

# Times of Crisis

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, March 15, 2020

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**Main Theme** – Concerning how believers should respond in this time of crisis (i.e., Coronavirus).

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## WORSHIP & PRAYER

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Regular Events**
  - Touch Upon Bulletin for Details (Highlight Ministries, etc.)
- **Upcoming Events Pt. 2**
  - Holy Week – April 5–12 (Invite Your Friends, Relatives & More)

## MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH (N/A)**
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**Main Theme – Concerning how believers should respond in this time of crisis (i.e., Coronavirus).**

## INTRODUCTION

As always it is wonderful to see you. I do look forward to these moments of corporate worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today. Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

**KEY** – May we have ears to hear what the Spirit of the Lord is saying in this hour...

## SETTING THE STAGE

There is an old ADAGE that is popular in political circles: i.e., “never let a crisis go to waste.” Of course, I find it reprehensible when leaders seek to make political hay out of tragic events. Yet, this morning I am going to draw upon a slightly ALTERED version of this principle: i.e., “never let a crisis go to waste, but use it as an opportunity to point people to Christ and to matters of eternal truth.”

**FYI** – As we gather, our nation is gripped with FEAR and a pervading sense of PANIC—seemingly worsening by the moment—due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19). I am sure that this sense of anxiety has troubled the hearts of people present even in this very room! Thus said, I have deemed it necessary to postpone our regularly scheduled teaching (i.e., the Beatitudes) to address this global concern from a biblical perspective.

We should always strive to understand our world/circumstances through the filter of Scripture!

THUS SAID...

**Q. How should we respond in this season of developing crisis and panic?**

**Q. How should we—as followers of Christ—behave in such a circumstance?**

These are great questions (i.e., timely)! Allow me the opportunity to RESPOND accordingly:

**FYI** – I will be outlining about 5–6 interrelated points...

## #1 – PERSPECTIVE

To begin, we are in need of some much-needed PERSPECTIVE.

**NOTE** – People are running around like THIS is the first generation in human history to face a crisis (i.e., medical or otherwise). People have been asking me if the Coronavirus is mentioned in the Bible, acting like what is happening is SO COMPLETELY unprecedented that it MUST be mentioned in end-time prophecy!

**KEY** – “Let’s not exaggerate the novelty” of our situation. Though COVID-19 is a new strain of disease, it is NOT the first time a virus has caused a global pandemic! It has happened before and it will—should the Lord tarry—happen again! Remember the words of King Solomon (son of David):

### **Ecclesiastes 1:9 (NIV)**

9 What has been will be again,  
 what has been done will be done again;  
 there is nothing new under the sun.

**FYI** – In 1948 C. S. Lewis wrote an essay on how the people of his generation were to live in the atomic age. i.e., People were terrified of the awesome power of the atomic bomb, causing men and women to question, “HOW are we to live and function in such a time?” I find Lewis’s words both insightful and applicable:

In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb [substitute the issue of the day: e.g., Coronavirus]. How are we to live in an atomic age? 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 have pillaged your shores; or indeed, as you already live in an age of cancer, motor accidents” and so forth.

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. The first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are going to be destroyed by the atomic bomb, let it when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—e.g., praying, working, reading, listening to music, connecting with family and friends—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They make break our bodies, but they need not dominate our minds.

**KEY 1** – This virus is simply the newest in an ever-increasing and age-old list of “world-shattering events.” Yet that the world is STILL here! In twenty years—perhaps less—this will all be but a distant memory and something else will likely captivate and command our attention. So...

**KEY 2** – Get some perspective, calm down, and wash your hands!

## #2 – FAITH

Moreover, this is a time for Christians to exercise their FAITH.

**NOTE** – I CAN understand the fearfulness I am seeing in the lives of those who are lost. I CANNOT to understand the alarm I am witnessing in the lives of those who belong to Jesus Christ. Church, this should not be—we are to be a people who live under the command, “Fear NOT” (cf. Josh. 1:9; Isa. 41:10, 13; John 14:27). Can I ask you a few questions?

**Q. Is God NOT Omniscient** (all-knowing; perfect knowledge of all things past/present/future)?

Do we really think that the Coronavirus and its spread is something that has caught the Lord by SURPRISE? Certainly the virus and its impact has blindsided earthly leaders and beyond, but do you think that it blindsided the King of Heaven?

### **Job 28:24**

24 . . . he views the ends of the earth  
and sees everything under the heavens.

### **Psalms 147:5**

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power;  
his understanding has no limit.

### **Isaiah 40:28**

28 Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

### **Hebrews 4:13**

13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

**KEY** – Just because is surprised you does NOT mean that it surprised Him. WHERE is your faith?

**Q. Is God NOT Omnipotent** (all-powerful; able to do what He purposes to accomplish)?

Why are believers running around like God is SUDDENLY impotent in the face of this crisis? Why are people acting like they are DOOMED to both catch and die from the Coronavirus? Where has our confidence in God’s keeping and healing power gone? Perhaps we are NOT used to trusting God at this level—but that is an indictment on our character and not His!

**KEY** – Maybe it is time we spend some time in Psalm 91...

### **Psalm 91**

- 1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust."
  
- 3 Surely he will save you  
from the fowler's snare  
and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4 He will cover you with his feathers,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- 5 You will not fear the terror of night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,  
6 nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- 7 A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.
- 8 You will only observe with your eyes  
and see the punishment of the wicked.
  
- 9 If you say, "The Lord is my refuge,"  
and you make the Most High your dwelling,  
10 no harm will overtake you,  
no disaster will come near your tent.
- 11 For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways;  
12 they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- 13 You will tread on the lion and the cobra;  
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
  
- 14 "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him;  
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
- 15 He will call on me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble,  
I will deliver him and honor him.
- 16 With long life I will satisfy him  
and show him my salvation."

**Q. Is God NOT sovereign** (in control/dominion over all things)?

You might say, “If God is truly in control WHY is there a virus in the first place!” Of course, Scripture thoroughly answers this line of questioning, noting that both sickness and death are in this world due to the misuse of the freedom God elected to give humanity (cf. Gen. 3). Therefore, we CANNOT ascribe blame to God that belongs solely to us!

**KEY 1** – Though God hates human suffering and calamity, do NOT doubt that He can use it to achieve and/or advance eternally good ends! I wonder how many people have been moved to greater degrees of faith, prayer, and interdependence because of this pandemic? I wonder how many people have been moved to consider their own mortality and human frailty because of this virus? I wonder how many people have been moved to trust in Christ (attaining salvation)?

**KEY 2** – You never know how the Lord can use such an event to awaken the human heart (i.e., entire nations)! We act like pain is always a bad thing (and for good reason). But can the Lord use pain and human suffering to lead people to necessary and positive ends? YES! And maybe—in His sovereign purpose—there is a reason for this virus and its spread that transcends our understanding, power and control—but not His!

**Romans 8:28**

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[a] have been called according to his purpose.

**KEY 3** – Trust in God’s wisdom, power and purpose.

### #3 – PREPARATION

Thus said, this is a time for strategic PREPARATION.

**NOTE** – Sometimes disastrous scenarios take place and bit of preparation can go a LONG way. Though we are to trust wholly in the Lord (previous point), it was He who endowed man with wisdom, logic and intelligence whereby we might ANTICIPATE situations and PREPARE accordingly.

**KEY** – There is nothing wrong with using the brain that God gave you! It is not contrary to faith!

There is an interesting account recorded in the Book of Genesis (i.e., chapter 41):

#### 1) In Genesis 41 Pharaoh has Two Dreams that Disturb Him Greatly

##### **Genesis 41:1–8**

1 . . . Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, 2 when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. 3 After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. 4 And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

5 He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. 6 After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. 7 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

8 In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

#### 2) God Supernaturally Reveals the Meaning of the Dream Via Joseph

##### **Genesis 41:15–16, 25–32**

15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” 16 “I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.”

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. 27 The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.

28 “It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. 29 Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, 30 but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. 31 The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. 32 The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

### **3) God Imparts Supernatural Wisdom re: How to Practically Handle the Problem**

#### **Genesis 41:33–40**

33 “And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. 35 They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. 36 This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.”

37 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. 38 So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God[a]?”

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.”

**Q. Could God have supernaturally multiplied the food to provide for the people? YES**

**Q. Does the Lord promise to supernaturally multiply the food to provide for them? NO**

RATHER, God imparts wisdom whereby they can work to prepare and provide for themselves! Sometimes the supernatural provision/answer we are looking for is rooted in incredibly practical things!

**KEY 1** – In the case of the CORONAVIRUS, perhaps God is communicating wisdom through the doctors and medical professional when they tell us to wash our hands (20 seconds), cover when we cough or sneeze, maintain personal space, etc. Perhaps God is communicating wisdom through our Federal and State leaders when they say to fill up your gas tank, set aside 1–2 weeks-worth of food, etc.

**KEY 2** – Maybe it’s time you took some precautions and did some preparation (should the worst-case scenario happen). In perilous times, you will be a REFUGE or a REFUGEE. You can be a haven/help to those in need or one who is in need.

**Q. What separates a person who is a refuge from a refugee? A modicum of preparation!**

## #4 – PRAYER

Moving along, this is a perfect time for deeper degrees of PRAYER.

**NOTE** – This is a time for Christians across the world to call upon the Lord with one voice! Call me silly, but I still believe that the “prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (cf. James 5:16b).

**QUOTE 1** – “God has not changed; and His ear is just as quick to hear the voice of real prayer, and His hand is just as long and strong to save; as it ever was.” (R.A. Torrey)

**QUOTE 2** – “Prayer is as mighty as God, because He has committed Himself to answer it.” (Leonard Ravenhill)

### **Matthew 7:7–8**

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

**QUOTE 3** – “To get nations back on their feet, we must first get down on our knees.” (Billy Graham)

### **2 Chronicles 7:14 (NIV)**

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

### **Q. WHAT can you pray for?**

#### **1) Pray for those Who are Suffering**

##### **James 5:13**

13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray.

#### **2) Pray for those Who are Facing Death (Open Eyes/Hearts)**

##### **2 Corinthians 4:4**

4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

### 3) Pray for world leaders/divine wisdom

#### 1 Timothy 2:1–4

1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

### 4) Pray for Medical Professionals/Workers (Fulfillment of the Following Promise)

#### Proverbs 11:25

25 A generous person will prosper;  
whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

### 5) Pray for God to Raise Up Witnesses

#### Matthew 9:37–38

37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

## #5 – WITNESS

And on that point—and finally—this is a time for Christians to PROCLAIM Jesus Christ.

**NOTE** – There is a biblical truth that ‘everything that can be shaken will be shaken’ (cf. Heb. 12:27). There are seasons wherein God EXPOSES the FRAILTY of man and the systems/kingdoms we create. We are in such an age! Our vulnerabilities (e.g., physical, medical, economic, etc.) have all-too-clearly been exposed—which is quite unnerving for many!

**KEY 1** – Yet this is the precise moment to direct people to the ONE who cannot be shaken!

#### Malachi 3:6

“For I the Lord do not change”

#### James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

#### Hebrews 10:38

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

#### Isaiah 40:28

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

**KEY 2** – This is also the moment to direct people to the KINGDOM that cannot be shaken!

**Hebrews 13:14**

14 For here we do not have an enduring city [kingdom], but we are looking for the city [kingdom] that is to come.

**Hebrews 11:10**

10 [Like Abraham—the forefather of our faith—we must look forward to] to the city [i.e., kingdom] with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

**KEY 3** – This is a time to proclaim Jesus Christ, the Promise of Heaven and Eternal Hope! Modern Christianity has FORFEITED much in making everything—i.e., the whole of our message—about the here and now. The best promises of God are NOT about this life, but what is AHEAD...

**John 3:16 (Emphasis Mine)**

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have **everlasting** life.

**1) Be a Witness in What You Say**

**2) Be a Witness in How You Live**

## CONCLUSION

**Q. How should you respond during this (or any season of) crisis?**

**A.** With perspective, faith, strategic preparation, prayer and Christian witness!

**James 1:22**

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

IN CLOSING...

**Numbers 6:24–26**

24 The Lord bless you  
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.