

CURRENT EVENTS

Should Christians Be Anxious About the Coronavirus?

MARCH 3, 2020 | **TODD WAGNER**

With the increasing coronavirus cases outside of China, many believers across the United States wonder how to respond to the increasing alarm. What would God have us do in the face of a growing international health crisis? Should our churches close their doors for fear of spreading illness? Should I take my kids out of school? Cancel travel plans?

How should we help a panicked world?

Remember What We Know

First, it's important to be reminded about what we already know. Worry is not our friend, and panic is not our way. Solomon reminds us, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Prov. 24:10). May it never be said that God's people are governed more by fear than faith.

Corrie ten Boom, along with other faithful from among the nations, led courageously in the face of the Nazi fascism—a different form of deadly virus. And she reminds us, "Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrows, it empties today of its strength."

In times of crisis, the world needs steady people who are strengthened by God's grace and selfless by God's power. Worry accomplishes nothing except weakness of heart and head. It's been said that 90 percent of the things we worry or become panicked about never happen, and the other 10 percent are outside our control.

While we remain on alert against viruses of doctrine or disease, worrying won't change our circumstances or lower our chance of infection. It won't help us fight off illness or move us to action. Worrying about COVID-19 (or anything else) will only increase trouble. Rather than worrying and being anxious, Jesus calls us to respond with prayer and faith in him (Matt. 6:33–34; Phil. 4:6). We need not worry ultimately because we know the One who has defeated sin and death (1 Cor. 15:55–57).

Remind yourself continually: it takes the same amount of energy to worry as to pray. One leads to peace, the other to panic. Choose wisely.

Love Well and Trust Him

If God calls us to worry about anything, it's how to love people well. The psalmist encourages us, "Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness" ([Ps. 37:3](#)). Peter reminds us to press on in the midst of every evil. Whether persecutions or pandemics, we can trust in the Lord, knowing, "It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil" ([1 Pet. 3:17](#)).

Worry is common to man. But God has called us to face troubles and threats with courage, leaning our weight on him.

Throughout history, Christians have often stood out because they were willing to help the sick even during plagues, pandemics, and persecutions. They loved people and weren't afraid of death because they understood that "to live is Christ and to die is gain" ([Phil. 1:21](#)). By stepping into the mess of sickness and disease, they were able to demonstrate their faith to a watching world. So, rather than just asking "How do I stay healthy?" perhaps we should be also ask "How can I help the sick?" Let's be quick to help and slow to hide in basements.

Prayer-infused confidence, compassion, and selflessness should mark how we talk about the coronavirus. Why? Because our Savior put on flesh ([John 1:14](#)) and stepped into our sickness, sin, and death. He healed the sick and cared for the hurting. We must do likewise.

We Can Be Careful, Too

None of this means we should be reckless. Neither Christ's love nor God's Word encourages careless risks, but both promote obedience. Loving the sick doesn't mean we intentionally infect ourselves ([Prov. 22:3](#)). If infection becomes a legitimate risk (at the moment, the Center for Disease Control says the virus isn't communally spreading in the United States, and the health risk is low), responding to the coronavirus likely means taking small practical steps like washing our hands and staying home if we're sick.

Before you think of canceling church services, ask, "How can we care for those at risk?" As others get sick, care for them. Are most of you still healthy? That's a great reason to gather for thanksgiving and prayer. Seek appropriate medical care as symptoms arise and don't forsake caring for one another.

Follow the example of those who've acted faithfully in the past. In 19th-century England, when thousands were dying of cholera, Charles Spurgeon visited homes to care for people. The church of Jesus in Wuhan China, the virus's epicenter, is faithfully leading even today.

Finally, as you watch the world react to this crisis—itself a stark reminder of our mortality—don't neglect to share the hope you have in Jesus ([1 Pet. 3:15](#)). Share how he rescued you from the universal epidemic of sin and the penalty of death. Share that your hope is not found in remaining healthy this side of heaven.

We'll all face death eventually. Thanks to Jesus, we can come to that day with confidence. Like Paul, we can remember that to live is Christ, but to die is gain ([Phil. 1:21](#)). We truly have nothing ultimate to fear—not from the coronavirus, [the Ebola virus](#), natural disasters, or anything else.

Press on, friends. Pray for the sick. Walk in God's strength. Love the brotherhood. Do good to all men. Use your health to serve, not to hide. Jesus is sovereign over it all. And we are immortal until God's work for us to do is finished.

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CHURCH PLANTING

This Little Church of Mine, I'm Gonna Let It Shine

MARCH 3, 2020 | [CHRISTY BRITTON](#)

ACTS 29: CHURCHES PLANTING CHURCHES

Like many of you, I remember Sunday mornings gathered around a kid-sized table with other little ones. Dressed in our Sunday best, we ate cookies (the ones with the hole in the center you could stick your finger through) and drank Kool-Aid while our teacher led us in song. *This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.* . . . As our voices sang on, we declared (loudly and a bit off key) that we wouldn't hide our lights, wouldn't let Satan blow them out.

Now that I'm in my 40s, my cookie and Kool-Aid consumption has decreased, but some days I still hum the familiar childhood song. I appreciate its simplicity and biblical clarity, echoing Jesus's words:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven ([Matt. 5:14–16](#)).

The world's darkness can be overwhelming. Our souls recognize the wrongness of fallen creation—broken homes, unwanted babies, sexual slavery, and more. But no matter how devastating the darkness becomes, there is One who has overcome it ([John 1:5](#)).

God is light ([1 John 1:5](#)) and has made us children of light ([1 Thes. 5:5](#)). Essentially, then, a church is a gathering of light-bearers. We plant churches to create more communities of light. We plant churches that plant churches to reach the darkest corners of the world.

Consider three effects of a church that shines.

1. Darkness Is Exposed

Evil thrives in darkness. One of the great evils of our time is abortion. On December 31, 2019, as people all over the world celebrated the coming of the new year, Disrn News [reported](#) that the leading cause of death worldwide in 2019—by far—was abortion. More than 42 million image-bearers were killed last year. To put this in perspective, approximately 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

Is your church devastated by the global slaughtering of unborn children? Then resolve to plant more churches. The horrors of this holocaust—and many other deeds of darkness—result from the sin of unbelief. “The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble” ([Prov. 4:19](#)). The only thing distinguishing us from the wicked is grace. God opened our eyes so we could turn from darkness to light and receive forgiveness for our sins ([Acts 26:18](#)).

“Is your church devastated by the global slaughtering of unborn children? Then resolve to plant more churches.”



As ones who've been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of Christ ([Col. 1:13](#)), we plant churches that expose sin by preaching the Scriptures. We invite rebels to repent and believe. Our bold proclamation—that Christ saves sinners—chases away darkness.

2. Goodness Is Visible

Our church plants must be communities of light that not only expose darkness, but illuminate goodness. We were created in Christ Jesus for good works ([Eph. 2:10](#)), and his goodness is displayed when his people let their light shine.

When churches choose purity over pornography and care for victims of human trafficking, the world sees goodness against the backdrop of oppressive wickedness. When church plants include parents who treasure

and train their children, and spouses who work through their differences to the praise of Jesus, our neighbors witness goodness.

The world's appetite for wickedness grows daily. So when our obedience to God's light-shining command likewise increases, we offer an alternative diet. Through our glad obedience, they can get a taste for something better. Something satisfying. With our good works we declare, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!" ([Ps. 34:8](#)).

3. God Is Glorified

What do we want others to do when they see our good works? Give glory to God ([Matt. 5:16](#)). Our pro-life ethic isn't based on misplaced aspirations to fit within a certain tribe. We don't welcome the fatherless into our homes to create better Instagram stories. Our refusal to compromise our integrity to advance our careers isn't so we can play the martyr at small group. We don't shine for our sake, but for God's.

"Our ambitions are aimed at his great glory magnified among neighbors and nations."



Our good works are fueled by the desire to see our Father in heaven praised. Our ambitions are aimed at his great glory magnified among neighbors and nations. We work heartily for him ([Col. 3:23](#)), and he is glorified through our actions.

I'm no longer the little girl who loved to sing about her light. I'm a woman who follows Jesus, the light of the world ([John 8:12](#)), and I'm gonna let my light shine. Yes, darkness abounds. But even the tiniest flickering dispels the dark. And we don't just flicker, we *shine* Christ's light into the dark and behold his mercy toward sinners.

Do you see the effect your church can have by letting your light shine brightly? And how church-planting churches can further spread the light? Let's courageously shine forth gospel grace, remembering that the darkness can never overcome the light ([John 1:5](#)).

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