



FBC Friends,

Public health emergencies have occurred throughout history. Typhoid fever, the influenza of 1918, the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, severe acute respiratory virus (SARS), and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) are a few examples. SARS, a coronavirus, began in China in 2002 and did occur worldwide though it was quickly contained and has not been identified since 2004. MERS cases are linked to the Arabian Peninsula. Like SARS, MERS is also a coronavirus first reported in 2012. The United States confirmed two cases of MERS associated with travel to Saudi Arabia in 2014 and continues to monitor for it.

The current coronavirus in the United States called SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19 was first detected on January 20, 2020 in the state of Washington after it emerged from central China. As you know it is now in every state and has spread throughout much of the world. Illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to death. The symptoms generally occur 2 to 14 days after exposure and consist of fever, cough, and shortness of breath though other symptoms may be present. It is currently recommended that persons with mild symptoms stay at home and isolate themselves at home. Emergency signs that require immediate medical attention include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, and bluish lips or face.

What can you do to protect yourself and your family? Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

- Stay home when you are sick and avoid exposing others. Call your provider's office in advance of a visit. Ask your provider if he/she has the capability to do a telehealth visit.
- Limit visitors to your home.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and especially after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- Use a hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth if possible.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay 6 feet away from other people (non-family members).
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.
- Exercise.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Stay at home as much as possible and avoid gatherings of more than 10 people. This guidance may change soon.

I am reminded of the time that Jesus retreated to the desert after his baptism. The Bible tells us that Jesus spent forty days and nights in the desert without food. He returned filled with the Holy Spirit. Christians now find themselves "in a desert" and uncharted territory. Our desert is not a physical desert but a disruption of our normal lifestyle desert. What should be our response as a Christian? What can we do now? Paul gave us instruction in Ephesians Chapters 4 and 5. In Chapter 5 he reminds us that our lives should be controlled by love.

Your mental and spiritual health is most important when you are "in the desert." You can be nourished by God's word. Spend time daily with reading His word, meditating, and praying. Show your love to others. Call or communicate with your fellow church members, family, neighbors, and others. Remember that every day is a special day and a gift from God. We will get through these crises as we have done in the other public health emergencies. We know that our Lord is with us and will never forsake us. We may come out of it with a deeper relationship with God and filled with the Holy Spirit.

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