

Don't Waste the Coronavirus

The ongoing Corona virus threat has changed all of our lives in pretty drastic ways. In order to avoid contracting and spreading the virus, most of us are spending a lot more time at home. This isn't all bad. The limited self-quarantining most of us have been doing has given many families some extended time to be together. On the other hand, for many there are the added burdens of new financial concerns, with many being laid off from work, and many small businesses unable to function at all. Certainly, Corona virus has changed our lives radically.

Some are already speculating as to the *permanent* changes that Corona virus will produce in our institutions and the way we live our lives. Will churches begin to devote *more* resources to online meetings, or make more use of social media? Almost certainly. It may even be that God is preparing his church for days ahead when we might be scattered through persecution.

But what about *personal* changes? How has this pandemic affected *you*? Are you keeping socially acceptable distance from others? No doubt as much as you can. Are you washing your hands more often? I hope so. Are you staying at home more, perhaps even working from home? This is true for many. So, let me ask you, what are you doing with this new normal we are experiencing? Some of you may have loads more free time than you are used to, while others, although working from home, are busier than ever (I know this is true for Kara and myself). As Christians, we don't have the luxury of simply treating this pandemic as an opportunity to catch up on some (perhaps much needed) sleep, or binge-watching television. We have to ask ourselves, "What is God doing in my life through this unusual set of circumstances?"

Maybe God is teaching us all to trust him more (especially if you are laid off from work). Maybe God is going to use this time to work in our families, as we are no doubt spending a lot more time together (dads, what a great time to take charge of family worship!). Maybe God is reminding us all that there are plenty of things in our lives that are completely out of our control. God is no doubt doing all of these things and much more. But could it be that God also expects *us* to do something? Perhaps he wants us to see the present situation as an opportunity for growth. I believe God wants *us* to take action as well.

What if you took some of your isolation time to develop some new habits in your life? Godly habits. What we often call *spiritual disciplines*. Given the busyness of daily life for most of us, it is easy to let good things overshadow the *most* important things (we often refer to this as the *tyranny of the urgent*). What role has prayer played in your life? Or the study of God's Word? How about the discipline of fasting, or solitude? The disciplines of worship and meditation? These practices are crucial for our growth in grace and knowledge. In fact, they are some of the very *means* God uses to disciple us as his children. Unfortunately, we don't often slow down enough to care for our own souls. This is a great time to change that pattern!

Paul urges Timothy to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (1 Tim 4:7). Such discipline is not a *substitute* for the grace of God, but is our *necessary response* to the work of God’s grace in our lives. Peter puts it this way in 2 Peter 1:5-9:

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

When Peter speaks of *applying all diligence*, he is urging us to *work out our salvation* in the same way that Paul did in Philippians 2:12, and for precisely the same reason, because *it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure*.

These two passages, along with 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 urge upon us the importance of *our* work, *our* effort, and our labor, in response to the grace of God that has been given to us in Christ Jesus. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but **I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.**”

Don’t waste this opportunity to readjust and refocus your life. If God has given you some extended time at home, use it to reorient your life toward eternity.

Recommended Reading:

Easy: Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*

More Challenging: Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*