

bread for the journey

The Fabric of Hope

A little bit of hope is better than no hope at all.

Ogden Nash would disagree. He once said, “Hope is dope.” I disagree with Ogden Nash. Hope is not dope. It is the essential ingredient in a life that is intentional about moving forward.

Sam Schmid was involved in a car crash in Tucson in 2011 that left him with a brain aneurysm, among other life-threatening injuries. His doctors discussed with his family the incredibly sensitive subject of taking him off life support within a week of Christmas Day. On Christmas Eve, Sam Schmid awoke from the coma he was in since the crash more than two months ago. His parents never gave up hope that Sam would regain consciousness and consider it a miracle that he did. Sam has a long way to go before he can say he has returned to “normal,” but thank God, Sam is not what he used to be, though not yet what he will be.

What was the fabric of their hope? What kept hope alive for the Schmidts? What keeps hope alive for anyone who looks forward to a new day instead of downward into the pit of despair?

Of course, it is impossible to tell for everyone what keeps hope alive, but there are at least four different threads that are woven into the fabric of hope. They are: 1) the dream that things could be better; 2) the passion and desire to work toward making things better; 3) the right amount of impatience; and 4) a mustard seed of faith.

1) The dream that things could be better. A dream is not an illusion. There is no future to an illusion. A dream is not a hallucination—not something made up or fabricated out of nothing. A dream is born in the heart of imagination. It is wishful thinking at its best, because there is enough reality to every dream to give it the possibility of coming true. Every dream has a toehold in reality. Pay attention to your sleeping dreams. There is enough stuff in a sleeping dream to make it real and a possibility of coming true. Martin Luther King was not pipe-dreaming when he delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. He tasted freedom for himself. He met with men and women who were once enslaved but now were free. He tasted justice for all. Every recovering addict who dreams about recovery knows at least a few recovering addicts who have gone before him to the promised land of lasting recovery. It takes a shred of reality and clear thinking, to be sure, but it also takes great imagination to move forward. Never lose sight of your dreams. Dreams are worthy threads on which to build hope for a worthy future.

2) The passion and desire to move forward and make things better than they were. Passion is often misunderstood and tends to leave one at the station when before he/she knows it, the train has already pulled out. NFL players running out of the tunnel onto the field before the game are excited and pumped about playing and winning. They are all steamed up, jumping around, high-fiving each other, yelling and getting into one another’s faces. This is not passion. It is perhaps an offshoot of it. But passion is the stuff the players do in preparation and practice the week before the game. It is kind of like what AA says about sobriety. If you want it, you are willing to go to any length and take certain steps. You are willing to make a decision to turn your life and will over to a power greater than yourself. This is the passion and desire to move forward. Passion is head, heart


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and feet. Show me where your feet take you, and I will tell you if you are passionate about recovery. Passion is not passion without the willingness to work for it and the execution of working hard for it.

3) The right amount of impatience. This is the fire in the belly necessary to move forward. This is impatience properly placed. Not impatience with other people, places and things—on time smoke breaks, nurses who answer johnny-on-the-spot, or the impatience you feel while waiting for others to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. When I was on crutches, I wanted my wife to get me a glass of water—right now! This is misplaced impatience and a rude, crude misunderstanding of what it means to wait on others' help. No, the impatience we need is the impatience with self. It is so easy to lie around the house during convalescence, so easy doing nothing, dozing, daydreaming about nothing at all. I needed to get more than a little impatient with myself to get off my duff and do what I could for myself to promote healing. "They" can only do so much for you. We need to partner with the helping people who serve us. They cannot do it without our participation. And our impatience to get well.

4) A mustard seed of faith. Not a lot. Just a little bit can move a mountain, so someone once said. If I did not believe God was

real, I am not sure I could move forward, much less think it is worth moving forward. Believing and having faith that God is alive, that God cares and that God wants this world to be better are important incentives to stay in the game of life and do what I can to make a difference for God's sake. Knowing that God, every so often, drops dribblets of miracles our way and miraculously, albeit infrequently, interrupts the natural flow of tragedy and disaster makes all the difference. Sam Schmid's story is an inspirational case in point. Your story? Stories of recovery allow us to see and know there is a bigger picture or a finished picture in the making. It is a kingdom of peace and justice, joy and lasting recovery for all.

Hope is threadbare without the necessary materials to create a garment that will keep us warm enough and protect us against the onslaught of despair's cold winter night. We need them all to keep hope alive: the dream, the passion, the impatience and the faith to see a world beyond where our seeing eyes can see. 



The Rev. Dr. William Lenters, Chaplain

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is a bi-monthly news and views letter from Rev. Dr. William Lenters, Chaplain at Rosecrance. Bread for the Journey is written on behalf of people who live with addictions. Together, and by God's grace, we will try to make a difference.

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