

Why This Pastor Says We Must Reopen Our States Right Now

In regard to the overreach by some government bureaucrats and elected officials, we raised in our last op-ed the legitimate question of who, in a constitutional sense, is the king of America.

The answer is: We the people. Conspicuous by its absence in the coronavirus conundrum is any citizen participation or representative debate about the actions to be taken. Although President Trump and other elected executives do have constitutional emergency powers, who decided this was such a dire exigency that the actions taken were justified? That decision was made by unelected government bureaucrats, selected “experts,” doomsday soothsayers, computer models and a frenzied media. Only now that their ever-changing predictions have fallen flat, dissenting voices are starting to be heard. Where were the freedom and constitutional protections of speech, assembly, religious observance and democratic process? They were found unutilized, hidden behind face masks and quarantine’s closed doors.

Freedom allows citizens to evaluate and reprove their government, the importance of which can’t be overestimated. Whereas everybody has the right to be wrong, some politicians, government bureaucrats, and local and county officials have exercised that right to the greatest possible extent during the COVID-19 tribulation.

With that said, a Gideon by the name of Dr. Steve Riggle stands in Houston.

Pastor Steve and Becky Riggle met in college. It was love at first sight for Steve. Nine months later they were married, Steve being 19 by two weeks, and Becky 20. They have now been

partners in life and ministry for more than 50 years.

While doing ministry in a Philippines prison in 1978, Steve and Becky were taken hostage by four prisoners armed with knives. During the attempted escape from the prison, police killed the four prisoners. Stabbed multiple times, Steve almost died. Becky was shot, after which she spent nine months in a body cast, had five surgeries and needed another nine months to learn how to walk again.

In 1983, Steve and Becky moved to Houston, Texas, to begin Grace Community Church in the NASA community. During their tenure, the church grew to 17,000 members and a 250,000 square feet, 10,000-seat worship center was constructed, located on 80 acres, ministering to the NASA community.

Pastor Steve wrote on Saturday, April 18:

“Liberate Texas now. Time to reopen Texas. We have been patient, even though every projection of the impact of the coronavirus has been grossly wrong. We were told to flatten the curve because there was no cure, even though a very small number actually die from the virus in comparison with the population and other diseases and causes of death we live with on a daily basis. Now, over 22,000,000 people have lost their jobs in one month ... and there is more economic fallout to follow [for example, 43% can't afford to go more than one month without a paycheck, and 24% have less than \$250 in their bank accounts preceding payday.] In our county, in the same time period, we had five coronavirus-related deaths and 15 suicides.

“We waited for our governor to tell us he was ending the restrictions that have ruined our economy and our livelihoods. Instead, he made an announcement about an announcement and appointed a task force to further delay getting everyone back to work when he could have restored everything with a stroke of his pen. Since our governor put the restrictions in place

by his edict, he should have simply removed them with some guidelines by the same process. Shockingly, his big action was to tell those struggling with mental and emotional health issues to go to the state parks with a mask on rather than opening the churches and suggesting they seek help there. He also decided to allow some elective surgeries since the hospital systems in Texas are losing money because so few are actually in the hospital. And he allowed retail businesses to open up for curbside shopping. ... He didn't say where the change rooms were, presumably in your car or on the sidewalk.

"Enough of the ridiculous!

"It is time to open up Texas based on the following five words:

"We have *Rights*; we are Americans who have a Constitution and a Bill of Rights.

"We are *Rational*. Consider the following facts from the Texas DSHS website as of April 17: Population of Texas: 29,000,000 (29 million). Tested for COVID-19: 169,536 (.0055 or half of 1%). Positive for COVID-19: 17,371 (.0006 or 6/100 of 1%). Hospitalized for COVID: 1,522 (.00005 or 5/1000 of 1%). Deaths due to COVID: 428 (.000014 or 1/1000 of 1%).

"You could read the data and interpret it that 'protecting some' has actually become 'needlessly punishing all.'

"We take *Risks*. We are Texans who stand tall and realize that life has some risks. That should be our choice, not the mandate of the state attempting to protect us from perceived harm.

"We understand *Responsibilities*. We are citizens who will do the responsible thing. Those who are at risk should stay home. Those who are afraid should stay home.

"We will *Resist*, because it is our right to do so. We are free

people. Unless an overwhelming number of people let our officials know that we are done with their mandates and edicts we will continue to be controlled by them.

“Historian William J. Federer ended one of his presentations with this story: ‘Someday you will be dead—but you will be in heaven because you believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay for all of your sins.

“Imagine being in heaven 10,000 years—you will probably run into Moses, maybe walking along the streets of gold. Maybe he will invite you over to his place. He’ll probably have a pretty nice place, maybe having one of those big fireplaces where the logs don’t burn up (he saw the burning bush in the wilderness and it did not burn up!).

“You are there with all the guests, and Moses is seated at your table. You ask, ‘Moses, what was it like? I read the book, and even saw the movie, but here you are—can we hear it firsthand?’ Moses stands up and says, ‘I was 80 years old, and Pharaoh’s army was charging at us, and we were totally unarmed,’ and I held out my staff and said, ‘God, use me to deliver your people—and the waves parted, we went through and Pharaoh’s army was drowned.’

“Everyone in the room will be in awe! Then you look around the table, and there is David, so you ask him, ‘David, tell us your story.’ David stands up, the room is quiet. ‘I was just a teenager, and this giant thug Goliath was mocking our God and mocking our faith, and the grownups were too chicken to do anything. So I took my sling, hit him in the head with a stone and used his own sword to chop his head off.’

“... Everyone in the room will be in awe.

“Then you look, and see Gideon and say, ‘Gideon, tell us your story.’ Gideon stands and says, ‘There were 120,000 Midianites and I had 32,000 Israelites, and God said, “That’s too many; tell everyone who is scared to go home.” Great, now I only had

10,000. God said, "That's still too many; go drink from a creek," and He whittled it down to 300. With 300 we defeated the Midianite host!'

"One by one, everyone around the table tell their stories—Deborah, Elijah, the apostle Paul ... then they come to you and say, 'Tell us your story!'"

Out of 6,000 years of recorded history God has placed us here, in 2020. This is our time. This is our kairos.

What story are we going to tell?

Gideons and Rahabs are beginning to stand.