

Chonda Pierce Shares 'Best Medicine' for Quarantine

Chonda Pierce says if this coronavirus lasts any longer, she's going to run out of closets to reorganize. Like many touring speakers and artists, the popular comedian recently announced that she would have to postpone all current shows on her tour in light of the recent COVID-19 outbreaks in the U.S. Now she says she has plenty of free time—and is finding creative ways to spend it.

"I have been to church more times on a Sunday than I can count," Pierce laughs. "Because I go to my church online, and then I sit at four other services online. It's like an Amazon wish list. I am church shopping from the bed. ... It's gonna be a little hard [to go back]. ... We're going to be so used to being able to just stay in our pajamas, we're going to go to church looking like Walmart shoppers."

Pierce says that though the impact of the coronavirus is no laughing matter—with more than 1 million infected and 55,000 dead worldwide—it's important to maintain joy and a sense of humor even in dark times.

"Someone asked me the other day, 'Will the coronavirus be part of your act? When is the appropriate time to start making jokes about it?'" Pierce says. "And I said, 'You don't make jokes about the death that's going on. But you can make jokes about the way you react to having to be locked in the house for that long—how you get to know yourself better than you've ever known.' There's going to be a myriad of material that comes out of the quarantine issue, and there's [already] funny memes that you see now online. ... In a dark time, [comedy] can be a great medicine that the world needs."

In that spirit, Pierce joked, laughed and shared with *Charisma*

about how she's handling life at home, the need for joy and the power of empathy in this season.

Importance of Joy

Though Pierce can't tour in the midst of quarantine, she has been staying in touch with fans through social media and video livestreams. She jokes that some people are in psychiatric hospitals for talking to themselves, and here she is doing just that in front of an international audience of thousands.

"I'm so un-tech savvy," Pierce says. "My hotsy-totsy friends with all the toys will call me just mad as a wet hen because I jump online with my cell phone. I finally learned how to plug in a USB microphone. [Usually] somebody has to come over and set stuff up for me. Well, now I'm by myself, and nobody can come over. So I've had to learn so much of this. But I'll do my little Facebook Lives, and thousands will watch.

She believes people resonate with her videos because, in times of tragedy, people crave comedy and joy.

"You know, it was during the Vietnam War that the sitcom became very popular on television, that people wanted to sit around the television and laugh because of the war that was going on," Pierce says. "And so comedy is so imperative during dark times on the planet. And God uses it as the medicine it was intended to be used."

It's like Solomon writes in Proverbs 17:22: "A merry heart does good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones."

Pierce says sometimes finding that joy inside of yourself can feel impossible, particularly when tragic news surrounds you. That's why we need to rely on God in difficult seasons.

"I always tell people, when you feel like you don't have a joyful heart or you're having a hard time finding that, just

relax—because the joy of the Lord is your strength,” she says. “So don’t even rely on your own joy. Just relax and find out more stuff about Jesus. Spend some more time with the Lord. Read the Bible a few more chapters than you normally would do during this quarantine time. If you begin to concentrate on that, all of a sudden you will find joy, because it’s the joy of the Lord that gets you through.”

She says it’s also important not to allow the devil to fill your mind with negativity and fear.

“Sometimes your mind is the battlefield in social distancing and times like this,” Pierce says. “Fear crops up. Fear is absolutely a real thing during times like this, but what you have to fight is worry. My pastor convicted me the other day, because he said worry is a sin—and I thought, *Oh, dear, I’ve messed up on that one this week.* You have to constantly fight it out in your mind. [When it comes to] the whole idea of quarantine, isolation and staying away from people, the battle is not only just keeping this virus out of your body, but keeping the negativity out of your mind.”

That’s where spiritual warfare comes in for the believer.

“You have to push yourself to look on the bright side,” Pierce says. “You have to keep pushing yourself to look for the good out of it. The devil’s job is to keep dragging us down, and you have to fight that. You have to fight back.”

Caring for Others

Pierce says she personally doesn’t mind being alone and getting some “quiet time” during this season. In fact, she jokes that the worst part about it is that she has to eat her own cooking—and that her dating life is proof that she’s been social distancing for years. But she acknowledges the truth of Genesis 2:18b: “It is not good that the man should be alone.”

“I am someone who struggles with clinical depression,” Pierce

says. "Now, I'm highly medicated and blessed by a loving God and a great doctor. But I have to be careful about that. If you're not careful, isolation is not your friend when it comes to depression."

But she praises God that the internet has enabled people to stay in communication with one another even from a distance.

"I don't miss a day Facetiming my son to make sure he's staying home and taking all of this seriously, like all parents fussing at their kids," Pierce says. "I don't miss a day checking in on my friends, through texting, Skype and Zoom. We are blessed that this hit us at a time when technology is at its best. ... For everything that the devil is trying to drag us down about, the Lord counters that quickly with His grace, comfort and blessings of all kinds."

Pierce says sometimes the best way to keep your mind occupied and free from worry is to become focused on something bigger than yourself: "I try to think outside of my concerns and think about others. I am blessed [in this season] to be able to do some things I've not ever had the opportunity or thought to do."

As an example, she says that she became concerned about the plight of mom-and-pop businesses in the small town near Nashville where she lives. She was concerned that they wouldn't be able to financially survive this extended quarantine and decided to try and help them out.

"I wrote on Facebook, 'For two hours, I will buy your pizza if you come get a pizza from [this local business] for takeout. They'll bring it to your car, so you don't have to be afraid,'" Pierce says. "Too many people like pizza in my county. I had no idea! It ended up being thousands of dollars, and I was able to bless not only just that restaurant but people like me who aren't able to cook or figure out where their next groceries are coming from. I just love getting to

do that. But that did not just bless those people who got food that night and fed their families; what it did was bless me. It got my mind completely off of the worry and the struggle.”

But it doesn’t take money to perform a random act of kindness. Pierce says there are plenty of opportunities in this season to live out Jesus’ command to love your neighbor as yourself.

“Call a neighbor,” Pierce says. “This is the first time you’ve got time to just sit down and call somebody you haven’t talked to in a long time. Check on an elderly person and say, ‘Hey, I’ve got my mask and my gloves on, and I’m going to the grocery store. What can I bring you?’ It helps your difficulties if you step out of your own pain and try to find ways to help other people. That’s been the key for me.”

Pierce says it’s one of the only times in modern history when everyone in the world has been forced to break their habits, slow down and reflect. That makes it a valuable time to share the Good News of Jesus with people who don’t know Him.

“[My pastor] said that never in his lifetime or mine has the entire world stopped,” she says. “It’s not just America. This is going on in every country in some form or fashion. The entire world has stopped. And God’s gotten everybody’s attention. ... Everybody thinks about their own mortality during times like this, and when you think about your own mortality, you think about eternity. The Bible says God will work out things for good. He doesn’t bring plagues like He did in the Old Testament anymore—because the grace of Jesus came to cover a lot of things—but He will use good or bad to get your attention. So this can be a vital, incredible time for the world. It could be that last movement of a revival that we’ve been desperately needing to turn our eyes upon the Lord.”
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