let us offer our life to God. What do you want your death to mean for the world? How can your life be a gift for the people you love?

## Nurture Relationships

The thing that matters most is our relationship. Our relationship with others determines the quality of our lives. The most common deathbed regrets are: (1) "I wish I didn't spend so much time working." (2) I wish I was able to express my feelings better with those I love." (3) "I wish I stayed in better touch with others."

*"Shower the people you love with love."*

**James Taylor**

What are the important relationships in your life? What are your top 10 relationships? Is there a beloved aunt or Godchild that you haven't spent time with? Can you invest time in that relationship?

## Share Your Faith

The courage to lead is a willingness to take risks for the good of an unknown future. What has been the impact of God in your life? Have the courage to share it. Become an expert in the things God has done for you in your life. Share your experiences with God in a humble way that is not preachy.

Jesus said to his disciples, "What I say to you in the darkness, you have to say in the light." You are meant to proclaim God's word wherever you go. "What I say to you, proclaim on the rooftops. Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my father." (Reading from Matthew). We are always moving in a direction in our spiritual life—toward God or toward fear.

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*“May we have the courage to proclaim the gospel by the witness of our lives.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

Evangelization is the willingness to engage others in your faith experience. This could be something as simple as discussing your faith experience. It is challenging to talk about faith in mixed company. We should be effusive in our faith and reticent about our opinions.

## Being Receptive to the Call of God

**Be Open:** You need to have openness that the next thing that happens to you could be a call from God. If God is calling us and we ignore that call, that would be devastating.

If the thief on the cross gives Jesus the power over his life, how much more can we?

**Do the Work:** Doing God’s work is labor. When God’s call comes, it won’t be obvious and it will be difficult.

*“The tears on your face are the cost of your dreams.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

There will be a cost and it will be hard. There is no shortcut. There is no way to follow Jesus without self-discipline and sacrifice. You are the only one who can do this.

**Ignore the Imposter Syndrome:** You feel that you’re not worthy or qualified. Simon Peter said to Jesus, “I’m not worthy. I’m sinful.” We are indeed worthy because God made us so. It’s not what we think about ourselves that matters. It’s what God thinks about us that matters.

*“If you ever doubt how God feels about you, just look at the cross. That’s all you have to know.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

The imposter syndrome will stop us from doing what God wants. You are God’s only plan for spreading the Gospel.

## Confronting Temptation

Hiding from our weaknesses will not work—we have to face them. Name the temptation that you are facing and ask, “What is getting in the way of facing this?” You can’t manage a temptation unless you focus on what matters. If you are

tempted by overeating, put a note on the refrigerator that reads, “Nothing tastes as good as being fit feels.” Remember what matters most.

## Be Humble

We don’t need to think less of ourselves. We just need to think of ourselves less. Use all of the opportunities in life to recognize how imperfect we are.

*“The one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

**Reading from Luke**

## Difficult Conversations

Having hard conversations is never easy, but when they are rooted in love, you can’t mess it up.

## Let Go of Resentment

It takes effort to hold onto resentment—you hold onto the hurt. When you hold onto resentment, something dies within you. You should pray for those who have wronged you.

## The Meaning of Death

No one wants to die. We think of death as the worst thing, but it is the only entrance to our true home. The number one fear is the fear of dying, but that is the only way to eternal life. We are afraid of the very thing that is the cornerstone of our faith.

Heaven is like a king who hosts a magnificent banquet and the joy is extreme. Paul said that, “For me, death is gain. I long to depart this world and be with Christ.” Teresa of Avila said, “Heaven is being in the presence of God.”

*“Heaven is being in God’s presence and knowing that you are.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

God did not bring us this far to leave us. Those who die go to be with God.

We are all going to die someday. God has never promised to save us from dying. God did not save Jesus from dying. Jesus did not come to save us from dying, he came to save us from death.

Don’t worry about death. God made us imperishable. When a 12 year old girl died, Jesus said to her mother, “Don’t be afraid. Just have faith.” (Reading from Mark). In death, life has changed, not

ended. At death, you will see that God’s wonderful promises are true.

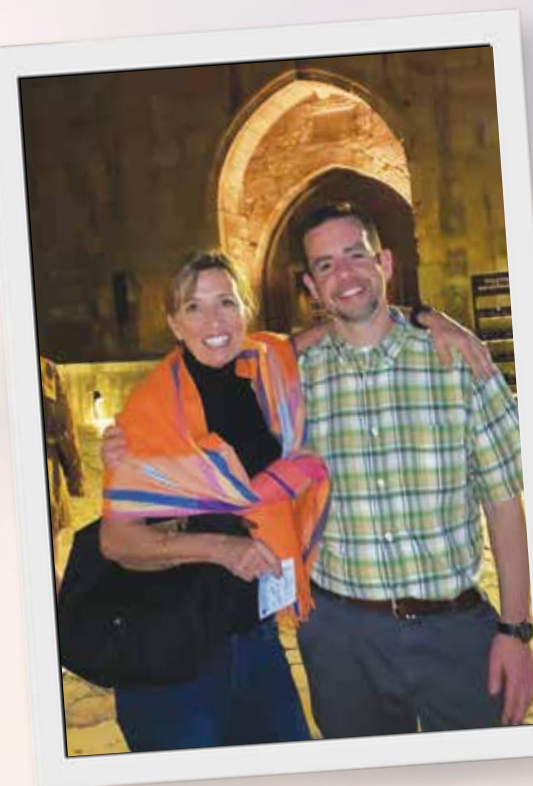
## Doing Your Best

We are always asked by God to do the very best we can do. What good does it do to dwell on the past? Making mistakes is the price of being human. God has chosen a way to help us learn by making mistakes.

*“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I can’t change. Give me the courage to change the things I can. And give me wisdom to know the difference.”*

**The Serenity Prayer**

Life is not like a train—it is more like a sailboat, where the wind continually changes and you have to adjust the route.



*Lisa and Father Scott. Spending seven days in Israel provided a spiritual journey unlike any Lisa and I have ever taken.*

## Compassion for the Week

When you show compassion to a stranger in need, you are living the message of Jesus. We should love our neighbor even when they are not like us at all. Who have we walked by and not helped?

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*“Anything worth doing is going to involve struggle.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

God asks us to help everyone regardless of who they are. “The Lord hears the cry of the poor. Blessed be the poor.” (Psalm 34).

## Confronting Doubt

Do you ever wonder if it is all true? Many people have doubt, no matter how much they believe—that’s part of faith. Even after all that they had seen Jesus do, the apostles had doubt. (Reading from Matthew). Faith is believing in things that you cannot see.

We want to believe that we have perfect faith, but like “Doubting Thomas” (Reading from John), there is so much we don’t understand. Thomas spent 3 years living with Jesus and witnessed many miracles, but he still had difficulty believing.

*“For faith to be faith, there must be some risk involved. Doubts are a beautiful part of faith.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

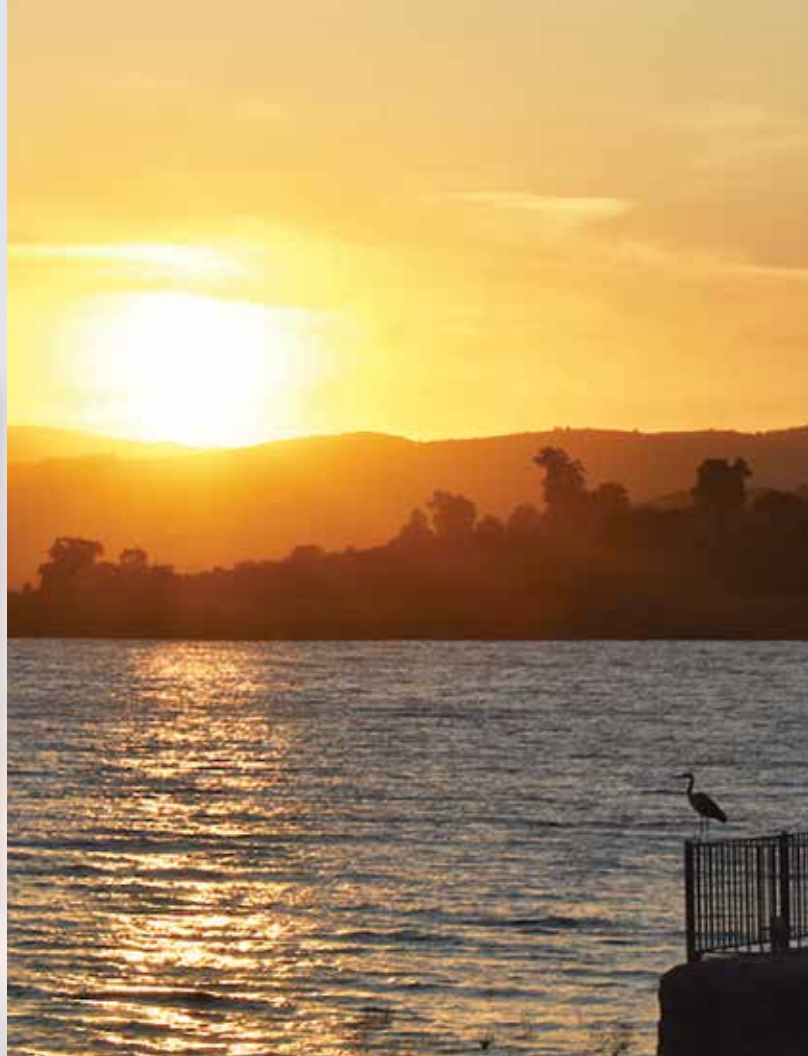
When you have doubt, fix your heart on the amazing things God has done for you. Stay focused on what God has done for you.

## Measuring Backwards

When you are face down on the floor, the best thing you can do is look back and see how far you’ve come.

## Forgive Yourself

Jesus has already died for the sins of the world, so you don’t have to have shame for your sins. If God could have made you any



*(above) Sunset on the Sea of Galilee in Israel.*

better, he would have. Each of us is more than the worst things we’ve done. Focusing on your sins is not the best way to measure how strong your faith is.

When asked to condemn an adulterer, Jesus immediately forgives her (Reading from Luke). In a few days, Jesus will forgive his own murder. God can forgive any sin. You are forbidden to feel guilty for your sins because God has already forgiven them. There is a distinction between who we are and what we’ve done.

*“God made you and God doesn’t make junk.”*

**Father Scott VanDerveer**

The question is what do we do with that forgiveness? What are we supposed to do with our shame? All of us are imperfect with character defects. Our flaws bring about God’s glory.

## Hope for the Future

“God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world.” John 3:16. Jesus transformed our future from one of fear, to one of hope.

Thank you, Father Scott VanDerveer, for being the source of this content. You have inspired and transformed lives and deepened our faith and trust in God. I am grateful to call you my friend.

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