



Is Your COVID-19 Christianity Still Being Tested?

1 Peter 1:6: (NASB) *In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.*



Wearing a mask when you go out. Cleaning and sanitizing anything and everything all the time. Social distancing. Avoiding crowded places. Working from home or not being able to work at all. Seeing friends and family on Zoom instead of in person. It is enough to make the strongest among us feel battle worn. We are edgier, suffer higher levels of anxiety and are lonely. All of this because of COVID-19, a microscopic virus. How small is this virus? For an unscientific

illustration, imagine flatly stacking up eight sticky notes, which equal about one millimeter in height. A micron is one one-thousandth of that height. It would take about eight coronavirus particles to equal one micron. That means you could stack up 8,000 COVID particles and they would be equal to the eight sticky notes that are a millimeter thick. How can something so miniature turn our lives upside down? As Christians, how do we cope?

When we did our two coronavirus podcasts back in March and April of this year, we asked how it fit into God’s plan and if the effects of lockdown and scarcity changed our characters for better or worse. We are still here dealing with this unthinkable disease, and it is wearing us down in a lot of ways.



SEGMENT THEME: COMPLACENCY

How do we handle the very real issues before us? Does the “no end in sight” possibility that COVID-19 has presented feed a rationalized or lazy approach to our Christian life?

National Geographic published an article dated September 22, 2020 called, *Why Our Minds Can’t Make Sense of COVID-19’s Enormous Death Toll*. It explained that although more than 200,000 people in the United States have died (and about a million worldwide), researchers say our brains are not wired to make sense of big numbers. We are also trying to digest death tolls amid other worries, including economic uncertainty, civil unrest, wildfires and hurricanes, geopolitical strife, election tensions and unprecedented shifts in how we work, shop, socialize and educate our children. If you are already stressed out, the 200,000 statistic becomes just another thing. The magnitude of the death toll can make us become less compassionate. The article explained, “Our feelings are very strong for one person in danger, but they don’t scale up very well. If there are two people, you don’t feel twice as bad. Your attention gets divided and you don’t have as strong an emotional connection.”

The long duration of the pandemic combined with the absence of a clear end can dull people’s sense of shock. We have gotten so used to hearing about deaths that they no longer emotionally register.



World War I took place between 1914-1918, and then the Spanish Flu attacked the world. Twenty million people died as a result of the war and another fifty million as a result of the flu. Seventy million people died between 1914 and 1918. That means 14 percent of the world's population passed away. The people who died from the Spanish Flu were young. When we look at the deaths from COVID-19 and say, this has never happened before, it is really that it has never happened in our lifetime.

Your brain on social distancing, Loneliness Isolation During COVID-19, Let There Be Health

- If we can't form deep social connections because, say, we're social distancing due to a global pandemic, our bodies go into survival mode. We start producing more cortisol, a stress hormone that keeps us alert to threats. Our bodies experience more overall inflammation - a way to prepare to heal any injuries we might get while out on our own without help. And our sleep becomes shallower so we can wake up to dangers in the night. These survival responses help us get through short, threatening bursts of isolation, but the longer we're lonely, the more these changes wear on our cells and organs. That's why perpetually lonely people are at higher risk for mental, physical and emotional problems and have weakened immune systems.*

We got to thinking about having weakened immune systems. We want to strengthen our **CHRISTIAN IMMUNE SYSTEM** to counter the far-reaching effects of COVID-19 and its fallout.

Throughout the program we will point out some symptoms of a weakened spiritual immune system. We will suggest a total of eight "red flags" - see if any of these apply to you. Here are the first two:

"Red flags" of a weakened spiritual immune system



1. Loss of love toward God
2. Dimming of our faith and trust in the Lord's providences

Just like it is said eating blueberries and avocados can boost our natural immune system, there are certain things we can do spiritually to help protect us. We will call these "immunity boosters."



1 Corinthians 3:10-16: (NASB) ¹⁰According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.



During all the negativity during this difficult time, we need to stand on the foundation of Christ.

When we reestablish our foundation, we reestablish our most important thing.

This is necessary to be able to assess how we are building on that most important thing:

¹²Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

Are our building materials precious and of great value, or are they earthly commodities? Difficult experiences - be they from fire, wind, water, a virus, sickness, tragedy or the fallout from any of these things - are meant to test how we build our lives on the foundation of Jesus.

Gold and silver are refined (purified) by the heat of fire. Wood, hay and straw are destroyed by fire. We need to reset and build with the appropriate things on the foundation of Jesus.

¹⁴If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. ¹⁶Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you?

Even in the fire of trial and testing, if we build according to the specs of the architect, the structure is meant for eternity:

Matthew 6:33: (NASB) *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

(Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com>) ...People in spiritual distress often no longer believe the world is a safe place. They might lose hope and have a difficult time finding meaning and purpose in what's happening to them. ...Spiritual struggle is a key indicator of negative medical outcomes. A two-year study by the Duke University Medical Center found that religious struggle - which refers to experiences of tension, strain and conflict about spiritual matters within oneself, with others or with God - is a predictor of mortality in medically ill elderly patients. ...Certain types of struggle had much higher correlations with death. For churchgoers, feeling "alienated from or unloved by God," for instance, was linked with a 19-28 percent increase in risk of dying during the course of the study.

This is why we need to boost up our **CHRISTIAN IMMUNE SYSTEM.**



When it comes to the topic of complacency, you are both pastors in your respective congregations. How are you handling Zoom church? It has been very convenient, but I personally tend to feel a little disconnected from the whole experience.



It is a challenge. We have a small group in our area, and we began meeting about two months ago in my office space every other week. We set it up for social distancing and provided hand sanitizer so everyone would be comfortable. It was wonderful to get back together. Well, life happens, and a tornado came through our town and ripped part of the roof off of the building. My office is on the top floor, and it started raining in my office! I no longer have that office since it needs to be rebuilt; I'm now in a tiny little space. Now we cannot meet together in my office and we are back to Zoom. It is a blessing even though it is not ideal.



We have been doing our Bible studies on Zoom on Wednesdays and Sundays. For our group, it has been a blessing in some ways because several are able to join us who could not physically be there before due to either location or work scheduling issues. Participation in the studies has increased for many. I don't know if it is because they are more comfortable on Zoom than in person. Not only do we have Bible studies, but we have testimony meetings for the brethren to share what they are going through so we can pray for and help encourage others. We have time before and after our studies for a little fellowship. Even though there are positives, we still feel that void of not being together. A sad thing is some babies were born in our group last year, and we have missed seeing them physically growing up and forming a special connection with them.

We need to be careful because once we begin to live with a sense of isolation, the walls just get thicker.

We recommend getting into small Bible study groups during this time. We have had several people write in and say they are using the CQ audio podcast together with the CQ Rewind Show Notes we provide for each episode as the basis for their weekly Bible study. They also use the one-page Study Questions we provide, for no cost of course. It is an easy way to connect with others who want to go deeper into the lessons. It is like a "Bible study in a box!"



We want to do everything we can to reset so we are focusing on the most important things.

 **Loneliness - first understand, *How Isolation Can Kill You, Entertain the Elk***

- *Humans are a social species, and so prolonged isolation isn't good for our body and mind, but neither is the coronavirus. So, how can we continue practicing social distancing and quarantining while also taking care of our social needs? First, understand - recognize your need for social interactions, educate yourself with a number of the scholarly articles out there that break down the science and how isolation affects your brain, body and behavior. For instance, open the blinds of your house during the day because sunlight helps set your circadian rhythms which help you sleep better at night. The more you educate yourself, the better you'll also be at fighting the stigma that loneliness only happens to certain people. Loneliness is a shared human experience that happens to everyone at one time or another. It's certainly nothing to feel ashamed or embarrassed about.*



We received some sad news this week. A friend of ours we knew from Bible camps many years ago passed away this past week. The pressures of life, the loss of hope and loneliness contributed to her death. Our hearts go out to her family. It is easy to lose hope, but we have the opportunity to rekindle our hope and reset.

SPIRITUAL VACCINATION FOR COVID CHAOS:



RESET YOUR MIND ON BUILDING THE RIGHT STRUCTURE UPON THE RIGHT FOUNDATION WITH THE RIGHT MATERIALS.

RESET

Remember, what and how we build is precious to God!

When trouble hits, some answers always seem to rise to the top. In this case, we need to get back to the basics.

A spiritual foundation is a start.

What about when we are in serious financial trouble due to COVID-19?

This is a hard and practical question. What if we are out of work and running out of money as a result of the COVID-19 lockdowns? Do we find our faith draining away with our financial security? We need to focus ourselves on the right kind of actions to manage this very real and serious issue.

SEGMENT THEME: ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

Don't believe every worried thought you have. Worried thoughts are notoriously inaccurate.
— Renee Jain

When we panic, we make bad decisions. We tend to worry about possibilities and not realities. In most cases, the possibilities do not come to fruition.

"Red flags" of a weakened spiritual immune system



- 3. Inclination not to be fervent in prayer
- 4. Decrease in our zeal and energy in His service and the study of His word

If we are experiencing either of these red flags, we need an immunity booster.



I MUST LOOK AT MY CIRCUMSTANCES

WHEN THEY ARE BLEAK AND SEE THEM THROUGH SPIRITUAL EYES,

DOING WHATEVER I CAN TO FULFILL MY RESPONSIBILITIES.



(Source: PBS.org) *Stories from Americans suffering from the pandemic's financial fallout.* Juliana E. said: Credit card payments, loan payments are all late. You obviously amass many late fees with those. If this goes on for another month or two, I mean, how am I supposed to really recover from that?

It is hard to stay centered under financial stress. Depression can set in when the stress is overwhelming and we feel like there is no way out.

All of our experiences - even our financial hardships - are a preparatory and necessary work so we can learn and grow:

Romans 8:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

Respond to hardship with the conviction that it is valuable.

TO RESPOND IS TO ACT. DO something concrete to help instead of just talking about it or complaining about it.



Loneliness - second act, *How Isolation Can Kill You, Entertain the Elk*

- *Seek relationships. Texting and email are one way, but the most effective way would be video calls through apps like FaceTime, Zoom and Skype where you can make eye contact with the other person. Make sure you are seeking intimate relationships with people who truly know you and can love you, not hundreds of shallow relationships with strangers on social media. Authentic relationships aren't something you fall backwards into accidentally. It requires time, energy and honesty. Breaking free from an individualistic mindset that looks inwards and turning towards a more communal mindset that cares for those around you is a good way to not only help others, but also to feel connected to the outside world and the collective goal to which we're all striving. So, make relationships a priority.*



We need connections with friends to help us cope with hardships.

God has proven His grace to faith in Him. He delivers THROUGH hardship not FROM hardship:

Romans 8:31-32: (NASB) ³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not spare His own son, but delivered him over for us all, how will He not also with him freely give us all things?

This Scripture is referring to spiritual gifts. We are being prepared for eternity. Respond to hardship knowing that it is an asset and not a liability to our Christian growth and maturity.

(Source: PBS.org) *Stories from Americans suffering from the pandemic's financial fallout.* Ashley H. Said: I have a son. He is about 10 months old. I have to pay for his health insurance, as well as mine, without having a paycheck. And we had to take out a loan just because formula is so expensive. It ended up being \$900. But we took out a loan and we pay it monthly, so that's something else I have to worry about.

Taking out a loan to feed your child is desperation.



The greatest victories that God has planned for us are usually shrouded in deep distress:

Romans 8:35,37-39: (NASB) ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁷But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When we *overwhelmingly conquer*, it does not mean the experience ends; it means we have a handle on it. We are learning what we need to be learning while going through the experience.

(Source: PBS.org) *Stories from Americans suffering from the pandemic's financial fallout.* Ginger said: I think a lot of small business owners are frankly worried. Applying for a loan in a regular environment is stressful, but doing it in this kind of climate, where you know you might not survive if you don't get it, is really heart-wrenching.

We have to take some type of action and may need to ask for help.

Remember, our value is not determined by worldly success, net worth or social acceptance:

Matthew 10:29-31: (NASB) ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Fear is a tool of Satan. We need to be courageous. Courage is not the absence of fear; courage is ACTION in the presence of fear.



Do what you need to do with the strongest spiritual conviction you can so you can come out the other end and say, "I was blessed by that." We can still be blessed even if things may not work out the way we hoped.

We need fellowship with other Christians because sometimes we need to ask for help. When we are connected to one another, it is much easier to support one another.

For those of us who see our brother or sister in such a hard spot:

James 2:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and be filled, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? ¹⁷Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.



This is about not accepting the difficulties lying down. Be a warrior through the difficulties and trials - whatever the circumstance. We need to take care of one another. That is what Jesus would do. Whether we are the one going through the trial or the one that sees the trial, ACTION is required.

It is so important to remember that our Christian faith boils down to Christlike actions in all aspects of life.

General and financial hardship can easily harm our relationships. How do we counter this problem?

Relationship stress is very real and can be a life-breaker. The strain of the COVID-19 fallout has likely adversely affected marriages and family relationships, especially when they were already strained. This is an issue of not only managing my own attitudes, but the attitudes of others as well.

SEGMENT THEME: RELATIONSHIPS

We had our friend, Dr. Wendy Trzyna, Professor of Microbiology at Marshall University, give us some data about the disease in Parts I and II of our coronavirus series. We asked Dr. Wendy if she could give us some updates on what is happening with the vaccines.

Unprecedented progress, Hope in Pandemic, Dr. Wendy Trzyna, Professor of Microbiology at Marshall University

- SARS-CoV-2 vaccine development is proceeding at an unprecedented rate with a large amount of resources being directed at these efforts. At no other time in history has there ever been so many concurrent vaccine candidates being worked on for a single infectious agent as we see now for this virus. The majority of the vaccine candidates being developed target the viral spike protein, which is what binds the virus to human airway cells. Hence, antibodies produced to this protein are expected to provide protection against infection. A number of studies have shown that antibodies to the spike do work to neutralize the virus, making it unable to bind to cells in culture, which essentially means it is highly likely that there will ultimately be a successful vaccine. For seven of the most promising candidates, even while vaccine trials are ongoing, manufacturing has begun simultaneously, so that once a vaccine is approved it can be distributed a lot sooner.*



We can easily manage if we will only take, each day, the burden appointed to it. But the load will be too heavy for us if we carry yesterday's burden over again today, and then add the burden of the morrow before we are required to bear it. — John Newton

Rituals mark time. The pandemic ruined certain traditions and rites of passage, such as birthday parties, weddings, graduations, back-to-school shopping trips. Not being able to attend

funerals or memorial services adds another layer of confusion to the grief. Holding onto traditions or creating new ones is crucial for us humans. Rituals help people recover more quickly when facing loss or grief because they call for a pause, a reflection, and allow us to process. We have lost a lot.





Weddings, funerals and events are markers in our lives. One of our CQ contributors, a young sister in Christ, waited patiently on the Lord's providence for a long time to find the right individual to marry. She is now engaged, and they cannot get married. Her fiancé is in a different country. There are travel restrictions between that country and the United States and he cannot come here. She said, "I always thought the hard part would be getting the man, not marrying him!" This is just another interruption to the normal flow of life which wreaks havoc on our relationships.

"Red flags" of a weakened spiritual immune system



- 5. Loss of interest in our brethren, our Christian family
- 6. Less desire to have companionship and fellowship with our brethren



THIRD IMMUNITY BOOSTER:
REVITALIZE

I MUST WILLINGLY REVITALIZE MY RELATIONSHIPS BEGINNING WITH MY OWN PRIVILEGE AND WEAKNESSES, SO I CAN ACCEPT THE PRIVILEGE AND WEAKNESSES OF OTHERS.

First, I must know who I am:

Romans 12:3: (NASB) *For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*

Revitalizing my place and status with God and Christ gives me a solid foundation for relationships with others. A relationship with another person does not work automatically. The stronger we are in terms of WHO we are, the better opportunity there is for that relationship to work.



BE MERCIFUL WITH OURSELVES BEFORE GOD BECAUSE WE ALL FALL SHORT DAILY.

Falling short should not stop us from going to God; it should move us forward. Let Him pick us up.

Second, I must know what I am a part of:

1 Corinthians 12:18,21-22: (NASB) *¹⁸But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ²¹And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²²On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;*



The Zoom church experience is a blessing and it is wonderful to have it, but when we are not in the same room, we do not have the opportunity for one-on-one conversation, to be able to privately engage. We need to find ways to meet together with respect to social distancing and have fellowship (in masks!).

Revitalizing the value of the brotherhood by seeing them through God’s eyes opens the door to more readily appreciating them. Sometimes we lose our appreciation because we are so focused on trying to cope.

Mercy

SHOW MERCY TO THE BROTHERHOOD WHEN THEY FALL SHORT, REMINDING OURSELVES THAT WE FALL SHORT, ALSO.

Third, I must not follow the temptation of tribal unity at the expense of respecting those in the world:

Galatians 6:9-10: (NASB) *⁹Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*

Revitalizing my view of the average person who crosses my path means I see them as a valuable recipient of Jesus’ sacrifice.

Mercy

BE WILLING TO GIVE MERCY TO ALL. JESUS DIED FOR THEM, TOO.



This is a good place to bring up the debate about wearing a mask during this pandemic. **2 Timothy 1:7** talks about having the “spirit of a sound mind.” If there is a chance a simple thing like a mask can help protect others, as well as ourselves, why wouldn’t we do it? Our motivation should be to try to protect each other as best we can because we want to bring compassion and joy to others, not sadness.



Personally, I am not a worrier type. I do not have a high level of concern others do. But I understand why they do, and it would not be Christlike of me to discount their feelings. Until proven it is not beneficial, I am wearing my mask, even though I don't like it. I will because I don't want to be offensive to others; I want to encourage others.

Some have brought up Acts 4:18-21 about the government telling the apostles not to preach in the name of Jesus. Does this apply? Is the government restricting our liberty by telling us we have to wear a mask or cannot meet together in large numbers?

Getting together with others should be in a socially responsible way. Breaking the law is not a Christlike witness. If we have to meet on Zoom or in smaller groups, so be it. Just because we cannot do exactly what we want does not mean we cannot do several other things to help fill the void. Rejoice in the opportunity while remembering the conscience of others.

Fourth, I must be thoroughly willing to cut my brother, sister, spouse, family member some slack:

Romans 14:2-3: (NASB) ²One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. ³The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

We are all weak in some areas and strong in others. We should be here to build each other up. Revitalizing my view of my family means respecting their thinking and emotions and appreciating their genuine concerns and fears. Once I do this, I can better embrace them.

Mercy

THE HARDEST ONES TO BE MERCIFUL TO ARE THOSE WHO ARE MORE FAMILIAR TO US. WE CAN LET OUR GUARD DOWN AND TAKE FAMILY FOR GRANTED.

Fifth, I must be sincere in my attempts to treat others in a godly way:

Romans 12:9-12: (NASB) ⁹Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Mercy

BE MERCIFUL, JUST AS YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL. LUKE 6:36

The highest example of mercy is God, in sending His son to ransom the world. In these times of difficulty, trial and stress, we need to revitalize everything around us in terms of our relationships.



Check out our CQ Kids video: WHAT IS MERCY?

christianquestions.com/youtube



SPIRITUAL VACCINATION FOR COVID CHAOS:



Revitalize

by RECONNECTING with a godly
VIEW OF EVERYTHING.

THIS OPENS THE DOOR FOR PATIENCE, TOLERANCE
AND APPRECIATION, INSTEAD OF RAW EMOTION AND REACTION.

Raw emotion and reaction might be our default right now because of the pandemic, but we have to revitalize and be a positive influence on those around us.

We REALLY need diligence in these areas as the quality of our lives and the lives of those around us depend on it.

**Has the COVID-19 virus been sent by God to get our attention?
Is this the beginning of the end?**

While we do not see COVID-19 as some plague *sent* by God, we do see it as *permitted* by Him. We also do not see this as the very *end times*, even though we do live in the *time of the end*. As Christians, we need to focus ourselves on being the light of the world, even if no one appreciates us. It is not a matter of being appreciated; it is a matter of asking ourselves if we shine our light through everything we do and say.

SEGMENT THEME: LIVING PROACTIVELY, especially from the prophetic standpoint of where we are in God's plan.

 **Working on solutions, *Hope in Pandemic*, Dr. Wendy Trzyna, Professor of Microbiology at Marshall University**

- *So even while there remains much to learn about the virus and how immunity to it develops, there are thousands of scientists and doctors around the world currently working on this coronavirus, learning more about it at an extraordinary pace. This many months into the pandemic, there are currently 57,000 scientific articles related to SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 indexed on pubmed.gov, which is a database of scientific articles maintained by the NIH. The website, clinicaltrials.gov, lists nearly 3,400 related clinical trials. The scientific community knows a whole lot more now about this virus than back in March and April of this year. Even though effective vaccines and disease treatments do take time to develop, collectively this whole level of directed activity concentrated on the pandemic should in itself provide some degree of hope that a solution is forthcoming.*





It is amazing that we have all these brilliant scientific minds focused in on this tiny little virus. This gives us hope that they will find a way to cope with it fairly soon. While we look to God for our *ultimate* hope, it is wonderful to see medical science honing in on this virus to alleviate some of the present sufferings.

These mountains that you are carrying, you were only supposed to climb. — Najwa Zebian

This is such a strengthening quote in time of trial. Think of Jesus talking to us when we are burdened with all the loads we carry. Think of him telling us he only wanted us to *climb* these mountains of our trials that we choose to *carry* with us. He tells us to put them down and climb them one at a time. We tend to drag the burdens of our lives with us, rather than climbing them, learning from them and then moving on.

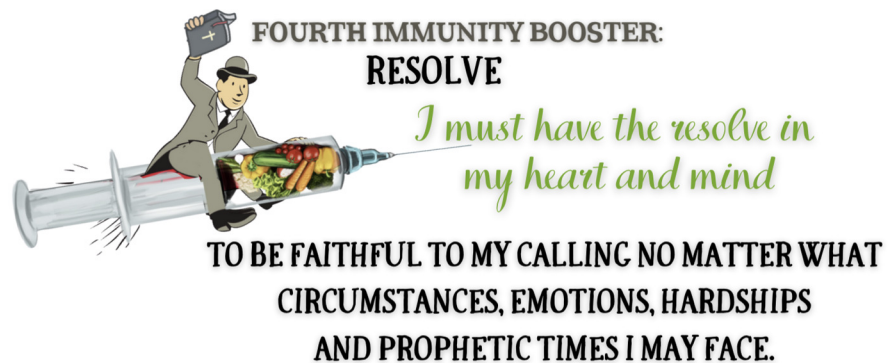
We need to leave the guilt, pain and struggle in the past, taking only the lessons learned for application in the future. It is important that we work through these experiences, keeping the prophetic time in the back of our minds.

Let's look at the next two red flags of a weakened spiritual immune system:

"Red flags" of a weakened spiritual immune system



7. Estimating our worth and the worth of our brethren according to worldly standards
8. Inclination to think, speak and act according to human standards



This is the moment that is helping us to prepare for eternity. We need to consider this because the end result is beyond magnificent! Even though the moment is really difficult and feels like it is a “forever” moment, it does not negate the fact of **WHY** it is there, **WHERE** it is in the stream of time in relation to God’s plan and **WHAT** we can learn from it. It is important that we **RESOLVE**, or decide, that we will be *faithful to our calling* no matter the perilous times we live in.



We are living in the perilous times prophesied:

2 Timothy 3:1-5: (NASB)
 But realize this, that in the last days **DIFFICULT TIMES** will come. For men will be:

• LOVERS OF SELF	• UNHOLY	• TREACHEROUS
• LOVERS OF MONEY	• UNLOVING	• RECKLESS
• BOASTFUL	• IRRECONCILABLE	• CONCEITED
• ARROGANT	• MALICIOUS GOSSIPS	• LOVERS OF PLEASURE
• REVILERS	• WITHOUT SELF-CONTROL	RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD
• DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS	• BRUTAL	• HOLDING TO A FORM OF
• UNGRATEFUL	• HATERS OF GOOD	GODLINESS, ALTHOUGH THEY
		HAVE DENIED ITS POWER

AVOID MEN SUCH AS THESE!

This is a horrible list we do not want to be on! Does this not sound like today? Adding the pandemic to the degradation of society makes us think we are in real trouble! It is true that it is a very troublous time.

We need to ask ourselves:

- How am I resolved to handle being in this prophetic place (*the last days*) and moving through these negative influences (*lovers of self, lovers of money, ...malicious gossips, ...lovers of pleasure, etc.*)?
- Have I resolved to gravitate only towards those things which are righteous and godly? Or have I decided to go with the flow of worldly and human standards, like our red flags?



A lot of people in the religious community believe that we are in the beginning of Armageddon, but we believe there is a substantial time to go yet.

Armageddon will be very intense but over in a relatively short time. This COVID-19 experience feels very intense because we have not experienced anything similar in our lifetimes. But when we go back to other times in history, some not all that long ago, we see incredible intensity, stress, death and sickness, unrest and uncertainty in all kinds of places. While this is certainly difficult, we do not believe it is Armageddon.

Our hope is a LIVING hope - no other hope in all this world can claim that! Resolve to HOPE:

1 Peter 1:3-4: (NASB) ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born (begotten) again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.



Why a *living hope*? Despite our present experiences with trial and difficulty, pain, suffering and trauma, we have a *living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. It is a *living hope* because Jesus lives. Jesus lives, after he suffered great tribulation and died, because of the grace of God and the payment of the ransom. This is a *living hope* that we, too, will live again, and by extension, the rest of the world.

Our entire life experience now is to prepare us for a future with Jesus.

Resolve to PREPARE:

⁴to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,



We need to keep the mental picture of finding true north. A compass needle always goes back to its magnetic north because that is what it is designed to do. Christians always need to return to *our* true north. We frequently need to *RESET* to find our foundation. By finding out the direction we are heading, it helps us identify where we are.

Once we know where true north is, we can find south, east and west. True north is magnetic, sure and sound. God’s plan is magnetic, sure and sound. If we keep God’s plan as our mental “true north” we can determine everything else.

In life or death, certainty or trauma, we live a protected life. Resolve to EMBRACE THAT PROTECTION:

1 Peter 1:5-7: (NASB) ⁵who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

The idea here is that we are being protected *for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*. We have this protection as part of God’s promise, but we have to go through difficulties now so that we may develop to *be more precious than gold... even though* (especially because we are) *tested by fire*. The end result is a glorious salvation as long as we stay the course. It is a beautiful picture of protection *through* the hard experiences, which are gauged by God to be only as difficult as we need and can bear.

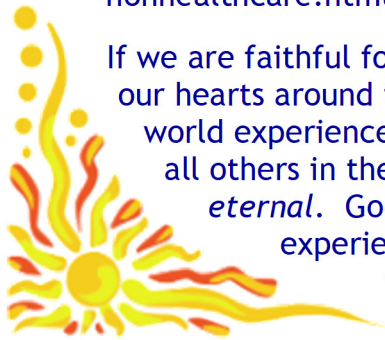


- (Source: The Center for Disease Control and Prevention) 40% of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance use by late June this year due to COVID-19 stressors. This included anxiety/depression symptoms, trauma/stressor related disorders symptoms, an increase in seriously considered suicide, and an increase in, or a newly started, substance abuse.
- (Source: Nielsen reports)
 - Alcohol sales in stores were up 54% in late March compared to that time last year.
 - Online sales were up nearly 500% in late April.



- According to a Morning Consult poll of 2,200 U.S. adults conducted in early April, 16% of all adults said they were drinking more during the pandemic, with higher rates among younger adults.
- A lot of Alcoholic Anonymous meetings, especially those held at churches, were canceled, forcing members to meet remotely. Meeting on Zoom for AA has been difficult for some. They need that personal contact for encouragement. Many have formed groups to keep in touch through phone, email or Facebook. Summer weather has helped by enabling outdoor social distancing meetings but with winter coming, that will cease in the northern states.

(For stress and coping strategies see the CDC's website:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/mental-health-nonhealthcare.html>)



If we are faithful followers of Christ, we are protected even if we cannot get our hearts around these grim realizations right now. We experience what the world experiences, so we know that true Christians are suffering along with all others in the world. However, *we need to remember that our hope is eternal*. God does not expect us to be victorious in all of our daily experiences. He looks at our effort in overcoming. This is a wonderful way to embrace His protection. Our trials are for the sake of eternity, not for the short term.

Faith in God's grace and plan is our deliverance. RESOLVE to live by faith:

1 Peter 1:8,9: (NASB) *and though you have not seen him, you love him, and though you do not see him now, but believe in him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

We are not supposed to sit around complaining and being fearful. We should remember how 2 Timothy 1:7 (quoted earlier) talks about *having the spirit of a sound mind*. The beginning of that text tells us *God has not given us a spirit of fear* - we have to guard against the spirit of fear because it is not Christlike.

If we do have fear (and we all do at one time or another), it does not come from God. What can we do with this fear? We can *act, or respond*, in the presence of fear and become courageous because we acted based on our faith.

"cqbiblepodcast"



We asked on our Facebook page, "What are you doing during the pandemic to be closer to God?"

Sally: Trusting Him, knowing that with so many unknowns, He is in control of my life and nothing can happen to me that He will not see me through, even the bad stuff. He gives me peace.

Katie: I read my Scriptures daily and communicate with Him in prayer. Although the world is in commotion right now, the One who knows how everything is going to play out is God. I trust Him and I trust His plan.



Jessy: Everything works together for good to those who love GOD! Trusting in Him and knowing His loving plan for mankind, keeps depression away! I've got more time to study and have fellowship with people from all over the world.

There are a lot of people who say during this COVID-19 isolation their spirituality has been boosted because they have the time to read their Bibles, time to study His word and have opportunities to talk to people from other states and other countries in their Christian family over Zoom.

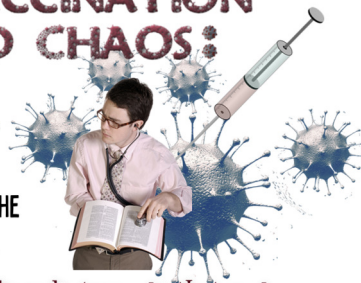
It is wonderful if during this time of isolation, we have gained strength. Now the challenge is to take the strength we might have gained and shine it to illuminate the path for others. What will we do in our daily lives to help encourage our fellow Christians and members of the wider society with which we come into contact? This is hard and requires everything we have to offer so that we can RESET, RESPOND, REVITALIZE and RESOLVE our lives.

SPIRITUAL VACCINATION FOR COVID CHAOS:

RESOLVE implies a final decision.

WHEN WE KNOW THE PATHWAY FOR ALL TO GET TO GOD'S KINGDOM MUST PASS THROUGH THE HARSHNESS OF SIN, DEATH AND DESTRUCTION,

LET US RESOLVE TO FAITHFULLY AND STEADILY WALK TOWARDS THAT END. GOD'S KINGDOM WILL COME AND HIS WILL, WILL BE DONE!



Revelation 21:4: (NASB) *and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*

When we look at this Scripture, we see the opportunity to lay hold of a plan that is specific and dynamic. It takes into account all of the harshness from the world in which we live and strongly states this is not the end! The trials of life are a process to get to the end, which, in fact, *is the beginning*. The beginning of life without pain and suffering because of the ransom of Jesus!

COVID-19 is a difficult experience. *We must not give in* to the harshness of what we are dealing with. Instead:

- RESET your foundation on Christ
- RESPOND, or act, when you have difficult times and decisions
- REVITALIZE your relationships
- RESOLVE to live by faith

You are a Christian - BE THE LIGHT.



**So, is your COVID-19 Christianity still being tested?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**



Christian Questions Weekly
Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and
Study Questions

Text
CQREWIND

to **22828** to get started.



Join us next week for our podcast on October 5, 2020

Ep. 1146: Can Biblical Strategies
Resolve Serious Conflicts? (Part II)

Bonus Material and Study Questions

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.
— William James

The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one.
— Elbert Hubbard

It's not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it. — Hans Selye

Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety or the handle of faith. — Henry Ward Beecher

If you focus on results, you will never change. If you focus on change, you will get results.
— Jack Dixon

Dealing with this pandemic requires us to look at how we habitually respond to things. The following is some scriptural perspective about setting strong habits.

To be ready to change any habit we must realize the effort:

Habakkuk 2:2-4: (NRSV) ²Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. ³For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. ⁴Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

1. Have a clearly defined goal - write the vision
2. Write it out in great detail - make it plain on tablets
3. Review it daily - so that a runner may read it



4. Take action - do those things necessary to make progress - *For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie.*
5. Realize that failures are only stepping-stones - *If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.*
6. Never, never, never give up - *the righteous live by their faith.*

Become committed to this action above all others:

Philippians 3:13-14: (ASV) ¹³*Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Commitment stands on a unique footing in our lives.

First the offering:

Romans 12:1-2: (NASB) ¹*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

Then the transformation:

²*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Romans 12:3-15: (NASB) ³*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

Understand what we are to do and who and what we are to support:

⁶*Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Make a decision to love without reservation:

⁹*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

How much we miss when we rush through the process:

Galatians 6:8-10: (ASV) ⁸*For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the spirit shall of the spirit reap eternal life. ⁹And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.*

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1145: Is Your COVID-19 Christianity Still Being Tested?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1145-covid-19/>

See:  CQRewind
SHOW NOTES

1. Due to the current trials with COVID-19, do you feel a loss of love toward God? How has your faith and trust in the Lord's providence changed (or stayed the same) in recent months? How can you regain any faith and trust?
2. How can we reset our minds to deal with the stress of COVID-19? What does "reset" mean specifically in your life? (See 1 Corinthians 3:10-16; Matthew 6:33) How does the concept of "true north" fit into this?
3. What has your prayer life been like since the beginning of the pandemic? How can you regain fervency while praying from the weighty distractions of life?
4. How has your zeal in working in God's service been affected by the pandemic? What is the appropriate response or action to rectify this lost fervency towards the Lord and His service? How can we help others with this problem? (See Romans 8:18-19,31-32,35,37-39, Matthew 10:29-31, James 2:15-17)
5. What is your relationship like with the Christians you are close to since the beginning of the pandemic? What can you do to reconnect with them?
6. How can we revitalize our Christian relationships using the statements below:
 - a. I must know *who* I am. (See Romans 12:3)
 - b. I must know *what* I am a part of. (See 1 Corinthians 12:18,21-22 NASB)
 - c. I must *not follow* the temptation of tribal unity at the expense of respecting those in the world. (See Galatians 6:9-10)
 - d. I must be *willing* to cut my brother, sister, spouse, family member, etc. some slack! (See Romans 14:2-3)
 - e. I must be *sincere* in my attempts to treat others in a godly way. (See Romans 12:9-12)
7. How do you see your own worth? How can we stay away from comparing ourselves to our brethren in Christ or our neighbor? How can we keep ourselves from sounding and acting like those around us in the world?
8. What practical things can we do to resolve to stay on a godly path?
 - a. How can we *avoid ungodliness*? (See 2 Timothy 3:1-5)
 - b. How can we resolve to *hope*? (See 1 Peter 1:3)
 - c. How can we *prepare*? (See 1 Peter 1:4)
 - d. How can we *embrace God's protection*? (See 1 Peter 1:5-7)
 - e. How can we *live by faith*? (See 1 Peter 1:8,9)
9. Explain the quote from Najwa Zebian, "*These mountains that you are carrying, you were only supposed to climb.*" What does it mean to you?