

# Pestilence



**“For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.”**

**Psalm 91:3-6**

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## Introduction

For those of us unsettled by coronavirus and are self-quarantining at home, those of us whose churches have shut down, and those of us who have been furloughed from our jobs until this plague is under control, this booklet will discuss what the Bible says about plagues and pestilence and what this all means and then focus on the experiences we are now enduring with this “pestilence of biblical proportion”. But first let us be reminded that God is always in control, ever forgiving, and ever merciful. David’s Psalm 91 is a perfect reminder of this:

### Psalm 91

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress:  
my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in

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trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Now this magnificent poem does not mean that the faithful—those who dwell “in the shelter of the Most High”—will not get the pestilence or suffer the other afflictions mentioned. Satan used this Psalm in his temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:5-7), trying to get him to invoke its promise that angels “will bear you up” by throwing himself off from the pinnacle of the Temple. But such an interpretation, Jesus points out, would be to put God to the test, violating Deuteronomy 6:16. But those who trust God as their refuge will be delivered from the evil of the pestilence and from fear of it.

## **Plague And Pestilence Are Not New To This World**

**Perhaps the most famous plague in history is the Black Death of the 14th century, thought by most to have been bubonic plague. Estimates are that more than 20 million people (a third to half of Europe's population) died in the outbreak.**

**In 1346, reports reached Europe of a devastating disease from China that was affecting many parts of Asia. The next year a mysterious disease appeared in Italy. Ships from the Black Sea sailed into Messina with sailors infected with black boils in their armpits and groins. It was the bubonic plague.**

**The disease was so lethal that people were known to go to bed well and die before waking. There were two types of this plague. The first was internal, causing swelling and internal bleeding. This was spread by contact. The second concentrated in the lungs and spread by coughing airborne germs. There was no known prevention or cure.**

**Whole towns were depopulated. The social structure completely broke down.**

**Parents abandoned children; husbands and wives left each other to die. In many cases no one was around to bury the dead, both from fear of contagion and lack of concern. One writer of the time tells of observing 5,000 bodies lying dead in a field.**

**In that age, the Bible was the primary means to measure any natural calamity. The only way to understand what was happening was to believe the world was coming to an end. There seemed no hope for the future.**

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**The bubonic plague has appeared in more recent times as well. The Great Plague of London in 1664-65 resulted in more than 70,000 deaths in a population estimated at 460,000. An outbreak in Canton and Hong Kong in 1894 left 80,000 to 100,000 dead, and within 20 years the disease spread from the southern Chinese ports throughout the whole world, resulting in more than 10 million deaths.**

**The plague came to America from Asia in 1899. Today cases are still reported, and an average of 15 people die each year. The disease originates in rodents and is usually transmitted to people by fleas, although animal bites can also be the means of transmission. It is still a virulent disease. As few as 10 bubonic plague cells can cause a person's death.**

**Perhaps disease transmission from rodents is part of what Revelation 6:8 means by death from "the beasts of the earth." Microbial and viral infection could also be intended.**

## **Why Pestilences Occur**

### **God Is Going To Get Our Attention When He Wants To Get Our Attention**

**When God wants our attention He will not stop. If God wants your attention and makes an attempt to get it but you ignore Him, He will not stop but just keep on “turning the screws” a little bit more and more until He gets it.**

**Can you think of ways God may have been trying to get our attention but which have been ignored by us until now? Now that He has turned the screws pretty tight, do you think coronavirus is finally getting our attention?**

**We will address topics during this series that discuss:**

- **If Romans 8:28 says “all things happen for good to those that love The Lord, for those who are called according to His purpose...”, just what good can come from sickness and death?**
- **Why would God allow Coronavirus?**
- **How is Coronavirus meant to get our attention?**
- **Can Coronavirus change our lives for the Better?**

**But first let us see how God used similar plagues and pestilence to get the attention of those he loved since way back in Old Testament times.**

## **Plagues And Pestilence Are Often Manifestations Of God's Wrath**

**Not only as His punishment but as signs—that is, as symbols—of His eternal anger against sin. This is evident throughout the prophecies of both the Old and New Testaments. For example, the “Song of Moses” in Deuteronomy 32:22-24:**

**For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. And I will heap disasters upon them; I will spend my arrows on them; they shall be wasted with hunger, and devoured by plague and poisonous pestilence.**

**Plagues And Pestilence Are Also A Sign That We Are And Have Been In the End Times**

**As Jesus Himself says in Matthew 24:10-13:**

**Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness.**

**And the Book of Revelation 6:7-8 describes the judgments of the apocalypse in terms of pestilence and plagues:**

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**When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth. Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.**

**But, along with this terrifying judgment of the Law, we also see the Gospel expressed in an Intercessor who stands between us and the plagues.**

**In Numbers 16 :44-48, we have the familiar narrative of God punishing the Israelites in the wilderness for their rebellion by sending them a plague. But then Aaron the High Priest—a type and forerunner of Christ—makes atonement for them by means of the altar of sacrifice, and interposes himself “between the dead and the living”:**

**and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” And they fell on their faces. And Moses said to Aaron, “Take your censer, and put fire on it from off the altar and lay incense on it and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the Lord; the plague has begun.” So Aaron took it as Moses said and ran into the midst of the assembly. And behold, the plague had already begun among the people. And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped.**

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**In 2 Samuel 24, David, who has sinned by numbering the people, is given a choice of God's judgments:**

**But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the Lord, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly." And when David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, "Go and say to David, 'Thus says the Lord, Three things I offer you. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you.'" So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me." Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man."**

**We could conclude from this passage that plagues are "the least evil" of the three and war is the worst, since God has mercy, unlike "pitiless man." The account goes on, with the plague being stopped at the site where the Temple with its sacrifices would be built, as the sin and its punishment is assumed by David and his House; that is to say, by the Son of David in writes in 2 Chronicles 3:3-16,25:**

**So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men. And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, "It is enough;**

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now stay your hand.” And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, “Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father’s house.” . . . And David built there an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel. . . .

Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

David, the House of David, the Temple, and the whole sacrificial system point to Jesus, who heals our plagues as told in Luke 7:21-23

In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

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## **Why Would God Allow Covid-19?**

**“Why would God allow Covid-19?” The whole world seems to be asking this question, a fact that actually gives the biggest part of the answer. More on that shortly.**

**COVID-19, or coronavirus disease 2019, is a respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). The effect of the illness can range from mild to severe. First identified in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, the virus quickly spread to other countries. On March 11, 2020, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization.**

**Only a liar or a true prophet can claim to know God’s reasons for bringing about COVID-19 or any other specific calamity. That’s partly because God’s purpose extends to every individual involved, from the beginning of time to the end of the world. Understanding every possible factor goes far beyond human ability, but God has within His complete knowledge and control every facet of every situation (Romans 8:28–30). The Bible reveals some insights about God’s use of deadly disasters in general, but we must apply relevant Scripture and the principles of faith in order to gain wisdom about any specific disaster.**

**As with any mystery, to solve it we must go from the known to the unknown in our search. So we’ll put question of why God would allow COVID-19 into the context of what we already know from the Bible and from personal experience: we know that life is a gift from the Creator (Isaiah 42:5; Acts 17:25). We know that God alone has the right and power to give life and take it away according to His own wisdom and plans (Job 2:10). We know that life is short and includes some degree of suffering, ending in death and judgment for how we lived our lives—only one life with no “do-overs” (Hebrews 9:27). Short or long, our lifespan and date of death are set and controlled by God (Matthew 10:29). Even the longest human lives are “like a breath; their days are like a fleeting shadow” (Psalm 144:4).**

**Moses described God's sovereignty over life and death, and this could have been written about today's COVID-19 pandemic:**

**“You turn people back to dust, saying, ‘Return to dust, you mortals.’ A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—they are like the new grass of the morning: In the morning it springs up new, but by evening it is dry and withered” (Psalm 90:3–6).**

**So what is God's purpose in allowing COVID-19? Without being too dogmatic, we know that, generally speaking, one of God's purposes in trials is to get the world's attention off themselves and onto Him, their Creator and Savior—which is the biggest part of the answer to the question at hand. “Why would God allow COVID-19?” Millions are suddenly asking that question right now, believers and non-believers alike, which means that God is on their minds. God desires for all people to earnestly seek Him and find Him, discovering that He is actually close to us (Jeremiah 29:13; Acts 17:26–28). God desires us to sense our own weakness and neediness so that we put our trust in Him (2 Corinthians 12:9). God desires people to fear Him with proper reverence and awe (Proverbs 9:10); to love Him more than their own lives (Matthew 10:37; John 12:25); and to show love and gratitude for the Savior by loving and helping fellow humans, especially the suffering (Romans 15:1; James 2:14–17). God desires to shift our focus and affection away from this temporary, troubled world to our eternal, heavenly home (Colossians 3:1–2; Hebrews 12:1–2).**

**Times of trouble are a prime motivation for us to store up treasures in heaven rather than cling to treasures on earth (Matthew 6:19–20; Colossians 3:1–3), and to be good stewards of those blessings God gives us in this life (Luke 16:11; Matthew 25:14–30). God wants us to trust Him absolutely, knowing that our times are in His hand (Psalm 31:15).**

**Ultimately, it is the poor and hurting who seek God, not the rich and comfortable. It is danger and calamity that turn men to their**

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**Savior, not health and wealth (see Mark 2:17). It is suffering that wakes us to our true need. C. S. Lewis put it this way: “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world” (The Problem of Pain, HarperCollins, 1996, p. 91).**

**Life for all people means facing suffering, death, and their eternal destiny. Even if we develop immunity to COVID-19, we can’t escape the fact of trouble in the world. What’s best for us, in any situation, is to seek God: “Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart” (Psalm 119:2).**

## **Why Does God Allow Us To Go Through Trials And Tribulations?**

**One of the most difficult parts of the Christian life is the fact that becoming a disciple of Christ does not make us immune to life's trials and tribulations. Why would a good and loving God allow us to go through such things as the death of a child, disease and injury to ourselves and our loved ones, financial hardships, worry and fear? Surely, if He loved us, He would take all these things away from us. After all, doesn't loving us mean He wants our lives to be easy and comfortable? Well, no, it doesn't. The Bible clearly teaches that God loves those who are His children, and He "works all things together for good" for us (Romans 8:28). So that must mean that the trials and tribulations He allows in our lives are part of the working together of all things for good. Therefore, for the believer, all trials and tribulations must have a divine purpose.**

**As in all things, God's ultimate purpose for us is to grow more and more into the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). This is the goal of the Christian, and everything in life, including the trials and tribulations, is designed to enable us to reach that goal. It is part of the process of sanctification, being set apart for God's purposes and fitted to live for His glory. The way trials accomplish this is explained in 1 Peter 1:6-7: "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which perishes, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The true believer's faith will be made sure by the trials we experience so that we can rest in the knowledge that it is real and will last forever.**

**Trials develop godly character, and that enables us to "rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:3-5). Jesus Christ set the perfect example. "But**

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**God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). These verses reveal aspects of His divine purpose for both Jesus Christ's trials and tribulations and ours. Persevering proves our faith. "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).**

**However, we must be careful never to make excuses for our "trials and tribulations" if they are a result of our own wrongdoing. "By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler" (1 Peter 4:15). God will forgive our sins because the eternal punishment for them has been paid by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. However, we still have to suffer the natural consequences in this life for our sins and bad choices. But God uses even those sufferings to mold and shape us for His purposes and our ultimate good.**

**Trials and tribulations come with both a purpose and a reward. "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. . . . Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:2-4,12).**

**Through all of life's trials and tribulations, we have the victory. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ." Although we are in a spiritual battle, Satan has no authority over the believer in Christ. God has given us His Word to guide us, His Holy Spirit to enable us, and the privilege of coming to Him anywhere, at any time, to pray about anything.**

## **Can Coronavirus Change Your Life for the Better?**

**Many folks may feel that nothing good can come of an insidious virus that has already affected over 4,000,000 people worldwide (and climbing) and caused about 300,000 deaths to date. And yet...**

**We believe—or want to believe—that God takes tragedies and turns them into good. You may already know and quote Romans 8:28 and Jeremiah 29:11 to comfort you during difficult times. These are good verses, with promises of God’s plan to prosper us and redeem our suffering.**

**However, even scripture can feel cliché and unsympathetic when delivered during a crisis.**

**Tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and all sorts of natural disasters occur regularly in our world. They seem like unnecessary horrors, yet God somehow brings good from the devastation they leave behind.**

**Communities rally. Churches share. People seek comfort and find Jesus. And we can look for the hand of God even in the midst of coronavirus.**

### **God Is Always Accomplishing Miracles**

**A worldwide virus is not an unusual way for God to work.**

**It’s quite possible—in fact it’s probable—that God intends to and is already accomplishing miracles in the wake of COVID-19. God values our transformation. Until we are uncomfortable, desperate, and despairing, we don’t often recognize and seek His power.**

**When catastrophes happen, we must consider that God is at work and longing to bring about change in us.**

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**Since healthy change occurs collectively in body, mind, and soul, here are 10 simple ways the COVID-19 could improve your overall health and change your life for better:**

### **1. Renewed (or New) Prayer Life**

**We should all pray for the virus to be contained and eradicated, and for the sick to be healed. We should hold up the grieving to feel comfort and the world's medical staff to endure. We should also pray for hearts to change.**

**During crisis, we lament, request, and intercede pretty easily. But let's not forget to confess our sins or to praise and thank God for who He is and what He does in crisis or not. God is good, He has always been good, and He always does good.**

**Praying from this perspective will change what you expect from God (even in a crisis) and will change how you love and worship Him. (Psalm 16:10-11)**

### **2. A Slower, More Peaceful Pace of Life**

**Does it really take canceled games, closed offices, and online school for us to realize that we are too busy? Let's cherish the opportunity to stay home out of the rat-race. Get more sleep. Read some books.**

**If you can, plan your work around your day instead of your day around your work. Doing simple things you normally don't have time for can will reveal how stressed-out and off-balance your non-virus life is.**

**Prioritize doing things you love and begin enjoying a slower life. (Psalm 15)**

### **3. Increased Family Time**

**Eat your meals together. Watch movies. Play board games. Take advantage of everyone having the same schedule. This may take some adjustment and grace. Our normal family schedules are so**

**chaotic that we are rarely home at the same times except to sleep.**

**Families with small children may feel the added hardship of a quarantine the most because they rely on activities to break up the day. Get creative with your backyard or make a new play-space in your house so your family time can be one of enjoyment rather than stress over germs. (Ephesians 5:19-21)**

#### **4. Greater Empathy and Patience**

**It's easy to panic, blame, or judge during a crisis. A national emergency is inconvenient. Not everyone responds to crisis the same way. Let's all hold our tongues for a moment before we respond to posts, notifications, speeches, and announcements.**

**Empathy dictates that I try to see the world through someone else's perspective.**

**Patience dictates that I control myself so other people can process and respond at their own pace.**

**These two skills are difficult to groom outside of catastrophe. Let's pause and learn them now. (Colossians 3:12-13)**

#### **5. Reduced Carbon Footprint**

**Coronavirus is an invitation to stay out of many stores and public places. Reducing your time in the car, bus, or train reduces pollution everywhere. Reduced travel also creates public spaces that are friendlier, cleaner, and less stressful—not to mention, we're all invited to enjoy more time at home.**

**By staying home because you have to, you might consider practicing the art of conservation. Perhaps a new habit of driving less will carry over into your life after COVID-19. (Genesis 2:15)**

## **6. New Outdoor Habits**

**This is a perfect time to begin a routine of taking walks, running in the park, kayaking, biking, sitting on your patio, or incorporating any another regular outdoor activity. We all have outside settings available to us, but often we are too busy to use them regularly.**

**With a looser schedule, you can begin an outdoor habit that if you maintain it, will produce huge rewards for your emotional and physical health in the future.**

**Being outside also provides a tangible atmosphere of worship and prayer. (Proverbs 3:5-8)**

## **7. Adjusted Financial Priorities**

**Crashing stock markets and vanishing retirement funds create significant anxiety and fear. In the face of economic failure, remaining calm becomes exceedingly difficult.**

**However, our faltering economy gives us each a golden opportunity to examine the source of our security. To help reduce your dependency on money, pay off your debts, minimize your expenditures, and give generously.**

**While financial saving and planning is important, a down-turn in the economy might spotlight the influence that your financial security has over you. (Philippians 4:19)**

## **8. Opportunities to Catch Up**

**Whether it's cleaning closets, scanning photographs, painting a room, or doing household repairs, you probably have a lot of jobs around your house that need your attention. Use this time to catch up on things you need to do but never have time to do.**

**You can probably make a list of 10 projects that don't even require you leaving the house to accomplish them. (Ephesians 5:15-17)**

## **9. Personal Growth**

**During this change of pace that coronavirus is requiring, you can choose to focus on some personal growth areas. Read, study, set up counseling. Taking care of our spiritual and emotional selves often takes a back burner to more demanding tasks.**

**Over the next few weeks, you might have a little extra time in your schedule to work on yourself. Take advantage of the opportunity. If you're growing and changing emotionally and spiritually, everything around you will improve.**

**A positive outlook also reduces obsession over the crises at hand. (2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Corinthians 15:30-34)**

## **10. Redefined Relationships**

**Instead of using technology as a social escape, divide your technology time between work and intentional social connection. A quarantine reminds us how much we need meaningful, physical connection to the people we know and love.**

**Use your social time to FaceTime on the phone (or speak face-to-face in person), rather than engaging in endless hours of surfing social media. Practice intentional interactions for the sole purpose of love and friendliness, and focus on real conversation. (Galatians 5:22-26)**

**We've been offered a window to a slower life, and we should take it. Yes, we have to worry about germs and social contact. We are cognizant of a suffering and fearful world. But right now, the majority of our schedule will probably be spent in adaptations.**

**Why not make necessary adaptations that will benefit our lives long-term while we have cause and motive? These new perspectives and practices can continue long after the coronavirus has died out.**

## **Pestilence Promotes Peace And Love**

**The global coronavirus pandemic and its resultant collateral damage have given us the opportunity to rediscover what we truly love.**

**Too many have buried themselves in careers and chasing dreams. Today, offices are empty – employees are sheltering at home. Too many have worshipped at the altar of sports and music. Today, arenas are empty – no fans cheering, pumping their fists or singing along.**

**Appointments have been canceled; calendars have been cleared. Maybe, for the first time in years, families find themselves home alone. No more pressing obligations. Are we redeeming the time? Have we reinstated family devotions? Are we praying together for those we love, our troubled communities, and our leaders?**

**Since the elderly are especially susceptible to the virus, long-overdue phone calls have been made over the past weeks. Adult children are checking in on aging parents. We are honoring our fathers and mothers again.**

**Though we are practicing social distancing, this is the time for the body of Christ to “dwell together in unity” – to come together under His banner of love. We need to demonstrate that we are united in one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one body, and one Spirit in one hope (Ephesians 4:3-4) – faith with action.**

**Our purpose is to love the Lord and to care for one another. Let's be about the Father's business!**

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## **7 Affirmations to Live By in the COVID-19 Crisis**

### **1. I will not give way to worry, fear, or worst-case scenario thinking.**

It's no mistake that Jesus says to not be afraid more than anything else in all of Scripture. Jesus invites us to trust in our ever-loving and always-watchful God rather than worry. He teaches us in Matthew 6:26-27, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" We can redirect our worry and fear and replace it with trust in the promises of Scripture.

### **2. I will look for the silver lining.**

Psalm 118:24 (NKJV) encourages, "This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." More time at home because of COVID-19 provides us with new opportunities to connect with loved ones and catch up on projects. What about choosing one thing a day that you can do that might not otherwise happen? Possibilities include long walks outside, book reading, home-cooked meals, and benefitting from important conversations. I pray these opportunities will buoy our spirits when we look back upon this difficult time.

### **3. I will feed my spirit a healthy diet.**

Though we cannot control the events spiraling around us, we can control our actions. While we take the necessary precautions, we can also direct where our minds dwell, for this

impacts our spirits. Our spiritual bodies run best when our intake is of the highest quality. Philippians 4:8 instructs, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Listen to inspiring music, spend quiet time in the sunshine in prayer, or watch uplifting programming that can edify your soul.

#### **4. I will remember to give thanks.**

When we seek to magnify what’s praiseworthy in our lives, we will inevitably uncover things to be thankful for. The Bible says that every good and perfect gift is from God (James 1:17). Giving God thanks isn’t simply a natural response to his goodness, it’s one of our most important Christian responsibilities. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 reads, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Jesus Christ.” Giving thanks allows us to keep the blessings that we have at the forefront of our minds. This practice is especially grounding in difficult circumstances.

#### **5. I will give grace to myself and others.**

My family has had some of “those” moments already—moments when we have acted less than our best, resulting in hurt. While there are no doubt silver linings to this time, there are also challenges. We are acclimating to a new normal in a confined environment. As I remember Jesus’ words, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9), I can try to sow a peaceful seed when I might otherwise be offended. As I attempt to show more grace towards others, I can also give it to myself. Jesus knows my brokenness and loves me anyway. I can breathe in his grace,

exhale the times when I fall short, and keep trying my best. Being Christian doesn't require that we're perfect—it means modeling real community, accountability, and forgiveness.

## **6. I will explore how I can help.**

While it can be tempting to fixate upon what's beyond our control right now, it's empowering to explore our agency. 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us, "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline." Amidst overwhelming need, we can look for creative ways to give. Many families recently gave to ER medics in New York City so that they might have supplies through GoFundMe and to our local FLAG chapter. Amidst increasing isolation as we're social distancing, we can phone a friend or loved one and offer support. Amidst heavy hearts, we can spread cheer. For instance, children have been making rainbows, displaying teddy bears, or even designing Easter eggs for the front windows of their residences. They're spreading hope, encouraging fun, and supporting community through these simple hunts! For more ideas to help, see point #4 in this article.

## **7. I will resolve myself to prayer.**

Prayer opens the door to divine intervention. We join hands with each other as the body of Christ when we pray. Jesus reminds us of the power of prayer when we come together (Matthew 18:19) and use his name (John 14:13). It gives us a vehicle to enlist God's protection for those who are working on the frontlines, petition for God's peace for those who are mourning or sick, acknowledge the current suffering and economic hardship, and unleash the full measure of God's redemptive work through our collective voice. Here is one prayer.

*Forgiven Then, Forgiven Now, Forgiven Forevermore*

**Repeatedly, the psalmist attests to our Deliverer. God has the power to rescue us when we feel like we are drowning in circumstances over our head (Psalm 18:16). He can bring us to a spacious place where we experience his delight (Psalm 18:19). By living these affirmations, God can equip us to overcome.**