

As the COVID-19 pandemic sweeps across the world, how should Christians respond? I believe that, as Christians, there are a number of specific responses that we can, and should, make to this crisis in our world.

Don't Panic or Despair

First, and most importantly, don't panic. There are more than enough "Chicken Littles" running around proclaiming doom and gloom, and there are many false prophets proclaiming this virus as God's judgment against whatever ill they believe plagues society. Personally, I am not ready to elevate any of them to the stature of Isaiah or Jeremiah.

I believe that it is important during this time that we realize that God is still sovereign. He is in control. Nothing that is happening is a surprise to him. Nor is it something that he has not allowed to occur for some reason. A reason that may only be known to himself.

Regardless of what may happen to others around me, to my family, or to myself, God is in control and I can trust him to accomplish his perfect will through whatever may come.

That does not mean that I will not potentially experience hurt and/or grief, but, as Paul said, "I know who I have believed and am persuaded that he will guard what I have entrusted to him till the end" (**2 Timothy 1:12**), and with that knowledge, as believers, we can rest assured that he will take care of us.

Show Respect for Our Government Leaders

It seems that many, including believers, enjoying criticizing our government and those who serve in it. Some today are crying that the government is responding too slowly or not strongly enough to this crisis.

Others are crying that the government is overstepping its proper bounds, claiming more and more power over ordinary citizens. I have heard many Christians on Facebook deploring the government's ban on churches gathering to worship and refusing to follow that directive.

However, I believe that we should be in submission to our governments during this time. First, because Scripture instructs us to be in submission to them (**Romans 13:1**), but, just as importantly, because the only known way to keep this virus from spreading is to maintain our distance from each other. When we gather together, we just help it to spread even more and we put more people at risk who are vulnerable to this disease.

So, follow the appropriate government guidelines. Maintain your distance. Wash your hands frequently. Work from home, if possible. Be an example to others around you.

Stay in Touch with Family, Friends, and the Church

One of the challenges that many are facing now is being isolated from other people. If you are on the extreme end of the introvert scale, like I am, this may not be a big deal. But for most people extended isolation can be very challenging.

During this time, look for opportunities to stay in touch. Nothing can replace face to face contact and human touch, but many of us today live in a very connected world. We can text, chat, email, talk on the phone, make video calls, attend virtual worship services and Bible studies, and more. Of course, not everyone can do all of that, but most of us can do at least some of it. So, take advantage of the available technology.

Stay in touch with the other people in your normal circle of family and friends. Make the effort to contact them to see how they are doing and offer encouragement to them. Especially look to those who may be all alone. Reach out to the older widows in your congregation who live alone. They may be challenging to connect with, but they need your touch.

Look for Opportunities to Help.

As always, Christians should be open to opportunities to help those in need, and that is no less true during this time. It will be more challenging to offer assistance with the social distancing and isolation rules in place, but when the opportunity presents itself, do not hesitate to help.

There are many who are especially susceptible to the coronavirus, likely among your neighbours. It may be that you can do their shopping for them. Or potentially help them with maintaining the exterior of their house and grounds.

Take the Opportunity to Develop Your Own Spirituality

You may find it challenging if you are among the many who find yourself spending more time at home than you are accustomed to. If you are in that position, take advantage of the opportunity to spend more time in personal development. You can read a book. Explore a field that you find interesting. Invest time in your family. There are countless things that you can do with your newly found free time.

Maybe the most important thing you can do is to take advantage of the opportunity to grow spiritually. Christians often express that life is too busy to spend much time in prayer and Bible study. But, if you are one of those “stuck at home,” this is an ideal opportunity to invest in your spiritual life. Pray. Read the Bible. Pray some more. Meditate on what you are reading. Read a book on spiritual disciplines. Pray some more. Seek the Lord and his will for your life. Above all, don't let this time go to waste.

Rejoice and Give Thanks to God

Without a doubt, the loss of life and suffering caused by COVID-19 is tragic. Before it runs its course, it will have likely touched everyone in the world to one extent or another. But, as Christians, our response does not need to mirror the unrest and despair that those around us exhibit.

We have a hope that transcends this world and our circumstances. We can rejoice, not in the tragic events unfolding around us, but in the God, who can use them to accomplish his purpose in our lives and in this world.

During this time of darkness, be a light. Let your light so shine that it will glorify God, drawing others to find their hope and fulness in the only one who truly transcends the struggles of this life. "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (**1 Thessalonians 5:16-19**).

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