

7 Good Things God Is Doing During the Coronavirus Crisis

“Is God not gracious, and faithful, to support us under the stroke? Is He not rich enough to give us something better than ever He will take away? Is not the light of His countenance better than life and all its most valued enjoyments?” –John Newton, author of “Amazing Grace.”

In this current coronavirus crisis as lives, churches, businesses and entire nations are upended worldwide, God wants us to be optimists and realists, staying faith-filled, totally dependent upon Him. This is part of the promised shaking prior to the return of Jesus (Heb. 12:26) and affords an opportunity to stand unmoved as “more than conquerors” (Rom. 8:37) in Christ.

“Surely the righteous man shall not be moved; the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord” (Ps. 112:6-7).

In the midst of the Nazi invasion, Winston Churchill declared, “A pessimist sees calamity in every opportunity but an optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity.” What helps us in this time of viral invasion is recognizing the good things God is doing in us and, through this tumultuous time, to draw people to Himself. We need to come into agreement as Christians to learn the lessons God intends and remain thankful in, but not necessarily for, all that is taking place (1 Thess. 5:18).

4 Areas of Agreement

Encountering the significant threat of the coronavirus pandemic, let’s agree on these essentials:

1. Approach God with humility and in unity with fellow believers “in order that you may know the way you should go. For you have not passed this way before” (Josh. 3:4). The time is now for an upgrade in our practice of prayer, as Jesus directed us at the end of the age, “Therefore watch always and pray” (Luke 21:36).

2. Affirm the Sovereignty of God over a defeated Satan exploiting natural disasters and sinful humanity “because he knows that his time is short” (Rev. 12:12). Genesis 50:20 reminds us, “as for you, you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.” C.S. Lewis told us, “The devil has no free hand in the world. He is on a leash and can only do what God permits.”

3. Accept our civic duty to honor the governing authorities (-7) regarding certain inconvenient hygienic restrictions like “social distancing” to “flatten the curve” of the contagious virus, protect those most vulnerable and enable us to engage in creative technology (without complaining), plus comply with legal requirements. This “fire drill” is preparatory for future “birth pangs” that will come with accelerating frequency and intensity as the day of the Lord approaches.

4. Acknowledge diversity of beliefs and faith levels among those in our midst, being respectful and avoiding presumption, hyper-faith extremes (“Smith Wigglesworth and John G. Lake wouldn’t compromise!”) and self-righteous pride. God is giving us a window of opportunity to come together and be kind to one another in this challenging season.

It’s time to brush aside the doomsday scenarios, conspiracy theories and misguided prophecies. It’s also time to recognize that more good is happening in addition to abortion mills and brothels shutting down!

7 Good Things God Is Doing

1 Samuel 30:6 tells us, "David was greatly distressed... But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

In these days of uncertainty, let's encourage ourselves in the Lord, seeing how God is at work.

1. In the midst of the storm, Christians are intentionally drawing apart to look to the Lord and His promises, finding security and hope in God as our "hiding place" (Ps. 32:7).

"Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide for a little while until the indignation is over" (Isa. 26:20). Strengthened in secret, we're going forth to shine as lights in the darkness.

2. We are seizing tremendous opportunities to evangelize as people are afraid, are needing support and are more available with freed-up schedules.

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 her time with them by sharing the gospel and giving all nine her personal testimony tract. The youngest to the oldest listened attentively to her every word.

3. God is giving us time to recapture our daily devotional time amidst this imposed "time out" from our busy lives so this holy habit will hopefully carry over once normalcy returns. Has busyness led to barrenness in your spiritual life? Rejoice that God is giving all of us time to recalibrate to be more fruitful, not just busy, and to return to our "first love" (Rev. 2:4)!

"White man" in Swahili is "mazungu": "one who spins around!" That's how many of us are perceived by others. God is using this strange course of events to mold us into more of a Mary than a Martha, who was so distracted and hurried in life, she

missed golden opportunities to simply spend time with Jesus (Luke 10:38-42).

[Suggestion: Take advantage of Mike Bickle's excellent, free, online resource on the end times: "The Omega Series".]

4. In this crisis, multitudes are recognizing the benefits and protection afforded by homeschooling. God is reminding us to prioritize the spiritual education of our children. Having more time at home enables us to reset schedules so we honor Deuteronomy 6:7 (with dads ideally leading the way). "You shall teach [God's Words] diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up."

Martin Luther warned us: "I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth."

5. God is providing us amazing opportunities to engage with backslidden Christians, agnostics and even atheists now considering the need to look outside of themselves for divine intervention. Did you happen to hear even atheist Bernie Sanders make references to God in his last debate?

"...for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9b).

During the worldwide cholera pandemic in the mid-1800s, Charles Spurgeon, "prince of preachers," urged his London church with these words:

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 a 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.

6. God is giving us an amazing opportunity to recover the "Sabbath rest" (graciously being imposed!) to appreciate its significance for our spiritual and physical well-being.

The Lord penalized Israel for 70 years in captivity to reclaim the 70 years they neglected the sabbath (2 Chr. 36:21). Scripture teaches God worked six days, then rested and gave us the fourth commandment to enjoy a day of rest (Ex. 20:8-11) to cultivate relational intimacy with Him, our families and His people.

It's refreshing to experience the Jewish "Shabbat" in Israel and witness everything closed for 24 hours. In our society that disregards this holy ordinance by working constantly and shopping on Sunday like any other day (it's Publix, Kroger and Cosco's busiest day!), we have the chance to re-establish the beauty and benefits of this divinely ordained gift from God.

7. The emphasis on "relational distancing" provides us a unique opportunity (while using wisdom) to connect winsomely with people and make the gospel attractive to them. Our situation is tailor-made for a "conspiracy of kindness" like the early Christians did in supplying famine relief in Acts 11:27-30. We can serve others, share resources and do good works. So, folks, glorify God in this time of visitation.

“Live your lives honorably among the Gentiles, so that though they speak against you as evildoers, they shall see your good works and thereby glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12).

It's been said, “The greatest moments of our lives are not when we think less of ourselves but when we think of ourselves less.” This is why for years I've worn a wristband that says, “I Am Second”: my daily reminder to reach out and bring . (Helping Other People Everyday)!

Fifty years ago I was headed for hell as a drummer in the “Lost Souls” band in Cleveland when in bad weather my car broke down. In my anxiety an African American man stopped, helped me, gave me a ride, then extended an invitation to his inner city, storefront church. His simple act of love was the beginning of my conversion to Jesus.

Here's the deal: The dark is getting darker, the light is getting lighter and the difference between the two is becoming increasingly evident. In the midst of this coronavirus pandemic, let's be optimists and realists recalling Winston Churchill's encouraging words in the midst of World War II: “It is not even the beginning of the end, but it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

A new day is dawning for the church!