

# WHAT WE CAN AND CANNOT CONTROL

## AWAKE

We invite you to take part in this Loving-Kindness meditation as preparation for our devotion, **“What We Can and Cannot Control.”**

The theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, paraphrasing the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, wrote what’s been popularized as the “serenity prayer.” Every day, thousands of people in recovery groups offer this prayer in solidarity with each other as they seek health and wholeness. Ponder these wise words that describe how we can best compose ourselves in a time such as this:

***“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”***

As you repeat this prayer, in what ways can you awaken to a depth of serenity that guides you to make differences when you can, and accept limits when you must?

## AWARE

It is human to seek to control when we are threatened or distressed. And yet the overwhelming power of a global pandemic makes us aware that we can get through this crisis by practicing non-control. In order to flatten the curve of the coronavirus, we must do nothing, “shelter in place,” and wait this out.

Daily meditation practices clear our minds, calm our hearts and give us ways to embrace this dilemma with dignity and peace. As you take these moments of silent awareness to discern what can and cannot be controlled, when can you act with love and courage, in big and small ways, and when must you trust a higher power to guide you with the serenity of non-control?



# WHAT WE CAN AND CANNOT CONTROL

## ALIVE

Too often we are not fully alive to the day that God has given us because we are anxious about a future that we cannot see...or control. Jesus asked his anxious followers, *“And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your life span?”* (Matthew 6: 27, NRSV)

In what ways can you mindfully and prayerfully be encouraged to relinquish control of the future? Can you sense the spirit’s aliveness within and around you as you welcome each day with gratitude?

## ABIDE

The Eastern philosophy of Taoism teaches equanimity of spirit by encouraging non-resistance. Peace and strength come by abiding at the lowest possible place in the valley. This principle is called Wu Wei, sometimes known as “the watercourse way.” Water has a habit of cutting a meandering path around obstacles, guided by gravity to a creek or pond bed where it sits, collects itself, and then rises-up with effortless strength. By following a path of non-resistance, water becomes the most irresistible force on earth!

Jesus taught his disciples to assume a similar posture of humility by saying, *“But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you.”* (Luke 14:10, NRSV)

By accepting what we cannot control through non-resistance and humility, we are controlling the most powerful way to respond to a challenge. During these forceful times of laying low, think of the ways that you can abide in low places of quiet acceptance that impart resilience and fortitude.

## ARISE

Arise to a deeper, more resilient life during today’s challenge. We are learning the wisdom God grants us by balancing control with non-control.

- Practice the Christian mindfulness exercise daily.
- Check in with your partner or virtual group.
- Continue to make contributions to your journal.

Write your reflections here

