

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today. I thank God for the opportunity to connect digitally with you in such a time as this. I do look forward to the time when we can all worship together again! Until that day, we will continue to meet using this medium.

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

This morning I want to open with a QUOTE that I came across while studying in Bible college. It is a quotation from a revivalist of years-gone-by named Leonard Ravenhill. Please take note the following:

**QUOTE** – “Take the opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity” (**REPEAT**)

**Q. What does this mean?**

**A.** It means that there are times in life (i.e., both individually and corporately) when doors of opportunity will open/present themselves, and we must pass through them while we may. Should we DELAY, said doors may well close—and the opportunity might be forever lost.

**NOTE 1** – I want you to consider the life and ministry of CHRIST. He lived His life knowing that He had but a short window of time to perform the work/will of the Father. Should He fail to achieve all that God commanded Him, that window would remain forever closed! Consider His words:

**John 9:4 (NKJV)**

4 I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

**NOTE 2** – Paul commanded us to maximize the spiritual opportunities that present themselves:

**Colossians 4:5 (NIV)**

5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

**Ephesians 5:15–16**

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

**KEY** – The truths of these passages are found in the remarks of Ravenhill:

**QUOTE** – “Take the opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity.”

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

### **Q. Why am I touching upon such themes?**

**A.** What is taking place in our country right now is—for each of us—a once-in-a-century event. You would likely have to be well over 100-years old to remember a pandemic that caused this degree of societal and/or global lockdown. Thus, for many, this is a time of UNPRECEDENTED concern, crisis, and challenge.

**KEY** – However, this is also an incredible period of OPPORTUNITY for the Church of Jesus Christ (i.e., individually, corporately and globally)—if we have the wisdom to recognize the open doors before us and the courage to step through them! May we have the good sense to...

**QUOTE** – “Take [this] opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity.”

### **Q. “Pastor, what opportunities lie before us at this time?”**

Great question—I am glad that you asked. Allow me to share the following points...

## **#1 – CALL OUT TO GOD**

Firstly, this period in history is giving us the unique opportunity to CALL out to God in prayer.

**FYI** – One of the most common reasons people cite for NOT taking the time to pray is a lack of time. Our culture—particularly in New England—is so fast-paced and on-the-go that many people feel like they have no time to pray! If I was paid a dollar for every time a believer told me they couldn’t find time to pray, I’d be able to retire early.

**KEY** – But TIME is now the one thing everyone seems to have an abundance of. As many are locked down in their homes, off-work, etc., time is the one commodity most of us have for the first time in our lives!

### **Q. Why not make this once-in-a-lifetime moment an opportunity to call out to God in prayer?**

**QUOTE** – During the Pandemic of 1918, the Assemblies of God called its people to a new commitment to/concentration of prayer. Consider the following words:

Here in Springfield [MO], all churches, Missions, etc., including the Assembly of God, are closed because of the scourge of Spanish Influenza that is raging in the town. The way to our loving Father’s heart and the way to His hear ear [is] still open, and we are finding it a splendid opportunity to devote additional time to prayer for our missionaries, and for the soldier boys, and for rain all over the world in this time of the Latter Rain. Where assemblies are closed, let the saints devote themselves . . . to prayer.

## **Q. What can we PRAY for?**

### **1) Revival**

#### **2 Chronicles 7:14**

14 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.

### **2) Your Fellow Man**

#### **1 Timothy 2:1–4**

1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people . . . [e.g., your brethren in Christ, your community in need, medical professionals, the sickly, the families of those who have passed, etc. — limitless opportunities to pray for those in need].

### **3) Earthly Leaders**

#### **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) Yourself (Own Needs)**

#### **Matthew 6:11**

11 Give us today our daily bread.

#### **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.

### **5) The Work of Christ/Church**

#### **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.”

**KEY** – We all have the opportunity to pray as never before! This season will NOT last forever...

**QUOTE** – “Take the opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity.”

## #2 – CONSIDER HIS WORD

Secondly, this period in time is giving us the unique opportunity to CONSIDER the Word of God.

**FYI** – One of the most common reasons people cite for NOT taking the time to study Scripture is a lack of time. Once again, if only I had a dollar for every time a Christian claimed lack of time as a justification for neglecting His Word!

**KEY** – But—AGAIN—time is the one thing that everyone seems to have an abundance of!

**Q. Why not make this once-in-a-lifetime moment an opportunity to delve into the Word?**

**FYI** – There is NOTHING like Scripture!

An unknown writer said, "This Book is the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding; its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's character. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ; yes, to glory itself, for eternity.

**1) Allow the Word to Convict You.**

**Hebrews 4:12**

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

**2) Allow the Word to Transform/Equip You.**

**2 Timothy 3:16**

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

### 3) Allow the Word to Inspire You.

#### Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
 he leads me beside quiet waters,  
 3 he refreshes my soul.  
 He guides me along the right paths  
 for his name's sake.  
 4 Even though I walk  
 through the darkest valley,  
 I will fear no evil,  
 for you are with me;  
 your rod and your staff,  
 they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me  
 in the presence of my enemies.  
 You anoint my head with oil;  
 my cup overflows.  
 6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
 all the days of my life,  
 and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
 forever.

#### Q. How can you read this and NOT feel inspired?

**NOTE** – Allow me to make a few PASTORAL suggestions:

- 1) Live in the Psalms and Proverbs (Balance Between Spiritual & Practical Matters)
- 2) Live in the Book of Acts (Consider the Example of the Early Church/Saints of God)
- 3) Live in the Gospels (Delve into the 'Example, Ministry, Teaching & Work' of Christ)

**KEY** – We all have the opportunity to study as never before! This season will NOT last forever...

**QUOTE** – “Take the opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity.”

### **#3 – CONNECT WITH OTHERS**

Thirdly, this period in history is giving us the unique opportunity to CONNECT with one another.

**NOTE** – Now you MAY be saying to yourself, “Pastor, how can you say that we have a unique opportunity to connect with one another? I can’t leave my house or travel at this time due to the Coronavirus!” But hear me in this...

**KEY** – Yes, the typical conduits for connection are temporarily severed/restricted. For instance, we are having to do this livestream v. meet in person for a typical Sunday Worship Service. Yet, we have the opportunity to connect with others in MEANINGFUL ways (if we are willing). Take note of the following:

#### **1) Phone Call**

We live in a generation when most people use their smartphones to do everything but talk on the phone. But now, with so little face-to-face connection, many of us are relying upon the connection that a phone conversation can provide.

You can take the time to call your brethren in Christ! I have never been on the phone so much!

#### **2) Social Media**

I have long harped on social media, warning of its misuses (and rightly so). But consider the role that this tool is now wonderfully serving. We are using a social media platform right now to connect, and you are hearing God’s Word via this technological means. I have tried to use social media more in recent days to spread pastoral messages/give updates. Most of us have likely used Facetime to connect with a loved one.

#### **3) Handwritten Notes**

At this time, the mail service is still functioning. Why not take the time to write out (by hand) a note of affection and encouragement? How many of you—by the raising of hands—have received cards before—and felt blessed by them? Why not take the time to write out a few cards and connect with one another!

#### **4) Quality Time at Home**

Many are now forced to spend time with their families as we all practice social distancing. Maximize this time. Spend time together—shut the TV’s and devices off—and really connect. Make a meal together, build a puzzle, play games, etc. For all those people who said they never have time with their families, consider this time a gift!

**NOTE 1** – As we find new (old) ways to connect and communicate, keep the following in mind:

**1 Peter 4:11** [Our Speech is to Have Prophetic Edge]

11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God.

**1 Corinthians 14:3** [Nature of Prophecy]

3 . . . The one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.

**NOTE 2** – Let the words from your mouth/heart be prophetic in nature!

**KEY** – We all have opportunity to connect as never before! This season will NOT last forever...

**QUOTE** – “Take the opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity.”

## **#4 – CARE FOR OTHERS**

Fourthly, this period in history is giving us the unique opportunity to CARE for one another.

**FYI** – I do NOT believe it was by accident that the Lord had us studying the Parable of the Good Samaritan as of late (cf. Luke 10:25–37). Remember, the Good Samaritan was commended as an example of selfless, sacrificial service (i.e., MODEL of compassion that we are to emulate).

**KEY** – The world can use some Good Samaritans right now! This is the time for us to be agents of COMPASSION to a world in need. Consider the following remarks from Franklin Graham—posted on social media as of late:

Many years ago, the great writer and theologian, A.W. Tozer, made this profound statement, “A scared world needs a fearless church.” That is so true. During this time with the coronavirus, fear is gripping the hearts of people around the world. There is a mountain of anxiety and alarm, and it is still building. It is as real as the virus itself—but it is treatable. There are people in need that we can reach out to help. Like a fireman runs to the fire, the church needs to respond to crises around us. We who are the church need to stand up and be the hands and feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. During these days of less group activity and gatherings, we could all take time to call and check on the elderly or others who are alone. Maybe you could offer to drop off some food or necessities they might need. Talking with someone on the phone, listening to what they are going through, and most importantly, praying with them, could change not only their day, but their entire outlook. We need to share the “reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). Jesus Christ is our hope, our anchor, our comfort, and our peace. Let’s share His love with as many people as we can, making every day count. Christians, God can use you. The virus isn’t the only thing that’s contagious. What if we had an outbreak of people helping people and a sweeping eruption of prayer?

**FYI 1** – I want to take a moment to THANK the many who have demonstrated this very heart and attitude since this pandemic began. I commend those of you who are taking the time to do what Franklin Graham is speaking of...

**FYI 2** – Daily the people of God have been calling me. They are asking me how I am doing. They are asking about the welfare of others. Many are actively helping to feed community children and families in need during this time. Others are running meals to and fro. Others are willing to give of their time, talents, energies and earthly supplies to make sure others are cared for.

WELL DONE! I am so proud to be a part of this local assembly...

**KEY** – But the work is not done! In many ways it is just starting. This could be our FINEST hour!

**Galatians 6:10**

10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

**Hebrews 13:16**

16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

**KEY** – We all have opportunity to serve as never before! This season will NOT last forever...

**QUOTE** – “Take the opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity.”

## **#5 – CAST YOURSELF UPON THE LORD**

Finally, this time in history is giving us the unique opportunity to CAST ourselves upon the Lord.

**Q. Do you feel the weight of your guilt and sin? Cast yourself upon the One who is merciful...**

**Isaiah 1:18**

18 “Come now, let us settle the matter,”  
says the Lord.

“Though your sins are like scarlet,  
they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red as crimson,  
they shall be like wool.

**Q. Do you feel weak? Cast yourself upon the One who gives strength...**

**Philippians 4:13**

13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.



**Q. Do you feel weary? Cast yourself upon the One who renews...**

**Isaiah 40:28–31**

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.

29 He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

**Q. Do you face lack/deprivation? Cast yourself upon the One who provides...**

**Philippians 4:19**

19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

**Q. Do you feel vulnerable? Cast yourself upon the One who protects...**

**Psalms 18:2**

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;  
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

**Q. Do you feel hopeless? Cast yourself upon the One who gives hope...**

**Psalms 42:5**

5 Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.

**Q. Do you feel fearful? Cast yourself upon the One who offers peace...**

**John 14:27**

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

**Q. Do you feel alone/abandoned? Cast yourself upon the One who is faithful and near...**

**Hebrews 13:5**

5 . . . “Never will I leave you;  
never will I forsake you.”

## **CONCLUSION PT. 1**

This period of crisis affords us a series of once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. The opportunity to...

- 1) Call Out in Prayer**
- 2) Consider His Word**
- 3) Connect w/ Others**
- 4) Care for Others**
- 5) Cast/Commit**

**QUOTE** – “Take the opportunity of a lifetime during the lifetime of the opportunity.” (**PRAYER**)

## **CONCLUSION PT. 2**

Thank you for taking the time to join us today. We will continue to meet via social media until the authorities give us the greenlight to resume regular services. However, the work of God still CONTINUES, and that takes something very practical in nature: FINANCES.

**Q. Will you give to support this local church and its work?**

Please give online at [www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org) (preferred method) **OR** you can mail your offering to New Life Assembly of God – PO Box 536 South Barre, MA 01074. Allow me to close out our time with the following:

**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.