

What Christians Need to Know About Hong Kong, Coronavirus and the Global Church

What is happening in Hong Kong? This seems to be the question on everyone's mind after Beijing imposed a new national security law that limited Hong Kong's freedom and autonomy. Though *Charisma* does not have reporters stationed in China, I was able to call my friend, missionary Dennis Balcombe, to share on this week's episode of *The Strang Report* what is taking place overseas and how this affects Hong Kong Christians. We also discussed the coronavirus pandemic and the civil unrest and protests against the Chinese government.

You can listen to the full episode [here](#), but for those interested in going even deeper, Dennis shared his notes with me to share with my readers. These will provide a good overview of the situation taking place overseas and how we as the body of Christ can pray for our Chinese brothers and sisters. I had an excellent time speaking to Dennis, and I hope you find his insights illuminating:

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First, you should know that in Hong Kong, only 4 have died out of 1,100 infected. This is great considering we have 7.5 million people here in one of the most crowded cities in the world. With no local cases for some time, all restrictions on social distancing will be lifted in a couple days. We have been able to have church meetings for many weeks but are restricted to 50% capacity. (For example, because our main auditorium seats 700, we can have 350 in as many meetings as we wish.)

A few months ago, they totally closed the border to all

travelers from abroad, including transit through the airport, which they lifted a few days ago. But the restricted entry to travelers will remain in effect until Sept. 19, as they expect the coronavirus to continue to be in the USA and U.K. until that time. Our whole family will be going to Portland for our granddaughter's wedding the first week of August, and when we return to Hong Kong, we will have to be quarantined in our own home for two weeks.

In Taiwan, out of 23 million, only seven died, and several Asian nations share similar statistics. This is likely because we all remember SARS in 2003, which took the lives of 10% of those infected. From that time on, whenever anyone has even the slightest fever or cold, they will always wear a mask or even stay home from work or school. So when coronavirus first began to spread in China in February, everyone began wearing masks and practicing social distancing.

It was sad to read in your book [*God, Trump and COVID-19*] that many United States local governments closed down churches but allowed places selling alcohol and bars to remain open. The churches here were proactive and approached the government and health department with measures they intended to take to protect their congregations from the virus; as a result, the government agreed early on to let us have meetings up to 50% capacity of any building. Next week, that limit will be raised to 100%.

The virus has virtually been defeated in Hong Kong, Taiwan, New Zealand and many other Asian nations, which proves it can be done and should give hope to Americans. China had it almost totally defeated, and everything was opening up, but just two days ago, they found 79 cases in a large market in Beijing. As a result, they are taking stringent measures in certain parts of Beijing. They found the genetic code of the virus was quite different from the Chinese type, and it is said to be similar to types found in Europe; thus, some suspect it was brought in from Europe in food shipments that were in the market. But

nobody knows for sure.

The fear everywhere is that there might be a second wave, worse than the first, and I want to address this matter of fear. Fear is an enemy we all must face and defeat. First John 4:18 (NKJV) says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

While the stages of the virus are different in many nations, even among Christians there are similar fears:

1. Fear of sickness or even death from coronavirus (some evidence seems to indicate some who recover will have permanent damage to some organs in their bodies).
2. Fear of losing your job, income, retirement or house.
3. Fears of starvation and death in many third-world nations where people live hand to mouth.
4. Fears related to protests and riots that are now everywhere in the world.
5. Fear of police brutality, especially among racial and ethnic minorities.

Fears of police brutality and governmental overreach are not limited to black Americans. In fact, in Hong Kong, almost a year of protests against a now-withdrawn extradition law has resulted in China enforcing its own security law on us. These demonstrations resulted in the arrest of over 9,000 people, 40% being young students, and many were beaten and injured by police. But there is no real proof of any demonstrators being killed by the police.

Though we don't know the details, many Christian leaders are afraid we will lose all our freedoms and simply be another city in Communist China. Thus, thousands are making plans to emigrate just in case their worst fears are realized.

To deal with these fears (which do cause torment, as 1 John states), many churches are calling their people to several

days of fasting and prayer. Thousands are joining daily extended prayer meetings online. These meetings also providing counseling and special ministry to those with emotional and psychological struggles and problems. As a result, the gospel message is being preached more than at any time, and all churches are seeing many new conversions and even baptisms in the Holy Spirit.

This is the same in many parts of China. We have contacted house churches—many which are now resuming actual church meetings—and some are indicating thousands who never entered a church building have heard the gospel and accepted Christ by attending virtual meetings. There has been a mini-revival there.

Another side benefit is pastors are now allowing their young people—who are quite computer literate as it is—to operate the video conferencing or online ministry, and they are doing extremely professional jobs, as China has access to the most advanced equipment. A whole new sphere of ministry has opened for them, which will continue even after COVID-19 has left us. It also gives the people self-respect and confidence that they are part of a ministry that touches thousands of people. Before this, full-time church leaders did all such work.

Many who are still in some type of lockdown are using this time to remain at home or in small groups to pray, fast, worship and get deep in Bible study. Those who can travel can do the same in small church gatherings or small cell group meetings, which are allowed in most places. This is a time for every individual believer, church or cell group to experience revival.

Encourage people to drive out the fear, stop thinking and speaking so negatively, and receive God's love and in turn love your brethren. This is what John says: "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18b). And we should pray with believers (while communicating with them through social media)

around the world, believing good will come out of this.

There is a good chance that coronavirus will greatly decline, as we are seeing in Asia, and in the future act similar to a common flu. But we will have to learn the importance of masks and distancing when there is any chance of anyone carrying any type of virus or ordinary sickness. In Hong Kong, we expect we will be using masks for a few more years. It is now just a part of your clothing like your pants or dress, and nobody would think of going out without it.

When it comes to the new security laws that will be coming to Hong Kong—and nobody has any idea of the content now—we are calling everyone to pray and believe that that they will be good laws, bring stability to Hong Kong, and end the violence and riots. China has said over and over they are committed to “one country, two systems.” It is to their advantage to make it work, for they get the majority of their foreign currency and trade through Hong Kong.

Even if worse comes to worst, we will simply be another city in China. The next time you come to Hong Kong to help take Bibles, when you get off the plane, you might already be in mainland China. That will be great. You won't have to go to China, for you will be in China.

While some are talking about leaving Hong Kong due to the new laws in which some freedoms might be restricted, many of us feel the opposite. This might all turn out for the best for the gospel and the kingdom of God. Why are Christians always so negative and pessimistic about everything, when we have so many wonderful, precious promises in His Word and know the great power of prayer?

Francis Chan, a well-known speaker in the USA, recently closed his large church in San Francisco and moved permanently with his family to Hong Kong. He has some Chinese blood and can speak Cantonese. He is shocked to hear Western missionaries

talking about leaving because of the small possibility of persecution from China. He believes as I do that China, which now has probably the largest number of Christians of any nation, will soon see a great revival and turn to Christ. He wants to give his life to saving the Chinese and converting this great nation to Christ. That is also my vision, though I am 75 now.

Lastly, we realize we are a part of the body, and if one suffers, all suffer. Thus, here in Asia we have all been doing our best to help other hurting and suffering churches and Christians wherever we can. Almost every other day, our ministry team is making virtual visits to many nations to teach, train, preach, lead in worship, and conduct seminars and Sunday schools. We go to Lebanon, Pakistan, India. Bangladesh, France and dozens of cities all over China.

We are all sacrificing to send financial support to those in nations where there are total lockdowns, where churches that cannot receive any offerings, and where food and medical supplies are running out. We are doing a lot to help Lebanon now in particular. We know of one female worker from Nagaland who is now working in New Delhi, India. She is discriminated against as she looks Chinese, but at great risk of contracting the virus, she goes daily deep into crowded slum areas to minister to the poorest, and many have found Christ.

The reason I write all of this is to respond to the prophecy of David Wilkerson, which says this pandemic will result in a great harvest and revival. I don't understand why Christians have to be so negative and pessimistic all the time. I do believe COVID-19 is from the devil—as he comes to kill, steal and destroy—but we have powerful spiritual weapons of faith, the Word of God, praise and worship, and the gospel message on our side. Used properly, these will be the catalyst to defeat the virus, preach Christ to unreached people groups around the world and see His will done on earth as it is in heaven.