

## Ten Biblical Responses to the Corona Virus

CCC – 3-14-2020

### Pre-service stuff –

Welcome to our online experience – first time or an expert, here we are! I hope you meet God, learn something and grow in your faith!

For some of you, this is just weird. Admit it. You get the group worship when you are in a large gathering... but when you are not??? What do you do. I am going to encourage you to TRY – to react the same as when you are in the room. So if I say ‘repeat after me – JESUS IS STRONGER THAN CORONA’, you say - 😊. Nice job. You have broken the sound barrier. And remember when you do so, you are a part of a vast network of people who are joining you in prayer and singing – and even if there is distance, it is beautiful to God and we are trying to please him.

So if you are feeling led, bow your head and pray when we pray. Sing out loud if you like. If you are alone, nobody can hear how bad you are anyway. Turn up the TV. Dance with your kids in the living room.

We are going to start with an easy one. A tune that was originally sung in beer halls in Germany, but Martin Luther reclaimed it for Jesus. It is one of the world’s best known songs because it reminds us of the bigness of God in a world that is out of control. He is our mighty fortress!

### Message

Covid 19 – it is changing everything! You are watching me online, for instance. Setup – all the stuff shut down. Unprecedented – the NBA – cancelled. NHL – cancelled. Broadway – shut down. NCAA Tournament March Madness – Not in 2020! What will ESPN do? Disney world? No Mickey for you!

Which makes me ask – how did we get to COVID 19, why didn’t they just stop at 6?

Then it hits home with YOUR reality. Will my business tank? Will I really be out of work for a month? Is my school really going online? Does my teacher even know how to teach online? We have our first community spread case and the Governor said when we get a second, we will be shutting down schools for 6-8 weeks. And be prepared for a 2 week quarantine.

And then there are vulnerable people. Some will die. At this point, we don’t know how many. It is a pandemic... but in a world of hand sanitizers, tests and medicines, it is bound to be one that, in historical perspective, does not make the worst ever list. Still. It is scary.

Coronavirus is changing everything – at least for a month or two. And, because of the rapid and strong response, we will not forget it soon.

So, the biggest question is this – How is a Christian to respond to the Coronavirus? If the Bible speaks to every situation, what does it say in a coronavirus-riddled world? Well buckle your seatbelt because I

have 10 Biblical insights. Commands really. And I only had 24 hours, so this is raw Mark Ashton. These will help you to move forward as we encounter corona. My Corona!

Get out a pen and paper or your phone because I am about to drop some wisdom bombs on you that you will want to take note of. 10 Biblical responses to Corona Virus – Number ONE!

### 1) Trust the LORD

- a. Not nervous. He is in control and has watched the black plague, tornados, H1N1, wars, Ebola, AIDS, wars and famines.
- b. This is nothing new. There may be thousands of deaths or hundreds of thousands before this thing is done. But viruses and pandemics go back a long way.
  - i. Remember 2009? Influenza killed 575,000 that year!
  - ii. HIV/Aids killed 32million
  - iii. 1918 – the Spanish flu killed 100 million
  - iv. Black Death of the 1300s – 200 million people
- a. How do God's people respond in these moments?
- b. A microscopic unseeable virus has disrupted major social and economic systems. **Coronavirus shatters our illusion of control. You are not in charge... but it can press us to the simple truth... God is.** There is a very tenuous world out there and it is just the right place for us to be.
- c. EMP. Computer virus. Fragility of life. Terry Wardle "Don't put your identity in something you can lose." You have to put your identity not in your home, not in your income, not in your health... cuz you can lose those. Your identity must be in Christ!
- d. This is common to humanity. Do not be confused.

**CS Lewis Quote** "How are we to live with the Coronavirus\*? Note – every time I say 'coronavirus, CS Lewis said "Atomic Age." But ther rest is straight from him..."

How are we to live with coronavirus? " I am tempted to reply: "Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents."

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the Coronavirus occurred: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anaesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the current crisis has added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.

This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by the Coronavirus, let that virus when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing

tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about a virus. It may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but it need not dominate our minds.

*C.S. Lewis From "Present Concerns" New York: Harcourt, 1986*

- e. So what's a Jesus follower to do? Trust the LORD. Here is how David said it!
- f. God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.  
<sup>2</sup>Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,  
<sup>3</sup>though its waters roar and foam  
and the mountains quake with their surging. Psalm 46:1-3
- g. God is not surprised by Coronavirus. He is not worried about coronavirus. The idea that each of us will get sick is not new. The idea that each will die is not new. The idea that some die younger than others is not new. God has seen this for centuries. And ever since the fall of humanity people have died – from sickness, from age, from war, from murder and from viruses. And God is aware of it all. He sees it as a problem and **this is why he sent Jesus as a rescue mission to solve the problem of sin and pain and death and promise us a world where there is no more mourning, crying death or pain. Don't you yearn for that?** Jesus said it this way "In this world, you will have trouble, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world!
- h. God causes the rising and falling of kings. He is the one who measured out the seas in the palm of his hand. He is the one who knows the hairs on your head. He was here before all things and will continue after earths time is done. HE loves you and has your best interests in mind. You can trust him in good times and bad.

### Music begins

Prayer break- pause and focus on the bigness of God and the smallness of our 1 in 7 Billion lives. Then pause and shift to the idea that this big God loves you and thinks the world of you... He is your Father and he is concerned and close as he is powerful.

- 2) **Take the Detour** – Abraham to Israel. Joseph to Egypt. Moses to free Israelites. Nehemiah to rebuild the wall. Paul to Caesar. God took each from comfort to a mission they did not expect.
  - a. Kids at home... different work schedule, quarantined
  - b. Don't see this as inconvenience, but as opportunity!
  - c. God is directing you down a new path. How can I join you God? What surprises do you have in store for me now?
  - d. Our schedules are all of a sudden more free and flexible
  - e. Journey Groups are around this idea
- 3) **Use the brain** – I thought if I said "Use the" it had more Shakespearean power...  
psalm 90:12 **Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**
  - f. There is something powerful about becoming aware of our mortality. It makes us think more clearly, more wisely. When you are aware that there is an end, you live your life

with the brevity of life in mind. You live with eternal perspective. And you tend to live in a way that helps you to extend those number of days by applying the wisdom God gave you. Consider this quote from exodus.

g. Wash your hands –Exodus 20:20 <sup>20</sup>Whenever they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. WASH YOUR HANDS. Kids, it's Biblical – maybe a bit misapplied, but Biblical nonetheless!

i. Dudes... you have heard it on the news, now from Exodus. Wash your hands. Use hand sanitizer. Sneeze into your sleeve.

h. 70+? Respiratory? Heart? Immune? Family members with the same? Avoid crowds. Stay home more – maybe entirely. If you have a family member who is at risk, be careful! If your kids are telling you “Mom, stay home,” then do!

i. Don't get lost in conspiracies or politics or hysteria. There will always be extremist hype out there. Don't fall for the crazies. But do use the brain.

4) Anticipate the quarantine – Did you know quarantines have their origin in the Bible? Yup. Not the CDC, but the LEV - Leviticus records a quarantine that was required for people who have skin disease.

j. Leviticus quarantine Chapter 13:4ff <sup>4</sup>If the shiny spot on the skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to isolate the affected person for seven days. <sup>5</sup>On the seventh day the priest is to examine them, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to isolate them for another seven days. <sup>6</sup>On the seventh day the priest is to examine them again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce them clean;

k. So, the priest doubled as a doctor in those days. An infectious disease inspector. Glad that is not an expectation of pastors today! But watch yourself – a fever or a productive cough – coughing and stuff comes up... these are sure signs.

l. If you show symptoms, for goodness sake stay home! This should also be true if you have normal flu symptoms in a normal year! It is common courtesy. But even more so this year. And stay home 14 days so you can be sure it is gone. Just be smart

m. Don't make me come to your house to inspect the shiny spots on your skin!

5) Serve the city – In moments like these, we have opportunity to not just protect ourselves, but to do what God said in serving the weak, protecting the vulnerable and loving people in need.

n. Jeremiah 29:7 <sup>7</sup>Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

o. Babylonian background – You didn't choose to be here, but invest heavily because your life depends on it. 70 years... may as well be blessed. God wants YOU to invest in this city.

p. One thing we know will happen next week is this: Food insecurity will rise. Kids who normally depend on school breakfast and school lunch will be without school. Who is

going to take care of them? Well, at Franklin Elementary – our favorite corner of the city Village One, we will partner with Mission Church. Go to our website;

- i. [CCComaha.org/franklin](http://CCComaha.org/franklin) – write it down and you will find a list of food needs. Go shopping. Bring these to the church and we will package and distribute them to the kids. You can pull up by 12:30 TODAY or 8-5 all week long and we will get it to the right place.
  - ii. **Running TO the problem is the way Christians have engaged since the beginning of problems.**
- q. Rodney Stark, Rise of Christianity – How did the early Christian movement spread? Not by power or by the sword. Not by converting the masses of uneducated. But by rescuing abandoned baby girls off of garbage heaps. By choosing not to have abortion or engage in infanticide. And, when disease ravaged the people, they chose NOT to run to the hills, but to engage – as nurses, doctors or just caregivers. Yes, they risked their lives, but so many remembered the compassion in hard times that they easily turned to Jesus – the giver of compassion who modeled it, inspired it, and commissioned it in us.

**Rodney Stark – Rise of Christianity** - *"To cities filled with homeless and the impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fires and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services."* Rodney Stark

- r. **Friends, the church is at its best in the midst of tragedy and pandemic.** And this friends is the way of Christians because it is the way of Jesus
- s. Jesus entered into a sin-scarred, death-destined world and was not afraid to come face to face with sin or sickness or beating or death. He engaged!
- t. So, when we come to him, we encounter someone who is not remote or aloof, but someone who has been there before!

**6) Engage the CCC Family--** CCC that is

- u. Keep meeting in journey groups. Homes are good – smaller groups are totally OK as long as no one is sick or in a vulnerable class.
- v. Also, the church is open for prayer, for benevolence or for meeting a few friends in the Atrium. Staff are still coming in to run ministries remotely and the building will be open, although only the main doors.
- w. We plan to launch Online journey groups in a matter of weeks for those who want to connect in a Google hangout or other forum. Watch for more news there
- x. And while you are online, consider changing your giving to online giving. You can find it on the APP, or [cccomaha.org](http://cccomaha.org). Just the same as you pay online for anything else. It is safe, it is free and there is NO COVID 19 transmission using the online system. Germ free baby!
- a. We will have services online every week. Get creative on how you use them! Get together with another family and do church and brunch... invite your journey group to

meet Sunday morning around services. Invite people with NO church home to join you at your house.

- b. Kat Hope Jones – CCC group, watch party and Worship and waffles

## 7) Love the neighbor

- y. Opportunity to work with Seniors –at church or in neighborhood
- z. Shopping for Seniors – email [JoshuaL@cccomaha.org](mailto:JoshuaL@cccomaha.org)
- aa. Post on your next door app about being willing to help get groceries or watch kids
- bb. Create kid-watching coops for parents suddenly at home with kids – I'll take morning, you take afternoons. Kids can school together.
- cc. Exchange cell #s with neighbors so you can text in time of need if you are contagious.

Here is what **Martin Luther** said about this “ You ought to think this way: “very well, by God’s decree, the enemy has sent us poison and deadly offal. Therefore, I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person, but will go freely.” See this is such a God fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God!”

- 8) **Disciple the mind** – You may have more free time with this week than any other! You may be interrupted in such a way that you could fritter your time on trivia or invest it in your spiritual growth! I Corinthians 1:5 **We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**
  - dd. Before you Netflix binge – ask ‘what kind of person do I want to become? Will four hours of Netflix get me closer or something else?’
  - ee. Binge on Deuteronomy instead of Disney plus, Numbers instead of Netflix
  - ff. You got a list of books on your nightstand that you have wanted to get to? Lets grab that book that has been on the ‘to be read list’ The fat one!
  - gg. Try the Bible Project – Awesome video resources for Biblical Literacy – binge on these!
  - hh. Watch for CCC online resources coming soon! I think our people will cook up some cool stuff to bless you - watch for it.

## 9) Lead the kids

- ii. Have overt conversations – maybe a family meeting
  - i. Talk in straightforward but age appropriate ways
  - ii. Wash hands when you walk in the house
  - iii. Set dishwashers to sanitation mode
- jj. Show them you are balancing faith with wisdom

- i. Pray with them and walk in faith
    - kk. Go for walks together – take the dog. No virus to be scared of out in nature!
  - ll. Demonstrate confidence in God’s rule and eternal life!
    - i. Remind them that death is not the end.
      - ii. In fact, this entire life is a detour from the garden of eden to the New Heavens and New earth. We are but a breath of smoke, a mist in the wind.
- 10) **Live the joy**
- mm. We are on an adventure with God!
  - nn. Sickness happens because of a broken world
  - oo. Death may strike, but we are not afraid because Jesus beat death – In fact, he turned back death!
  - pp. Jesus and the Leper – Mark 1:40 You remember when he encountered a leper? This guy was super infectious. Imagine his skin oozing and pussy. His nervous system broken down and the inability to feel pain. He is totally hopeless and comes to Jesus saying “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Total faith. And Jesus TOUCHES him... I am willing. Be clean.
  - qq. Jesus came back to turn sickness into healing. To turn back the night. To infect evil with good and depression with joy.
  - rr. Your attitude during this time will be infectious. You think coronavirus is infectious? Christians can be!
  - ss. Have you watched any of those online videos about how stuff gets transferred and how much we rub up against each other? What if we were as joy-filled and infectious as Corona! The world would see, and know that Jesus is alive. In this world, you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world!

Lets Pray...