

Why Coronavirus Is a Window of Divine Opportunity for Christians

“The mass of humanity live lives of quiet desperation.”
–Thoreau

In the mid-1800s a Cholera pandemic broke out worldwide. In 1854 it hit London and 127 people died in three days. Three-fourths of the residents fled the city.

By the end of the outbreak, 616 people died. The mortality rate was 12.8%. Two prior outbreaks took the lives of 14,137 people.

If you were an influential pastor such as Charles Spurgeon, besides honoring the governing and medical authorities' recommendations, what would you tell your people?

“It is much to be feared that a constant run of prosperity, perpetual peace and freedom from disease may breed in our minds just what it has done in all human minds before, namely security, pride, hedonism and forgetfulness of God. It is a most solemn fact that human nature can scarcely bear a long continuance of peace and health. It is almost necessary that we should be salted with affliction every now and then lest we putrefy with sin.

“May God grant that we have neither famine nor sword but since we have this pestilence in a very slight degree, it becomes us to ask the Lord to bless it to the people so each tenderness of conscience may be apparent throughout the multitude and they may recognize the hand of God. Already I've been told by Christian brethren laboring in the east of London there is a greater willingness to listen to gospel truth.”

What Would Jesus Do?

We are smack dab in the middle of a global pandemic. People are fearful, anxious, worried, scared and extremely open to hearing those who bring truth, hope and encouragement in a compassionate and skillful way. Once again, there is a “greater willingness to listen to gospel truth.”

Jesus communicated the reason He came. “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). The word “seek” conveys intentionality, being proactive and taking initiative. “As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you” (John 20:21).

As we proclaim in this time that this is part of the prophesied end time “shaking” (Heb. 12:26) drawn from Haggai 2:6-9, the first of the five results is that “what is desired by all nations will come” (v. 7, NIV). We’re in the early stages of what some prophets are calling the “uncomfortable revival!”

What would Jesus do? He’d capitalize on the coronavirus to do exactly what He said beginning His public ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel” (Luke 4:18, MEV).

Our Window of Opportunity

When a tower fell, killing 18 people, Jesus seized the opportunity to share with people about their need to get right with God (Luke 13:4-5). Last week my wife delivered food and essentials to a family in downtown Nashville and ended by sharing the gospel and giving all nine her personal testimony tract. The youngest to the oldest listened attentively to her every word.

During these days when we look for ways to practically serve people in a “conspiracy of kindness,” grateful individuals often ask questions as to “Why the generosity?” Or when folks

express gratitude we can smile and simply tell them, “I was not always this way, but my life has changed; can I tell you how?” They rarely decline.

We then have the chance to convey hope and show people we care. Then we apply what Peter counseled Christians facing hard times under Emperor Nero.

“Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you’re living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy” (1 Pet. 3:15, MSG).

People Reaching for a Lifeline

When my car broke down on the freeway on a wintry Cleveland morning leaving me standing anxious and alone, an African-American man saw an opportunity in the interruption to his normal routine. He stopped, gave me a lift and later invited me to a service that providentially led to my Christian conversion. Many opportunities for sharing Christ come disguised as unwelcome interruptions!

My sister reached the end of her rope when a boyfriend she planned to marry unexpectedly ended the relationship. Just like people experiencing the sudden upheaval of the coronavirus pandemic, my sister found herself in a dark and depressing time that led her into drinking over 15 drinks a night and adding about 100 pounds in weight.

It was during that time that I saw the opportunity to practically express God’s love and kindness to her. One gesture was to invite her to accompany me on a weekend getaway where I could encourage her and lavish God’s love upon her in numerous practical ways. Upon returning she was open to join me for a church picnic. This led to a church service the next night. There God moved upon her heart and Margaret was born again!

Chuck Colson was President Nixon’s “hatchet man” in the White

House who famously said, "I would walk over my grandmother for Richard Nixon." He was ruthless in scheming and removing opponents of the president. Then Watergate exploded and his life went careening downhill as he sank into a pit of anxiety and fear.

Sensing his state, Tom Phillips, chief executive of the Raytheon Corporation, saw this as a divine appointment and knew Chuck was willing to listen so he shared his faith, read sections from *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis dealing with "The Great Sin-Pride," then prayed over Mr. Colson to find forgiveness and a new beginning in Christ.

Chuck Colson left Tom's home, yet couldn't leave his car that night as he sat in the driveway and wept. He quietly put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ and was born again.

Someone reached out to Colson with a lifeline in his time of need. Chuck went to prison but upon leaving founded Prison Fellowship in 1976, now serving prisoners in over 120 countries of the world. They advocate for justice and reform while providing compassionate care for their families in their time of need.

After Billy Graham, Chuck Colson is the man who most influenced my life and ministry. He mentored me through his writings and encouraged me significantly in developing a biblical worldview, enabling me to serve scores of people everywhere.

Invest Your Time Wisely

During this season of an imposed Sabbath rest, let me strongly encourage you to take advantage of these days to be equipped for greater fruitfulness and impact once this pandemic passes.

"Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, wisely using the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you should answer everyone"

(Col. 4:5-6).

1. To “walk in wisdom with those who are outside” (non-Christian/lost people), learn the adventure of lifestyle evangelism by watching five 20-minute, free, immediately accessible and enjoyable YouTube videos to equip and inspire you to be confident and successful in sharing your faith.

2. So “you may know how you should answer everyone” on the most important hot button issues of our day, spend 15 minutes for 30 days reviewing a free three-minute YouTube video; reading for 10 minutes the accompanying article; then reflecting for two minutes praying. Take the 30-day Bullseye Challenge to change your life!

Here’s the deal: Because of the coronavirus, God providentially pushed the “pause button” so you can become a compassionate, confident communicator and change agent, bringing people into the kingdom of God. The fruit is ripe for the pickin’ and you’re His ambassador to rescue the multitudes of anxious people all around us who are now more apt to listen.