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Located on Massachusetts and Wisconsin Avenues in our nation's capital, the Washington National Cathedral has been a spiritual home for all faiths in time of national celebration and national sorrow. Presidential prayers services have occurred following a presidential inauguration for FDR, Ronald Reagan, George Bush one and two, and recently with Barak Obama. State funerals have taken place there for Eisenhower, Reagan, and Ford. As the cornerstone was laid in 1907, Theodore Roosevelt ceremonially addressed a crowd of ten thousand. In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached his final Sunday sermon from this pulpit. In 2001, services were held to honor the victims of 9/11. And tucked away in the War Memorial chapel at this famed worship space is a stained glass window honoring four chaplains, Catholic priest, Father John Washington, the Dutch Reformed Rev. Clark Poling, the Jewish Rabbi Alexander Goode, and the Methodist Rev. George Fox, whose bravery would bring together a nation.

These four World War II chaplains were stationed aboard the USS Dorchester, and on February 3, 1943, off the coast of Greenland, a German U-boat attacked the ship. As the ship began to sink, the four chaplains were among the first on deck calming the men and handing out life jackets to their fellow soldiers as they abandoned ship. When the supply of life vests ran out, these brave chaplain gave their own to save the lives of their brethren. Out of 900 sailors, only 200 survived, and the four chaplains perished, going down with the ship. Yet, with their death imminent, witnesses reported that the chaplains were last seen comforted by each other and faith, as they huddled together reciting prayers from their own religious tradition.

Fortunately, most of us will never be put into a situation this dire. Yet, we will be forced to confront various crises in our lives. We will deal with physical pain or maybe the news of a life-threatening disease. We will deal with emotional loss whether by death taking someone dear to us, a relationship abruptly ending, or economic hardships plaguing us. During these challenging times, where will we turn to seek guidance, to find comfort, and to begin the process of healing?

Undoubtedly, like the four chaplains, many of us will turn to our faith tradition such as Christianity or Judaism. Similar to being diagnosed with an illness and taking our prescribed medication, it is a natural course of action to prescribe to faith's therapeutic potential. In the Christian faith tradition, think of the Beatles opening verses of "Let It Be,"

When I find myself in times of trouble, mother Mary comes to me,
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.
And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me,
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

By replacing "mother Mary" with Adonai, Allah, Vishnu or another deity, we too can grasp the power of each of our faith traditions. It guides us when confronting difficult questions like how will we overcome this situation and why is this happening to me.

On April 19, 1999 for many Columbine High School students went about their day as usual without a need or desire to connect with their faith; however, on April 20 when troubled teens killed 12 of their classmates in cold blood, there was a natural reaction to seek clergy to understand why and how this could happen. As New Yorkers and tourists on September 10, 2001 went to work, to the park, and to the World Trade Center faith for many was trivial in their lives. But, as we know on September 11, 2001, New Yorkers, tourists and the world sought rabbis, ministers, priests and imams to help make sense of the destruction left by terrorists. Similarly, when thinking about our personal lives, as crisis comes upon us, what role does faith play in our lives the day before we hear the news compared to day of the tragic moment? Yet, looking to our faith for guidance or answers in our times of crises is easy. However, faith cannot just be a restorative treatment to our problems for faith is not a remedy. It does not prevent the systematic killing at Columbine, the terrorist attacks in New York City, or our personal ills, rather holding onto faith at **all** times, in times of crisis and in times of goodness, offers us much needed support for all moments of our lives.

Holding fast to our faith during significant life decisions is much more difficult than relying on faith strictly during crisis. We see this from in the opening of Genesis 12 where Abram, not Abraham yet, is called by God to:

"Go forth from you land, your birthplace, your father's house, to the land that I will show you."

Abram is confronted with a difficult decision should he remain in comforts of his homeland or trust in this new journey that God will provide for him and

his family. From the text, we see that by heeding God's word, Abram begins his journey to a land of promise. Similarly, in our lives, when we ultimately choose to seek direction from faith not just in times of crisis, but at **all** times, we can find more meaning in our lives. Take for example the following individuals:

Bernard Madoff, a Jew and embarrassment to our people, had an opportunity to seek guidance from his faith before he went down his shameful path. He could have reverted back to his Sunday school days where he learned an ethical value system. He could have recalled the "Golden Rule," from the Jewish sage Hillel, who said, "That which is despicable to you, do not do to your fellow, this is the whole Torah, and the rest is commentary, go and learn it." However, instead of using faith as his motivation, he rejected these teachings for selfish means.

Chaim Salomon is a lesser-known Jew, who lived in America in the late 1700s. Like Madoff, a financier, but he held true to the Jewish teachings instilled in him from his birth. When the American Revolution commenced, Salomon could have profited from the new war. However, he held fast to the Jewish teachings yearning for the realization of liberty for all peoples. Through faith he decided to donate his money to the American militia, which would be instrumental in the American victory and provide us today a country founded on the ideals of freedom and tolerance.

Dr. Martin Luther King Junior could have recognized the differences of race as an acceptable aspect of American culture. However, through his faith education, which preached non-violence and tolerance, he knew that segregation and class distinction was deplorable. By relying on his faith, Dr. King paved the way for an America where race no longer defined the person.

Madoff, Salomon and King each were given the opportunity to seek guidance from faith in all aspects of their lives. Madoff, as we can see, moved away from the ethical principles of his faith tradition. Salomon and King each used their faith as the foundation of their lives, so when a crisis occurred their faith could provide them the impetus to guarantee change. Similarly, while the four chaplains epitomize courage in crisis, it was their faith that provided them the foundation to take immediate action. By embodying their faith, their fellow soldiers survived. As we think about the bravery of the chaplains, of King and of Salomon, when faced with everyday decisions in our lives, how do we respond? How do we embody our faith at all times of our lives so that when faced with crisis we will help others survive?