

FINDING PEACE AND WISDOM IN A PANDEMIC

- **Some *stats* regarding COVID-19 as of 3/14/2020 from worldometers.info website or yesterday's Corona Virus Task Force TV conference:**
 - 1) 154,367 cases worldwide; 5,798 deaths worldwide; 50 deaths in USA thus far
 - 2) Epicenter of outbreak was Wuhan, China
 - 3) 1,629 reported cases in USA; projected 98-99% recovery rate in USA
 - 4) Declared a National Emergency by President Trump last Friday – 3/13/2020
 - 5) Unprecedented gov't actions, provisions, and cooperation with the private sector to address this
 - 6) Free virus testing in USA to anyone showing symptoms
 - 7) Travel restrictions regarding travel to Europe, though all US citizens returning to US are allowed back in after successfully completing certain protocols; domestic restrictions being considered
 - 8) Cruise lines and other venues have temporarily suspended services
 - 9) Nursing homes are suspending all visitors except in close-to-death scenarios
- **Some *facts* regarding the coronavirus from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website:**
 - 1) **Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.** Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.
 - 2) **For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low.**
 - 3) **Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.**
 - 4) **There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy.**
 - a) Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
 - b) Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - c) Stay home when you are sick.
 - d) Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - 5) **You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms: Fever, Cough, Shortness of breath.** Seek medical advice if you develop symptoms AND have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or live in or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Call ahead before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- **Some *challenges* addressing the COVID19 virus** (taken from a booklet just printed from the Vistoso Community Church, Tuscon, AZ.) **The challenges are:**
 - 1) **It is a mode of transmission that is hard to control and includes everyday activities and situations.** COVID-19 is a respiratory droplet virus. This is a virus that spreads through people being around one another and breathing, something that puts everyone at risk.

- 2) **It has a lengthier asymptomatic window.** We're learning that people can remain infected but asymptomatic for up to 14 days with COVID-19. This means it is possible for someone to be spreading the virus for up to two weeks and not feel or look sick. This is significantly longer than many other respiratory droplet viruses. For influenza or rhinovirus strains (one of the causes of the common cold), this period is generally 1-7 days.
- 3) **It is a more infectious virus in which only a few virus particles can make someone ill.**
- 4) **It is a virus that can survive outside a person for a longer period of time.** It appears that COVID-19 is a virus that can survive outside of a human host for up to three days.
- 5) **There is wide variability in severity in different patient groups infected with COVID-19. In some types of patients, the fatality rate is alarming. Yes, the majority of people who are infected with COVID-19 will recover, but that does not appear to be true among certain populations.** Now, those populations are identified as those who are older (over 65) or have underlying health conditions that make them chronically ill, especially those who are immunosuppressed or with cardiac or lung conditions. In these groups, fatality rates are much higher than what we are seeing in unselected groups, possibly in the range of 10-15% or higher (we will only know more as more time passes). An infection in which 15% of those over 65 who catch it will die begins to sound much more alarming, though it is much less concerning for the general public. We still have much to learn about COVID-19, but what we do know is who is most vulnerable: older people (even healthy ones) and those with chronic illness, especially those that involve immunosuppression and/or cardiac/respiratory illness.
- 6) **It is also very important to realize not only vulnerable populations for COVID-19 but also how people survive the infection. This is critical for an understanding of public health management of an infection. In this case, it's not just important what the case fatality rate is (for this virus, still a moving target) but also what is needed to help people who do get infected survive.** This is where another significant concern comes in. A number of people with COVID-19 will require maximal life support in the ICU with ventilator support in order to survive. The good news is that modern medicine is capable of delivering care that relieves the lungs of their job in order to keep us alive during recovery when the lungs are compromised and healing. The bad news is that this kind of care is neither easy nor readily available for large numbers of people needing it at once.
- 7) **Though the virus itself may be survivable, if surviving requires intensive medical resourcing that simply doesn't exist at a level that can keep up with a rapidly spreading infection, some people will die, not because of the virus directly, but because life supporting measures in an overwhelmed hospital were simply not available for them.** Unfortunately, older adults or medically fragile individuals with the least chance of surviving are not prioritized in times of triage crisis—whether it's COVID-19, influenza pandemic, a massive pileup on the interstate, or a battlefield scene.
- 8) **The virus is so new, that no one's immune system has seen it before. The challenge is that doing so takes time, and none of these measures are available immediately during the first outbreak of a new virus. In this kind of situation, it becomes important to determine who is most at risk from infection and enact measures to help protect their health as better treatment options or vaccinations are developed. For COVID-19, older people (those over 65) and those with underlying health conditions seem to be particularly vulnerable, with a higher chance of becoming more severely ill requiring intensive life support or dying from this virus.**

- **Some *precautions* we are recommending or implementing to inhibit the coronavirus practically to protect our church family directly (by minimizing infection for the believers of DBC), as well as to reduce its spread in the city of Duluth and beyond:**
 - 1) **It will be helpful to regularly wash or sanitize your hands— before and after church, and after touching things that other people who didn't wash their hands may have touched (door handles, doorknobs, and so on).** We have sanitizers at entry doors, and many of you carry your own. We'd also remind people that hand-washing that kills virus on the hands requires water, soap, and a good 20 seconds of washing—the amount of time it takes to sing Happy Birthday, twice.
 - 2) **It will be helpful to cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.**
 - 3) **It will be helpful to consider eliminating hand-to-hand contact during church gatherings.** This will be a challenge, but it will help the spread of germs and the possibility of COVID19.
 - 4) **It will be helpful if you are ill, to join us via livestream from your home.** Even if you just have that vague feeling you might be coming down with something, that too would be a good time to utilize our live webcast. You are helping keep others well by minimizing the chance that you spread an infection you may be developing.
 - 5) **It would be helpful if you have anything that is causing you to be immunocompromised to avoid large groups for now.** So once again, attending our worship service via the livestream broadcast would be a good option.
 - 6) **It would be helpful if you suspect that you have been exposed to this virus that you either self-quarantine or get tested to find out and proceed accordingly.**

It is also important to remember that as more information becomes available, these guidelines and recommendations will undoubtedly change. It's important to take this one step at a time and realize that we can be calm and rational about medical developments, even while taking steps to protect ourselves and our communities.

- **The *DBC live webcast* can be accessed at: www.duluthbible.org/webcast-live**
- ***Pray for the elders at DBC* as we will continue to pray and monitor the news of COVID-19 to determine if there will come a time to temporarily suspend all church services and to encourage people to watch the service on live webcast, as well as to only donate online.**

BTW - there is no reported cases in Duluth as of today, 3-14-2020.

While some people may thinking, “this is all an over-reaction and where’s your faith?”, let me remind you that while God is ultimately in control, the Holy Spirit has appointed us as shepherds to care for His sheep and we would rather be wisely safe than wrongfully sorry.

- **Some *paradoxes* to acknowledge and seek to balance from Scripture in these issues are:**
 - 1) **The exercise of divine sovereignty and human responsibility**, along with
 - 2) **The exercise of personal liberty and serving others in love.**

- Seven biblical *principles* and numerous *promises* to remember and mix with faith when you are faced with alarming circumstances or conditions which can generate fear or anxiety.

1) Remember the _____ of your God.

- His _____. God is still on the throne & is working out His plan. (Ps.115:3; Dan. 4:17)
- His _____. This trial / circumstance did not take the Lord by surprise. (Ps.139:1-5)
- His _____. He never makes a mistake. (Isa.30:18; Gen. 18:25)
- His _____. (Rom.8:35-39)
- His _____. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)
- His _____ every day. (Lam.3:22-24, 32-33)
- His _____ can be trusted. (Psalm 27:13-14)
- His _____. (Heb.13:5-6; Matt.28:20)
- His _____. (Ps.36:5, 119:75; 1 Cor. 10:13)
- His _____. (Tit. 1:2; Josh. 24:13)

2) Recognize the reality of the _____ (Gen. 3; Rom.5:12), and that your ultimate appointment with _____ is in the Lord's hands. (Heb.9:27; Psalm 31:15; 1 Thess. 4:16-18)

3) _____ in the Lord with scriptural principles in mind (Job.1:20-21) and _____ Him that _____ things are still working together for good (Romans 8:18, 28-29), even when God allows trials and afflictions to occur or sin to temporarily triumph. (Gen.50:20)

4) Entrust your trial or cares to the Lord by _____ with thanksgiving (Ps. 55:22; Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:7; Heb. 4:16), and also pray for _____ how to address the issues practically as needed. (James 1:2-7)

5) _____ in the promises of God when you are afraid or troubled (John 14:1-3, 27; 16:33) & remember that the best is yet to come for the believer. (John 17: Rev. 5:9-14; 22:3-7)

6) Be _____ for opportunities to witness to the lost (Rom. 1:14-17; 1 Peter 3:14-15), and to serve the needy in love (1 Peter 4:7-11), especially other believers in Christ. (Gal. 6:10)

7) Resolve, by the grace of God, to _____ Jesus Christ by life or by death, and to _____ for Him and serve others (Phil.1:20-25) regardless of the outcome.

- In your trials and circumstances, are you responding by faith or reacting after the flesh?