

So I Finally Got COVID

As happened to many other Americans during the Christmas break, both my wife and I came down with COVID, marking the first time either of us contracted it. (I write this article on Day Nine, and we are on the mend, albeit slowly.)

Both of us have been far sicker at other times in our lives, and compared to how others have suffered over these last two years, our cases appear to be fairly mild. At the same time, this is the longest I have been sick since 2014 (when I made a radical lifestyle change), and there's something about this virus that feels demonic. If you've had it yourself, you probably agree.

Here, then, are some practical thoughts and reflections.

As I write, a close family friend since the 1980s is fighting for his life (he is in his mid-50s, married with children). We are believing for a miracle on his behalf, with limited options remaining for the doctors.

But as I have issued prayer calls on social media, I have read some stirring reports—downright miraculous reports—with people literally raised from their death beds after *months* in the hospital. That's what we pray for on behalf our friend. May the Lord do it again!

Others, sadly, have already left us, including (in just the last week or two) a pastor in his mid-60s, the daughter of an old colleague (she was about 50), and a Christian musician (in his early 40s). The hemorrhaging continues. Have we seen anything like this in our lifetimes?

And having enjoyed such vibrant, personal health for these last seven-plus years, my heart truly breaks for the *many* who suffer long-term, debilitating, painful, draining illnesses. I commend them for their courage, their faith and their

perseverance in the midst of such ongoing trials. May they find relief and healing and mercy! Their faith in the midst of suffering puts many of us to shame.

As for COVID specifically, one of the things that makes this condition so unique is the fear associated with it.

Again, speaking personally, I am one of the least fearful people you will ever meet, living with almost ridiculous optimism and overflowing expectation every day of my life.

Yet on the second night with COVID, after waking up from a nap, for some odd reason, I could not breathe for a split second. Immediately, a flood of thoughts hit my brain: *This is where it starts. This is how it happens. Next thing you'll be in the hospital, fighting for your life. It's going to get very dark very quickly!*

How crazy is that?

In years past, I had bad colds that were *far* worse than this present sickness (in terms of severity of symptoms, not length), let alone some severe flus that were absolutely miserable. Yet no sooner did I come down with an apparently minor case of COVID then this wave of fearful thoughts flooded my mind.

Of course, the thoughts were gone as quickly as they came, and my oxygen levels have remained strong throughout. But it was just another reminder: COVID and fear go hand in hand, and that fear can lead to all kinds of irrational thinking.

On a more practical note, my personal doctor, Mark Stengler, who in October 2020 was given the "Doctor of the Decade" award by the International Association of Top Professionals, wanted me to have ivermectin on hand in case I came down with COVID.

He wrote a prescription for me, but I could not get it filled in North Carolina. That's because Dr. Stengler is a

naturopathic doctor, and by law in our state, pharmacies do not fill prescriptions written by naturopaths. Talk about being behind the times.

As the International Association of Top Professionals noted, "Dr. Stengler's impressive repertoire of roles have included his activities as a medical expert on several television shows as well as his own weekly television show. Dr. Stengler was the host of a PBS educational and fundraising show, *A to Z Guide to Healing Yourself*. He was also the host of the highly successful *Beyond Chemo* documentary. Dr. Stengler also served on a medical advisory committee for the Yale University Complementary Medicine Outcomes Research Project."

Yet he cannot write a simple prescription in North Carolina. Wow.

He then had a traditional medical doctor on his team write me the prescription, but none of the major pharmacies would fill it because it was ivermectin. Instead, I had to go to a compounding pharmacy to get it filled. This is how politicized everything has become.

On another note, since I was too tired to do much of anything for the better part of a week, I watched a lot of football on TV. (It happened to be the time of the year for the college bowl games.)

And that means that I watched a lot of commercials too, including a seemingly endless stream of Pizza Hut commercials, featuring both their specialty pizzas and their decadent desserts.

This, in turn, made me wonder: What on earth are we doing? How can we possibly promote so much unhealthy food? In the words of Dr. Joel Fuhrman, whose nutritional guidelines helped transform my life, we are "digging our own graves with forks and knives."

To be clear, as a lifelong chocoholic until the age of 59, along with being an *extreme* consumer of pizza over those decades, I am not throwing stones or judging others. I know how hard it can be to break the stronghold of food.

But in the midst of the longest sickness I have experienced since 2014, when I'm even more acutely aware of the importance of healthy eating and having a strong immune system, I am struck afresh at the depth of unhealthiness in our decadent culture.

I can assure you that the long-term, wonderful benefits of healthy eating infinitely outweigh the temporary pleasures of a decadent meal. I am living proof!

May we all learn to be even better stewards of our bodies in 2022.

May we live life to the full, recognizing just how fragile it can be.

May the politicizing of COVID (from all sides) finally come to an end.

And may we turn to the Lord as our only sure foundation as we leave 2021 behind and journey into 2022. {eoa}

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