

For Such a Time as This

Doing Life Well in the Midst of the Coronavirus Crisis

Thesis: You and I were made for such a time as this (Esther 4:14; Acts 13:36).

Context: Dealing with the impact of the Coronavirus COVID-19

This morning, I wanted to share some verses and some thoughts with you that I have concerning what the Lord is saying and doing in the midst of the current crisis (Coronavirus or COVID-19). **I believe that the Lord has an impartation for us of his faith, courage, and grace today.**

1. **Realize that you and I were made for such a time as this** (Esther 4:14; Acts 13:36).
 - a. Queen Esther discovered that she was made for such a time as this when her people faced annihilation.
 - b. *12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. **And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"** (Esther 4:1-17 NIV).*
 - c. **According to Jesus in Matthew 5:13-16 and in other verses, this is my time** to preserve and season like salt, to shine, to share good news, to pray, to stand in the gap, to do warfare, to love, to serve, to lay down my life, and to point people to the One who is my Hope, my Redeemer, my Savior, my Deliverer, my Champion, my Healer, my Resurrected Lord, and my Soon-Coming-King.
2. **Learn to exercise your faith and courage muscles now, because you are going to need them in the day when things really ramp up** (Jeremiah 12:5).
 - a. In other words, you haven't seen anything yet. **That word is not to discourage or condemn you, but to challenge you.** We all need to grow our faith and courage muscles.
 - b. **If we can't keep up with the footmen, what are we going to do when it's time to run with the horses? (Jeremiah 12:5).**
 - c. *If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan? (Jeremiah 12:5 NIV).*
 - d. *So, Jeremiah, if you're worn out in this footrace with men, what makes you think you can race against horses? **And if you can't keep your wits during times of calm, what's going to happen when troubles break loose like the Jordan in flood?** (Jeremiah 12:5 MSG).*

- e. "You will hear of wars nearby and revolutions on every side, with more rumors of wars to come. **Don't panic or give in to your fears, for the breaking apart of the world's systems is destined to happen.** But it won't yet be the end; it will still be unfolding. 7 **"Nations will go to war against each other and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be terrible earthquakes—seismic events of epic proportion, horrible epidemics and famines in place after place.** 8 **This is how the first contractions and birth pains of the new age will begin!"** **[This is just the beginning of birth pains (NIV).]** 9 "You can expect to be persecuted, even killed; for you will be hated by all the nations because of your love for me. 10 **Then many will stop following me and fall away,** and they will betray one another and hate one another. 11 **And many lying prophets will arise, deceiving multitudes and leading them away from the path of truth.** 12 **There will be such an increase of sin and lawlessness that those whose hearts once burned with passion for God and others will grow cold.** 13 **But keep your hope to the end and you will experience life and deliverance.** 14 **"Yet through it all, this joyful assurance of the realm of heaven's kingdom will be proclaimed all over the world, providing every nation with a demonstration of the reality of God. And after this the end of this age will arrive"** (Matthew 24:6-14 TPT).
3. **Practice casting all your anxieties and concerns upon the Lord** (1 Peter 5:6-7).
- Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you* (1 Peter 5:6-7 NIV).
 - Cast the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully* (1 Peter 5:7 AMP).
 - In this time of trial and trouble, we can trust the Lord. We can depend on him. We can bow and surrender to his ways and his wisdom and his timing.
 - We can choose to believe that he cares for us.
 - One of the ways we humble ourselves is by choosing to cast our anxieties upon the Lord through prayer.** We can make declaration through our prayers of what God says.
4. **Declare that God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble** (Psalm 46:1-11).
- God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.** 4 *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. 5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. 7*

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress

[stronghold]. 8 Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." 11 **The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress** [stronghold] (Psalm 46:1-11 NIV).

b. As Luther wrote, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

5. **Pray Psalm 91 over your life, your family, and your community.**

a. **He who 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** (Psalm 91:1-6 NIV).

b. "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. 15 He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation" (Psalm 91:14-16 NIV).

6. **Be strong and courageous because the Lord is with you wherever you go** (Joshua 1:6-9).

a. "Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go**" (Joshua 1:9 NIV).

b. May the Lord give each of us physical strength and heart strength for the days ahead.

7. **Live in a place of faith and use wisdom in our responses** (Romans 14:22-23).

These are not mutually exclusive.

a. *Whatever is not of faith is sin* (Romans 14:23).

b. *Cultivate your own relationship with God, but don't impose it on others. You're fortunate if your behavior and your belief are coherent. 23 But if you're not sure, if you notice that you are acting in ways inconsistent with what you believe—some days trying to impose your opinions on others, other days just trying to please them—then you know that you're out of line. **If the way you live isn't consistent with what you believe, then it's wrong*** (Romans 14:22-23 MSG).

c. Please communicate to others what you need. Some people want to be hugged and touched; others don't. It's ok to share with someone what you need and want.

- d. If you are concerned because of a compromised or weak immune system or because of potential vulnerability for yourself or others, then feel free to do what you need to do. For some people that will mean self-isolating or limiting participation in events like church services and meetings for a while.
 - e. Listen to the instructions and directions of your medical doctors and professionals.
 - f. You have permission to do what you feel you need to do.
 - i. For me personally, I am still making the decision to lay hands on people and hug people, if they give me permission to do so.
 - ii. But I know that there are legitimate and practical reasons not to do that, and I will respect what someone says.
 - g. **We want to live in a place of faith and have wisdom in our responses.**
8. **Pray for your leaders and all those in places of authority** (1 Timothy 2:1-4).
- a. *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- 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 men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:1-4 NIV).*
 - b. First and foremost, **pray for** your leaders, **not against** them; and, refuse to judge or curse.
9. **Give grace and mercy because you need grace and mercy** (Matthew 5:7; 7:1).
- a. *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy (Matthew 5:7 NIV).*
 - b. *Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you (Matthew 7:1-2 NIV).*
 - c. This is a great time to give grace and mercy to others.
10. **See this is an occasion for our testimony** (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 12:11).
- a. I want to point you back to the sermon from last week (March 8).
 - b. I think that message is a very significant and timely word for us.
11. **Treat all sickness as an enemy, stand in the gap against it, and pray the opposite of what you see** (Ezekiel 22:30; Matthew 6:10; Matthew 4:23-28; 9:35-38).
- a. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray: *But deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:13 NASB).*
 - b. There is a war and an adversary.
 - c. God wants to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are inclined toward him.
 - d. Ephesians teaches us to believe right, live right, and fight right.
 - e. **Principles of warfare:**

- i. Wield the weapons of our warfare like the Word of God, forgiveness, love, righteousness, holy actions (see Isaiah 68).
- ii. Stand in repentance: "we have sinned" (Daniel 9:1-20).
- iii. Pray out of your authority in Christ (Luke 10:17-20).
- iv. Appeal directly to God for his intervention, righteousness, mercy, etc.
- v. Boldly ask God to execute vengeance and judgment against his enemies.
- vi. Proclaim the truth about Christ and his kingdom.
- vii. Declare the reality that all powers and principalities are subject to Christ and will bow before Jesus (Psalm 29:1-2; Psalm 86:8-10; Psalm 97:7; Colossians 1:13-18; Philippians 2:10-11; Hebrews 1:6).
- viii. Use the principle of replacement, praying for the opposite of the work of the enemy and brokenness which you see.

12. I am concerned for those impacted by the shutdowns related to dealing with the Coronavirus.

- a. Those who are cut off from caring people.
- b. Those who have hourly jobs and have lost their opportunity to work during the crisis.
- c. Those who are single parents who have been impacted by the closure of schools and daycares.
- d. Those who have businesses that are hurting because people aren't buying their products, going to their restaurants, or frequenting their establishments.
- e. Those who have lost opportunities to fulfill their dreams, like athletes who can't compete in the sporting events like college basketball.
- f. Those who travelled and now are stranded in different places.

13. I am saddened by:

- a. People who are fueling panic with their words and actions.
- b. People who overreacting to people who are overreacting.
- c. People who are blaming others.
- d. People who are dismissing the concerns and cares of others.
- e. People who don't have loved ones, good neighbors, or a loving church family to reach out and care for them.
- f. People who are criticizing leaders who are having to make difficult decisions during a difficult time.
- g. People who are judging others for what they think, feel, and believe.
- h. People are being tormented or ruled by fear and have no source of faith, hope, and light for what they are facing.
- i. People who have lost much in the stock market panic or in the collapse of oil prices.

14. I am amazed at people who are seeing opportunities or who are being creative in the midst of this trial.

- a. Like live streaming their church services.
- b. Like visiting places owned by or employing people from East Asia in order to show their love and support.
- c. Like sharing their faith with others who are discouraged or fearful.
- d. Like taking the time to find ways to care for neighbors and to reach out to others.
- e. Like volunteering to serve others through food distribution, grocery shopping, running errands, helping at assistance ministries, or other ways.
- f. Like posting helpful suggestions and resources on where to find trustworthy information on the Coronavirus and how to deal with it.
 - i. [Houston Responds](#): information for congregations.
 - ii. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also provides business-specific details about the coronavirus. [Read the Information](#)
 - iii. The World Health Organization is providing daily updates about the efforts to contain the virus. [Read the Updates](#)
 - iv. [Houston Health Dept PDF](#) as published on by the [Houston Office of Emergency Management](#)
- g. Like practicing how to show up in a reflective, thoughtful way rather than being ruled by anxiety (see [resource](#) below).

Conclusion:

You and I were made for such a time as this. Let's serve the Lord's purposes in our generation, just like people of faith have done throughout history. Let's learn, grow, and develop greater capacity to follow the Lord in the good times and the hard times. Let's give grace to ourselves and to others in this season. And let's rise up and join the Lord in his fight against evil like demons, diseases, and discouragement, and to welcome his kingdom to this earth.

Resource 1:

20 Questions to Help with COVID-19 Anxiety



Kathleen Smith

Mar 11, 2020

The first line [in my book](#) reads, “We truly live in anxious times.” And 2020 is surely living up to this statement. Over the last week, I thought a lot about writing a newsletter telling you how to stay calm as we figure out how to respond to COVID-19. But I’m not convinced that my thinking is more useful than your own.

Instead, I’m sharing 20 questions with you to help you do your own best thinking about how to respond to the problem, whatever the reality of your community, your family, and your own health. Read through them, and see what questions stand out to you.

1. What reality-based problems do I need to solve today?
2. What information do I need today?
3. When is the best time of day for me to read the news to update myself?
4. What’s the difference between thoughtfully and anxiously focusing on this problem?
5. How can I hold onto my best thinking when others are panicking?
6. How can I be a resource to others without becoming over-responsible for them?
7. How can I make time to define my principles for navigating this problem?
8. How can I share my thinking without trying to force others to follow it?
9. How do I know when I am anxiously avoiding the problem?
10. How might I automatically rely on others to reassure me or calm me down?
11. How can I stay calm and stick with a decision I’ve made, when others may disagree or be upset with me?
12. What does it look like to think flexibly, and allow for new information to inform my decisions?
13. What are my responsibilities to myself, my family, and the larger community?
14. What does it look like to be responsible for my health during this time?
15. What anxious behaviors or habits might get in the way of this responsibility?

16. How can I stay in emotional contact with others if in-person contact becomes limited?
17. What people in my life are examples of maturity who can be useful to me at this time?
18. In what relationships might reactivity and anxiety be high during the next month?
19. How might I sink into immaturity in those relationships?
20. What would be the evidence that I am handling this problem with maturity?

Would you add any to this list? Feel free to email them to me. I'll be back next week with more thinking. Until then, cheers to doing your best thinking in a very anxious world.

Resource 2:

From Marilyn Lee and Loving Houston:

[Loving Our Neighbors Amidst COVID-19](#)

As we care for our own families during this time, let's also consider those around us who may need extra support — while practicing healthy hygiene and social distancing as needed!

Love your neighbor as yourself

MARK 12:31

Loving Our Schools | School District Updates and Resources

- **Aldine ISD:** [COVID-19](#) | [Curbside Meals](#)
- **Cy-Fair ISD:** [COVID-19](#) | [Curbside Meals](#)
- **Fort Bend ISD:** [COVID-19](#) | [Food Distribution Sites](#)
- **Houston ISD:** [COVID-19](#) | [Food Distribution Sites](#)
- **Humble ISD:** [COVID-19](#) | (*Food Distribution Information to come*)
- **Katy ISD:** [COVID-19](#) | [Scroll down for updates on Student Meals](#)
- **Klein ISD:** [COVID-19](#) | [Curbside Meals](#)

- **Lamar CISD:** [COVID-19](#) (Scroll down for updates on Student Meals)
- **Magnolia ISD:** [COVID-19](#) (Scroll down for information on Curbside Meals)
- **Spring Branch ISD:** [COVID-19](#) | [Resources for Parents](#)
- **Other ISDs**
- **[Houston-Area School Closings](#)**

School and school district leaders, we are praying for continued wisdom as you determine how to best care for your students during this time. **Let us know** how churches can help!

Loving Our Kids | Ideas Amidst School Closures

- **[Ideas and Free Resources](#)** ([Merry Weary Wonders](#))
- **[Sample Daily Schedule for Kids](#)** ([Jessica McHale Photography](#))
- **[STEM Activities for Families](#)** ([@dailySTEM](#))
- **[Free Education Subscriptions](#)**
- **[Free Educational Resources](#)**
- **[Virtual Museum Tours](#)**
- **["Disciple Your Kids at Home"](#)** (Lifeway)
- **["What to Do With the Kids When Schools Close Due to COVID-19"](#)** (Jennifer Sutherland-Miller)
- **["How to Talk to Your Child About Coronavirus"](#)** (Champion Forest Kids Ministry)

- [Free Internet Access for families during school closures](#) (Comcast)

Parents, we know that this is a stressful time for you as you consider how to provide for and care for your kids while school is closed. **Let us know** if we can help and if there's anything specific we can pray for.

Loving Our Churches | Information for Church Leaders

- ["Why Being #BetterTogether Is Crucial Now — Even with Social Distancing"](#) (Union Baptist Association)
- ["How Is The Church Gathering During Social Distancing?"](#) (Vanderbloemen)
- ["Love in the Time of Coronavirus — A Guide for Christian Leaders"](#) (Andy Crouch)

Resources from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America ([ELCA.org/PublicHealth](https://www.elca.org/PublicHealth)):

- [Worship in Times of Public Health Concerns](#)
- [Prayers for Times of Public Health Concern: COVID-19/Coronavirus](#)
- [Congregational Planning Checklist for Public Health Concerns](#)
- [How to stream your worship service — A starter guide](#)

*Pastors and leaders, we're praying for you as your shepherd your congregations. Please **let us know** if there's anything specific we can help with or pray for.*

Let's continue to pray for our national, state, and city leaders as they make decisions regarding the health of our communities. Pray also for families as they make difficult decisions regarding work, childcare, and the safety and well-being of every family member. May we love our neighbors well during this time!