



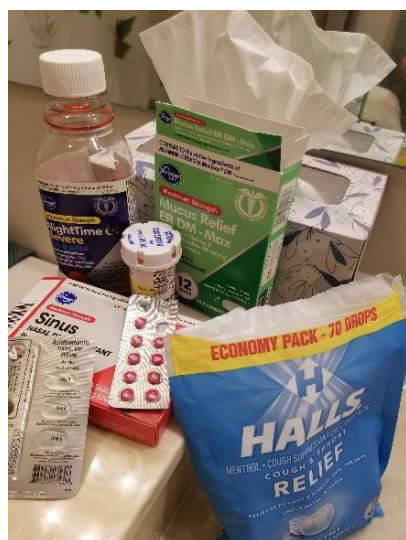
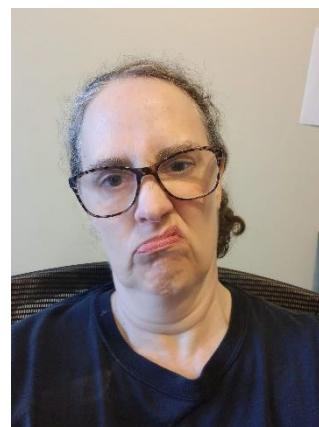
September 20, 2023
A Note from Beth Palmer

Dear Friends,

In early August I got some upper respiratory crud that has hung on FOREVER — it's been six weeks now, and it's still not totally gone!

Here's me at my best. (Ha.)

Dry throat for a week, then the chest cough, deep and croaky, for a couple weeks. Next was the worst. head. cold. ever. The phlegm, my God, the phlegm! Then it plugged up my ears, and my hearing got even worse than usual.



I took aaaaaall the over-the-counter meds: Mucinex, Sudafed, Claritin, Nyquil, Flonase, throat lozenges. I was groggy and light-headed and got hooked on Dr Pepper again. Other *super fun* side effects followed.

After the first three weeks of this nonsense and four negative Covid tests, my doctor started me on one prescription, then five days later added another.

I was lonely, bored, and miserable, with bouts of aggravation and apathy. I threw myself a pathetic pity party.

I found this great meme of a little stick figure hollering up at the sky, "IT'S A GOOD DAY TO YELL AT GOD!" but I can't share it here because it has cuss words in it. Good thing God can handle my anger. Plus, God didn't give me this bug.

The cool thing was that **God kept dropping reminders about the gifts of being sick.**

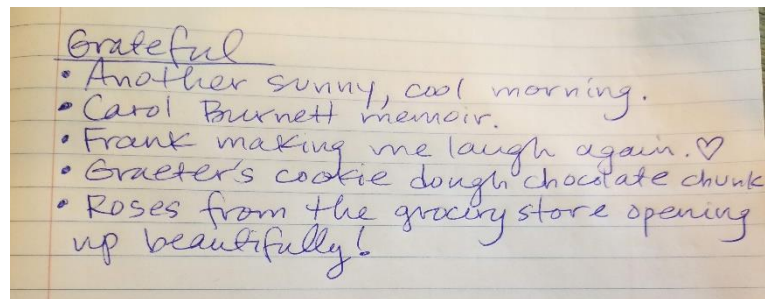
About 72% of the time **I was fairly patient!** I just kept plodding along, day after day, taking my medicine, trusting that I would eventually feel better. Patience does not come naturally to me, so it must be a God thing.

I was also rather gentle with myself! This is not like me. I'm usually hard on myself. It takes work to cut myself any slack.

But when I'm sick? I'm actually pretty good at resting, working when I can and stopping when I'm too tired or can't think anymore. I didn't give myself too much grief for not getting all my work done (though I don't go completely unpunished, let's be honest). I'm good at knowing when to reschedule a meeting or skip something. That's a God gift, and being gentle with myself is something I'd like to carry over from illness to wellness.

And God kept nudging me to use the emotional, psychological, and spiritual tools that I know help keep me grounded and centered and kind.

Every morning I write a list of at least five things I'm grateful for. It's a way of intentionally helping me keep a positive attitude, because otherwise I tend to just dwell on what's wrong with myself and the world. This practice has saved me!



Therapy taught me about **cognitive distortions**, and I can eventually talk myself out of my Catastrophizing and Future Telling ("I'm going to be sick for the rest of my life!!") and Shoulding ("I should have taken better care of myself." "I should have done more to strengthen my immune system." Couldn't possibly be that I just picked up some random germs!)

Some days I do **Breath Prayer** or **Centering Prayer**, when I focus on sitting in God's presence, letting go of my thoughts, breathing in God's no-matter-what love for me, receiving God's reminder that I am already enough even when I'm not accomplishing much.

Many days it's **Welcoming Prayer**, where I welcome whatever I'm feeling, turn toward it, let it wash over and through me, and gradually let it go, so the feelings don't get stuck inside me and fester. I've been getting LOTS of practice at welcoming and feeling and releasing irritability, anger, loneliness, fear, and sadness.

Other days it's deep body **stretching**, returning to my yoga skills and PT exercises, where I tune in to my body and give her all sorts of love and kindness.

I also keep praying, "HELP, please." "Help me get better, God. Bring healing to my body and spirit. Remind me that I'm not alone. Help me stay hopeful."



These are all skills I've learned in classes, workshops, books, yoga studios, and counseling sessions — intentionally seeking out sources of education and growth, most of them through church and other faith-based organizations — and they're critical to my ability to get through hard things without being awful to myself or everyone around me.

We have a great prayer class coming up at church, if you'd like to develop your own prayer practice. **Prayer and Meditation Boot Camp** will meet on Monday evenings in person at church starting October 2, with

Ginny Fisher and her team. It's an outstanding class! (Details and signup link on this page: <https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/learning-opportunities/>)

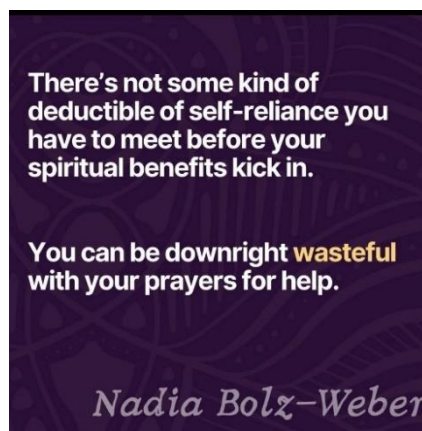
Yes, I still snapped at my husband Frank, ate my feelings too many times, and skipped exercise lots of days because I just couldn't make myself care. All the tools and practices and nudges from God don't exempt me from being human!

And even though all these gifts from God helped a ton, there was something even more important. Lutheran pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber says it well: **"You don't actually have to show up to your healing with all your own supplies."**

It's so freeing to remember that I don't have to use up all my own tools and do all the things I know to do *before* I go to God for help.

God certainly was in on my learning and growth, helping me find and use all those practices, for sure, and it's important that I do my part. But **God's also just always in the business of helping us heal in all the ways.** It's basically God's job.

Here's another of Nadia's gems: **"There's not some kind of deductible of self-reliance you have to meet before your spiritual benefits kick in. You can be downright wasteful with your prayers for help."** (She's on Instagram: @sarcasticlutheran.)



So here's to being intentional about seeking out our own learning and growth, absolutely.

But maybe today it's more important for me to hear as I write this that it's not all up to me, that we can be wasteful with our prayers, recklessly dependent on the God who is always on our side and in our corner, always seeking our healing and restoration, always working to bring us to wholeness.

Blessings on your journey, friends, with prayers that this bug doesn't catch you.

Beth

Here's me when I was feeling much better earlier in the summer 😊



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