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Word on the Street

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Diagnosing DISCONTENTMENT

HOW TO FIGHT A DISEASE THAT AFFECTS US ALL

Drip...drip...drip...splat!
The sticky, dark brown liquid melted down the cone, over tiny knuckles, and created a small puddle on the kitchen floor below.

“Emily, why aren’t you eating your ice cream cone? You love ice cream.”

“Mom, I want strawberry, not chocolate.” Emily’s round cheeks and full smile fell into an unmistakable pout.

“But when I told you all we had was chocolate you agreed. It’s important to be thankful for what you have.” Luckily, at that moment, Emily’s dad came through the kitchen, so the ice cream cone didn’t go to waste after all.

Regardless of our age, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, we are all like Emily. However, instead of being discontent about ice cream, our attention focuses on our job, education, family, relationships, income, abilities, personality, looks, and more. And, being dissatisfied in these categories goes much, much deeper than the kitchen floor. Our identities and our very souls are affected.

Discontentment may seem normal because everyone experiences it, but just because it is common doesn’t mean it’s benign. We must see the disease for what it is,

run to the One who has the cure, and guard our hearts against future infection.

PROGNOSIS OF THE HEART

We weren’t always discontent. In the first two chapters of the Bible, Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect, unadulterated relationship with God in their home, the Garden of Eden. Perfect contentment existed in them and between them. Then Satan, in the form of a serpent, deceived them into believing lies about themselves and how they related to God. From that point forward, sin entered the world, Adam and Eve were banned from the Garden, and every human has been infected with discontentment.

The Bible records many historical examples of discontentment: King David’s adultery with Bathsheba, King Solomon writing the entire book of Ecclesiastes, and Judas’ betrayal of Jesus to name a few. Today, we are more familiar with—and we participate in—things like comparing ourselves to others through social media, living vicariously through entertainment (movies, music, and books), consistently hopping from relationship to relationship, and wishing we had done more or done better by now.

The disease of discontentment is a matter of the heart, not circumstances. We all *feel* that a different spouse, a

“WHEN OUR HEARTS RAGE FOR THINGS WE CRAVE BUT CAN’T HAVE, LOOK TO GOD.”

different job, a different city to live in, you name it, will make our lives better, but we all *know* this is not true. Furthermore, being discontent is dangerous because it is a root problem that manifests in many other symptoms: ingratitude, arrogance, lust, greed, entitlement, idolatry, and self-protection.¹ Effects like these are hard to keep to ourselves. They spread to others, destroying our relationships, and they pull us further and further away from God.

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

Like a loving father who watches over his children, God knew from the very beginning, in Genesis, that we needed to be rescued from our desperate condition because we couldn't be content without Him. Therefore, the entire Bible is about His incredible plan to come to us, through Jesus, to restore the relationship that was broken. During Jesus' ministry on earth, He described the kind of people He came to save: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mark 2:17, NKJV). Therefore, if we see our discontentment for what it is, sin, we are the perfect candidate to receive His loving kindness and mercy. If we confess our sin and draw near to Him, we can receive the abundant life that only He provides.²

Jesus is relatable because He is not beyond discontentment Himself. Before He was to be hung on the cross, He prayed to His Father, "O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39, NKJV). He is our example because though He wished for His circumstances to be different, it did not lead Him to sin but to obedience. He felt what he felt, to the point of sweating drops of blood, yet He pursued His Father's will anyway. So, too, can we follow God in obedience despite the discontentment that attempts to destroy us.

Thankfully, we don't have to give in to our condition as if there were no other option. Because of Jesus, we have hope that contentment not only exists, but it is also attainable. Puritan preacher Jeremiah Burroughs puts it like this: "Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."³ Does that not sound better than the discontentment we're used to? Jesus was born, crucified, and resurrected so we may live this kind of life.

DON'T LET IT FESTER

Although Jesus fulfilled His part to save us from discontentment (before we could even ask), there are steps we must take to war against the daily infestation that tries to reopen old wounds. For example, realize that this is a war that requires effort. Satan wants to discourage us, using any method he can to get us to give up on God. Don't. When our hearts rage for things we crave but can't have, look to God. Remember all that He has done and is going to do in the future. Keep an eternal perspective.⁴

Also, everyone feels discontent about different areas of life so pay attention to what triggers *your* heart to be unsatisfied. Are certain friends and relatives a bad influence? Do certain apps like Pinterest or Instagram produce fantasies of a perfect life? Does following the lavish lifestyle of certain celebrities create an inappropriate longing for wealth? Once these areas are known, run! Even if it means unfollowing accounts, unfriending certain people, or learning to undo habits, be on the offense in the war against discontentment.

Finally, imitate the Apostle Paul. He wrote from a jail cell, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content" (Philippians 4:11, NKJV). Being content does not happen overnight. It is learned through a multitude of experiences over the course of life. In other words, don't give up if you see discontentment return. Keep returning to Christ, learn from mistakes, and thank Him for another chance to build character.

In the end, we all battle discontentment and that should bring us together. If we happen to be in a season of peace, we can help someone who isn't. Remember: discontentment is not benign. If left untreated, the smallest of issues can manifest into major consequences. Even if it's just about chocolate ice cream.

¹tvresources.net/resource-library/sermons/learning-contentment

²John 10:10.

³Burroughs, J. *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. Chapel Library.

⁴Colossians 3:2, NKJV



One girl's TRUE STORY

UNDERSTANDING FAITH

This testimony is from Hannah, a member of Street Level Ministries in Menomonie, WI

I grew up with my single mom in a suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota, while I occasionally visited my dad in San Diego, California. Both of my parents call themselves Christians, but I am not sure if they are really believers. I pray that they know and live for God zealously. Still, I am blessed that they introduced me to Jesus and the church at a young age.

In fourth grade during a Wednesday small group, I asked God to forgive me of my sins and come into my heart because it sounded like a pretty good gig, but I didn't know exactly what it entailed. Throughout middle school, my faith became more of my own as opposed to something inherited by my family. In eighth grade, I went through a class that was like confirmation for my non-denominational church called Approved Unto God (AUG). It taught me complex doctrines that helped me to strengthen and mature in my faith. Yet, I still had some unanswered questions that I didn't pursue answers to and instead ignored. At the end of AUG, I joined our junior high ministry in serving the community in Colorado on a mission trip where I shared my testimony in a

large group for the first time. Seeking to serve God more, I began serving in my church's nursery and later as a service host (usher).

During high school, I tried to become more of a disciple in speaking about Jesus with my non-Christian friends, and I sang in my senior high worship band. With less and less in common with my non-Christian friends, I drifted apart from my former friend group who fell into drinking and partying. At the end of high school, our senior high pastor told our tight-knit group that statistics say that most of us will fall away from the faith and not pursue Jesus in our adult lives. His point was that the church equipped us with everything we'd need to preserve our faith and do amazing things for God. I was determined to prove that statistic wrong. At that point, I had an attitude like Peter that I would never betray Jesus, and that I would never be a person that questions God (Matthew 26:33-35).

Fast forward to my freshman year of college. I took a psychology class with a professor who I respected in many ways but was a devout atheist. I tried not to let her philosophies taint what I thought I believed so strongly. However, many of the questions and doubts I had not previously explored festered in my mind. Soon I fell into a spell of doubt and despair that lasted two and a half years. My thoughts raced: How could I believe in God if there is so much we can't know? Does the Bible have laws that contradict each other? And are they impossible to follow? It came down to pride. God is the only One who knows everything, and by insisting I must know everything about God before I can know Him, I was putting myself on the same level as Him. What I began to understand later is the laws that God puts in the Bible to protect us because He loves us are impossible to follow on our own, but God makes anything possible. It took years before I realized this.

I felt depressed and alone. While working on general education requirements at my community college, there was an opportunity for me to join a Bible study at school and the college ministry at my church. I went to a couple of meetings and stopped going. My church attendance became off and on, yet I continued to be a service host. I remember feeling like an impostor going to church while, at one point, telling close family that I was agnostic. However, I continued to go as it forced me to think about the meaning of life. I wanted there to be a God even though I was not sure of His existence anymore. This period of my life was very humbling. God allowed me to be broken so I could truly understand what faith meant and trust Him with everything.

Toward the end of my sophomore year of college, I was weary and disillusioned. I would pray to God that if He does exist, that He would reveal who He really was to me and

“GOD ALLOWED ME TO BE BROKEN SO I COULD TRULY UNDERSTAND WHAT FAITH MEANT AND TRUST HIM WITH EVERYTHING.”

provide me with new Christian friends. Many of my prayers were selfish, like Thomas doubting Jesus rose again without seeing the nail marks through His hands (John 20:24-29). Through it all, God had a plan, and He answered my prayer in His own time.

When I transferred to UW-Stout, God generously provided me with a Christian roommate (who quickly became my best friend), Christian mentors, and a supportive church community and ministry through Street Level and Believers City Church. With research, I was able to wrap my head around some previously unanswered questions, and I trusted God with the rest. More importantly, God softened my heart toward Him. Now I can say with confidence that He has saved me.

God taught me to listen more closely to others and His answers. They may not be in the time frame I wanted or what I expected, but they are good, nevertheless. I began serving God again through Burning Dog Radio at Believers City Church. This time it is more out of joy and less out of obligation. Recently, He has been teaching me to be bolder in sharing my faith with others. He gave me the opportunity to be more involved at Street Level and share my testimony with people in a large group again and one-on-one.

A major teaching point that He has been making clear to me lately is to trust Him completely with my career, education, and future. I received a job offer for after graduation, prayed to God asking Him if it is where He wants me, and accepted it. I have been in prayer about finding the right church near my new job, but if that if it is not where God wants me, that He would make it evident. With the coronavirus outbreak, there was uncertainty as to whether my training program would be cancelled or if I could graduate. I had a surprising amount of peace knowing God would take care of my true needs regardless of the outcome. He has already given me salvation. I am still able to take the classes I need to graduate online. The recruiter emailed me back a week ago that my training program will be moved from June to September. However, no matter what will happen, I know that God is good all the time.

—Hannah

LOCKDOWN: THE PHILIPPINES' RESPONSE TO COVID-19

REPORTING FROM CEBU CITY, PH

On January 30, 2020, the Philippines Department of Health reported the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the country with a 38-year-old female Chinese national. On March 7th, the first local transmission of the virus was confirmed.¹ As of April 13th, the Philippines has reported 4,932 confirmed cases, 242 recoveries, and 315 deaths.²

The epicenter of the outbreak is situated in Metro Manila, the nation's capital and home to about 12 million people. To try to contain the spread of the virus and flatten the curve, President Rodrigo Duterte declared an “enhanced quarantine” on March 15th to seal the city from all land, air, and sea travel. What was once the busiest city throughout the nation's 7,641 islands has now become a ghost town as school, work, and public transport is suspended and residents are forced to stay at home.

“AFRAID? YES, WE ARE AFRAID OF THE VIRUS, BUT I THINK HUNGER AND INSANITY WILL KILL US FIRST...”

The nation's fifth-most populated city, Cebu City, isn't immune. On March 13th, Mayor Edgardo Labella suspended classes for students in all levels and encouraged social distancing. In a matter of only 14 days, Cebu City went from a slow crawl to a screeching halt, as a month-long “enhanced community quarantine” was implemented. The city's borders have been sealed, all public transport stopped, nonessential businesses closed, and families ordered to stay at home. Only one person per household may go out for groceries or other essentials, provided they have a government-issued pass to do so.

Many Filipinos fear death—not from catching the virus, but from hunger and anxiety. While social distancing is key in controlling the spread, for a nation made up of daily wage earners and large families cramped in one-room “homes,” staying indoors is nearly impossible. “My savings can only hold up for a week. I hope the groceries from the government are delivered. If not, we'll have nothing to eat,” said one public transport driver. Another citizen was asked if he was afraid of catching coronavirus, to which he replied, “Afraid? Yes, we are afraid of the virus, but I think hunger and insanity will kill us first before we die from the virus.”³

¹<https://www.who.int/philippines/emergencies/covid-19-in-the-philippines>

²<https://www.doh.gov.ph/2019-nCoV>

³https://www.vice.com/en_asia/article/m7qwbx/poor-filipinos-affected-coronavirus-lockdown

⁴<https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/255126-coronavirus-cases-philippines-maps-charts-data>



As a Matter of Fact WHAT IS CHURCH?

At times Christianity can be confusing. When you start to read the Bible there can be names of people and places you have never heard before. There will be words that have little to no meaning outside of the world of faith, and then, even more confusing are words that you know, but when they are carried over to Christianity, they might have an even greater depth of meaning than ever realized before. Knowing that it can at times be overwhelming, *Word on the Street* is going back to the basics to tackle common questions. These are questions that are not only integral for the new believer, but also for the seasoned Christian and anyone who is skeptical about the Christian faith. They are truths that you never move beyond.

WHAT IS CHURCH?

The word church generates images of old brick buildings, full of beautiful stained glass, heavy wooden pews, crosses hung on the walls, and pulpits front and center. Church has become synonymous with the building where traditional religious services take place. To view church solely this way would be a severe mistake. The church being perceived as a mere building is greatly underselling what Jesus and Scripture intend the church to be. In the Bible, the word used for church is describing a unique group of people. The biblical definition of church is a called-out assembly.¹ Whenever it is used in the Bible it refers to people. Simply put, the church is the people who are transformed and adopted by God. All Christians are the church.

WHY CHURCH?

To fully understand what the church is you must also understand its purposes. It is designed to train and equip believers to do what Jesus intended them to do.

It is where Christians are to be built up and strengthened. The church is where believers become more unified in their knowledge and understanding of who God is and what His plans are. The church is used by God for Christians to mature and grow into the people that God intends them to be.²

It is in the church where Christians can obey commands such as bear one another's burdens, love one another, honor one another, stir up one another to good works, admonish and correct each other, and speak truth to one another. The church exists for believers to engage in one another's lives in a real way that is going to make a real difference in each other's lives and for the purposes of Christ.

It is clear that the mission of God is largely dependent on the church. Commitment to the church is a necessity for anyone that seeks to be in God's will and used by Him in their community and beyond. Allowing a church to fulfill its role in your life requires active engagement and participation. It won't always be easy, but it will always be worth it.

The church of God is a big deal. It is so important that God commands us to not forsake it.³ It is the one institution that will never fall. In the words of Jesus, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18, ESV). God is behind the church. God loves the church because He loves people, not because He is greatly concerned with the majesty of a building. The church is imperfect people, in full realization of their need for a savior, gathering together for training, unity, and accomplishing the mission of Jesus. All of this is done for the glory of God.

¹ patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2014/08/28/what-is-the-bible-definition-of-church-what-is-the-biblical-view-of-church/

² Ephesians 4:11-14

³ Hebrews 10:25



QUARTERLY MUSIC BEAT

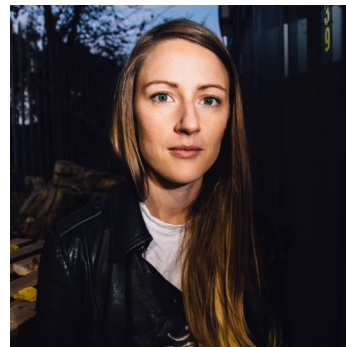
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AN UPDATE FROM OUR FRIENDS AT BURNING DOG RADIO

BURNING DOG RADIO'S *Summer Playlist*

Summer is usually a nostalgic time for many. You may have had to change your plans around some this summer, but let's make it a memorable one nonetheless with some good music playing in the background. This issue, we're highlighting some of the artists we've featured over the past few months on Burning Dog Radio.

Londoner **Ben Howard** has been making indie folk music for over a decade, though because of personal reasons, he's never heavily promoted his music. He's laid low because his focus has never been the fame; his focus is to make good music. And make good music he has. His is mostly just vocals, guitar, and piano, however, his music isn't always light and fluffy like much of the indie genre. He gets passionate. You'll just have to give him a listen to find out what we mean. Songs to check out: "I Forget Where We Were", "Depth Over Distance", and "I Will Be Blessed".



Next up is **Tina Boonstra**. This worship artist writes raw and from the heart. Her new track "Out Of My Depth" is one to keep you on your toes, as she reflects on trying to

keep it together. She plays with bass and percussion, keeping it simple and sweet with some added grit. Boonstra grew up as a songwriter in a missionary family, expecting her songs to find their home in the church halls she grew up with. However, she was able to explore and own her sound while still pulling inspiration from her Christian roots. Hit 'play' on these tracks: "Second Chance", "Concrete Heart", and "Find You".



ODESZA has the ultimate summer bops for you to blast on the sunny and rainy days. This electronic pop duo is made up of Harrison Mills and Clayton Knight from Washington state. They started making music their senior year of college at Western Washington University. They weren't planning on making a career out of music, but after their second full length album, *In Return* got over 30 million plays on SoundCloud and one of their songs earned a Grammy nomination, they decided to stick with it. ODESZA is perfect for when you're throwing a backyard barbeque, need a pick me up at work, or going hard at the gym. They range from epic and cinematic to glittery and smooth electronic music. Turn up these tracks: "Line of Sight", "A Moment Apart", and "Higher Ground".

Give our featured artists a listen each week this summer on Burning Dog Radio 101.7fm in Menomonie, WI. If you want to give a listen to any of the songs mentioned, find us on Spotify at [burningdogradio](https://burningdogradio.com).

LISTEN ON  Spotify

GAMERS & GOD


ARE VIDEO
GAMES
GLORIFYING
TO GOD?



His eyelids began to droop as he leaned forward in his padded desk chair. His fingers swiftly clicking the backlit keys of his mechanical keyboard. His other hand gracefully maneuvering his wireless mouse. The room was relatively quiet, relatively still, illuminated only by the soft glow of his computer screen. A stale scent of microwaved food, dirty clothes, and cramped living hung in the air. He fought back a yawn, unfazed by the smell he'd grown accustomed to. How could he be tired with all the exciting fun that awaited him just beyond the lobby? Just beyond the next loading screen? "One more round," he thought to himself, "Then I'll get some sleep." The clock only read 10:17 pm on his desktop. He felt justified since he didn't have any homework due the next day. Slugging back the last of his Coke, he set the empty can down next to a pile of wrinkled papers and refocused on his monitor. What felt like seconds passed by. As he looked up and rubbed the sleep from his eyes, his hand reached down for his phone, almost reflexively. The backlight from his screen hit his face like a miniature sun as he saw the time: 3:48 am? He groaned and threw his phone onto the pile of clothes strewn haphazardly across his bed. "Where did the time go?" he thought to himself. He leaned back in his chair, and exhaled, regretting ever signing up for an 8:00 am class.

"How did it get so late so soon? It's night before it's afternoon! December is here before it's June. My goodness how the time has flown! How did it get so late so soon?"

- Dr. Seuss



“WHAT IS THE APPEAL OF THESE VIDEO GAMES MARKETING TO PEOPLE OF ALL AGES, ACROSS THE WHOLE WORLD?”

Have you ever been in this situation? Getting lost in the next level of your game? Have you ever felt the lure of the next achievement, the next victory, the next round, keep you from doing what you think you should probably be doing instead? If it's not you routinely staying up well into the early hours of the morning playing video games, chances are, you know someone who does do this. In America alone, over 60% of teens play two or more hours of video games every single day.¹ Globally, over 2.5 billion people play video games for long periods of time, thus earning the nickname, Gamer.² You might be thinking, “So what? Is that a bad thing?” Are video games inherently a bad thing? Maybe, maybe not. Science and politics seem to be at opposite ends of the board on this question. Many blame video games for inciting violence, while others claim it's a great outlet for anger. Some view them as a source of laziness and apathy, while others believe video games are a helpful tool that encourages being social and working together as a team. While some still claim video games cause kids' brains to not develop properly, others cite video games as a benefit for mental development and problem-solving skills. What gives? What is the appeal of these video games marketed to people of all ages, across the whole world? Why is this \$115 billion³ market expected to keep growing and growing?

For Christians, to figure out what is good for us and what is bad for us, we go to the Bible for answers. Unfortunately for us living in 2020, the Bible doesn't have a strict command about video games and the use of them. It does, however, have a lot to say about time. The Bible talks about how we should use our time wisely⁴, and use our time to glorify God.⁵ The Bible also has a lot to say about the condition of our heart, and how we as Christians need to reflect on how our motivations affect our actions.

Why do you play video games? You need to stop and ask yourself this question before thinking they're an

evil to be cut out from your life altogether. Do you play to escape your daily grind and forget about the world around you? Or, is playing a game a relaxing rejuvenation that brings you closer to God who created you? God does give good gifts⁶ and wants you to have joy on earth.⁷ I've met people on both sides: those who have given up gaming to follow God into new areas of life, and those who still, on occasion, can enjoy a good game with a clean conscience. If, however, video games are causing problems as a distracting time waster that hinders spiritual growth, it's time to consider whether it's really what you're supposed to be doing.

Time is a finite resource and a gift. The crazy thing about time is that it never stops. You never have enough of it, and you always think you have more of it than you actually do. The Bible teaches us to number our days⁸ because we don't know when our last breath is going to happen. God does. And God, in His wisdom, has a plan for us, a journey; a specific story that He wants us to be a part of. He has specific work for every individual that He wants us to do while we have time on this earth. Will you wait around, spending time lost in another world, to figure out what that is? Is time spent behind a screen, sucked into a fantasy, part of that plan?

The ultimate answer is that it comes down to you and your relationship with God. Pray and seek where the Holy Spirit is leading and convicting you about your time and actions. Be willing to roll with and adapt to what God might have for you. Then talk to spiritually mature Christian leaders and friends for more insight too. Obeying Him to give up or to keep video games in your life will require faith. He might ask you to entirely give them up or cut back. He might not. Either way, He knows what will bring you massive joy and fulfill His purposes. Are you willing to trust Him?

¹cmch.tv/parents/video-games/

²newzoo.com/insights/articles/the-global-games-market-will-generate-152-1-billion-in-2019-as-the-u-s-overtakes-china-as-the-biggest-market/

³www.statista.com/statistics/246888/value-of-the-global-video-game-market/

⁴Colossians 4:5 NLT

⁵1 Corinthians 10:31 NLT

⁶Matthew 7:11 NLT

⁷Ecclesiastes 8:15 NLT

⁸Psalms 90:12 NLT



Social Distancing is Nothing New

GOD'S SOLUTION TO THE PANDEMIC OF LONELINESS

“To love means to open ourselves to suffering. Shall we shut our doors to love then and 'be safe'? That's the only alternative, really. But locking ourselves up and never facing another person won't fix what's really going on in our souls.” — Elisabeth Elliot

No one would have thought that our communities and countries would ever be physically forced apart. Social distancing guidelines have now disrupted the lives of millions of people. Everything seems to have been put on hold, and we are left with an incredibly empty social calendar. And we feel it, don't we? Now a simple trip to the grocery store is viewed as a wonderful opportunity to interact with other humans. Suddenly, our physical distance from other people correlates to how isolated we have felt all along.

LIVING IN LONELINESS

This phenomenon is nothing new. Many people have been experiencing social distancing for quite some time. Not necessarily the type of social distancing that requires at least six feet of physical space between ourselves, but the kind that puts up different relational barriers like developing protective mask-like personas to prevent people from knowing who we really

are. By masquerading false representations of ourselves, our interactions with others become quick and shallow, existing in a closed-off emotional bubble where nothing meaningful comes in or out. This is all done in hopes that it will somehow solve our loneliness, but only proves to drive us further apart and into deeper despair. We are people in isolation. Limiting our interactions physically just made this isolation more apparent.

Our world is more technologically connected than ever before. We can hold an entire conversation via text in the palm of our hand. We can see what our former high school classmates are cooking for dinner on multiple social media feeds. We are constantly, overwhelmingly inundated with quick, shallow, so-called connections that leave no time for deep conversations that matter.

The fear of being "disconnected" ironically causes us to neglect investing in the real-life relationships we do have. When was the last time you met someone for dinner or coffee and didn't look at your phone once? We desperately want to feel connected to people without making the investment and risk of actually doing so. We at least want to appear connected. This causes us to run from event to event, posting about our supposed grand adventures for people who don't care to see, thus perpetuating

“THE TRUTH IS WE DESIRE TO BE GENUINELY UNDERSTOOD AND LOVED BUT CRINGE AT THE THOUGHT OF EXPOSING WHO WE TRULY ARE. GOD DID NOT DESIGN US TO LIVE IN SUCH ISOLATION. HE OFFERS US AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WAY OF LIVING.”

the empty relationship and loneliness cycle. Now, more than ever, we understand that these online “communities” are no substitute for real, live, in-person interactions. But we still try to distract ourselves with them and with a multitude of other short-lived entertainment options. The truth is that we desire to be genuinely understood and loved but cringe at the thought of exposing who we truly are. God did not design us to live in such isolation. He offers us an entirely different way of living.

CREATED FOR CAMARADERIE

Imagine a group of people who are committed to each other through the good and the bad. They share what they have so that no one in the group lacks anything. They take time to discuss important issues and truly care about each other. They have each other over for dinner where they laugh together over joyous moments and cry together over shared struggles. This group doesn't get along so well because they're all so similar. In fact, they are as diverse as you can imagine. But it is what they have in common that makes the difference.

This is what we all search for. We seek out the ideal ragtag group of friends who will provide this kind of community. These types of groups dominate our most beloved television shows: *The Office*, *Friends*, *Cheers*, *Parks and Rec*, the list goes on. Yet, when it comes to our own lives, there is still a part of us that fights against the thought of sharing everything and being a part of such a committed group of people. Though we desire this, we also feel the need to self-preserve and put up barriers which make true friendship with others impossible. However, God

created us to experience deep connections with others and to live as part of a perfect community.

COMFORT IN CHAOS

So what are we to do? Is there any hope of relationships that don't leave us lonely? Yes. We just need to know where to look. Throughout the Bible, God communicates that He desires to be in relationship with us, with you, individually. This is one of the reasons we were created. He wants us to turn to Him and get to know Him. Our relationship with Him should be as intimate as a dad and his child as the Bible describes in 1 John 3:1, “See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children” (NLT).

Jesus came from perfection in heaven and entered into our sick, dying, messy world. And He did so to live a life that perfectly served and loved those around Him. He died on our behalf so that we could belong to God's family and never be alone again. How? He was resurrected from the dead and was made alive forever and ever. Believing in Him, and the eternal life He promises, means this life is temporary because real life with Him begins now and lasts forever.

“For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26, NLT). God is the only One who can fully satisfy our desire to be fully known and loved, and He promises He will never leave us. This is the deepest and most meaningful relationship we can ever experience. It is out of this relationship that all other relationships can start to make sense.

RADICAL RELATIONSHIPS

The good news of this kind of life-giving relationship doesn't end there. After Jesus defeated death, He established His Church. As His representatives on earth, the Church is to show others how to have a relationship with God as well. These believers do this by allowing God to change every aspect of their lives, especially how they interact with other people. They are to be people marked by love for God, for each other, for their neighbors, and for their enemies. This group of people is to love each other in such a radical way that the whole world will know they are followers of Jesus. This mission is summed up in the Book of John, “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:34-35, NLT).


Learning to love people in this way does not come quickly or easily. Naturally, we enter into relationships to gain something for ourselves. We feel that if we don't look out for our well-being we will not have our needs met. That makes our relationships depend on our feelings and leads to friendships that are unstable, insecure, temporary, and shallow, which is the perfect recipe for loneliness.

God, however, calls us to be part of a local group of believers who seek the good of others, regardless of personal feelings and gain. When all members do that for each other, we don't have to fear our needs not being met. We'll have a whole church body looking out for our good instead of just fending for themselves.

This means we are free to lay aside the masks we wear to keep ourselves from being fully known. The Christian community is a place where we are all keenly aware of the fact that we are all screw-ups, so we don't need to hide our failures from each other and pretend like we are perfect. We are free to commit and invest in a select group of people that we will share our lives with. God wants His followers to do things for each other that require that we invest time and effort into relationships. This is done in all the day-to-day mess of real life, not just the quick, shallow, perfect-looking stuff we can easily post online. We don't have to live in fear that coming into close contact with these people will leave us plagued by more loneliness. These people aren't perfect, so they will disappoint from time to time, but being committed to each other means that when you disappoint them they won't give up on you either.

“A COMMUNITY IS ONLY AS STRONG AS WHAT IT IS BASED UPON. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS MEANT TO BE OF THE HIGHEST CALIBER BECAUSE OF WHO IT IS BASED UPON.”

A community is only as strong as what it is based upon. The Christian community is meant to be of the highest caliber because of Who it is based upon. A group of people securely loved and satisfied in God has the freedom to love each other regardless of surrounding circumstances and fickle feelings.

The world will tell you that practicing social distancing will save your life. The people of God, His Church, invite you to step in close and experience real, life-giving relationships. Don't wait until this pandemic is all over to find a community. If you're honest with yourself, you probably need it now more than ever. If you already belong to a church, see what they have going on for their members at this time and seek to connect with people in any (safe) way you can. If you don't have a church yet, look into some around your community, or around your university's community since you'll be going back there eventually. Maybe you've got a friend who has been pestering you about coming to church with them. Now you know they've been pestering you because the church is where the craving for real, lasting relationships can be satisfied. Ask them how they are connecting with their church family at this time. 

**Note: This is not a call to ignore current health and safety measures being enforced by the government for the fight against the recent pandemic. This is a call to seek God and invest in His people.*

Hello,



BelieversTogether.com

A website to find simple ways to JOIN US FOR CHURCH

Attend Church From Home During COVID-19.

We know that it is tough to stay connected to your church community. Some churches do not have the resources to provide services for their church during Safer-At-Home. We desire to use our resources to help people hear messages of hope in a time of despair. Thankfully, we live in a time when technology makes these things possible.



BEING MISSIONAL IN AN UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD

RETHINKING HOW TO SHARE GOD WITH THE WORLD AROUND US

Everything about life as I know it has been turned upside down. My days are usually filled with plenty of tasks. I know where I am going to be, when I am going to be there, and often who I am going to be around or even talk to. I read my Bible. I work. I go to church. I am a part of different ministries at the church. I spend time with my family. But now, the entire world is basically being asked to stay at home. There is a pandemic. We only get to go out of our homes for things like food and essential work.

GOD'S CALL IN OUR LIVES

God has called us to "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling." (Psalm 2:11, ESV) and "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19, ESV). How are we supposed to serve God and share Him with the people around us when the way we live our lives has been turned upside down?

One way we can handle this is to essentially become a hermit. We can just stay at home and fend for ourselves. Another way we can handle this is by moving forward and continuing to share Jesus with the people around us. The Bible says, "For nothing will be impossible with God." (Luke 1:37) and "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13 ESV) This is great news; it means that nothing is impossible for God, and He provides our strength!

PRAY

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." (James 1:5 ESV)

God will guide us in sharing Him with other people, but we need to be close to Him to be able to hear from Him. We can hear from Him through prayer. In prayer we can pray for God's guidance, opportunities, and personal mental strength. I think this is one of the most important things we can do.

LIVING BY EXAMPLE

"Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us." (Psalm 62:8 ESV)

We display God to the people around us by living by example. The people around you are going to see how you react to this situation. Are you panicking? Are you filling your cabinets full of basic supplies? How are you portraying yourself online? What do your social media posts say? Trusting in God and not reacting in extreme ways like the world around you will be seen by your neighbors and coworkers. They will see that there is something different in you and can lead to opportunities to share your faith.

SEEING PEOPLE'S NEEDS

We are used to seeing people in person. When we see people in person, we can

often tell how they are doing, or see if they are in need. Now that we are not in as close proximity with people, seeing their needs is going to take a little extra effort. Call or text your coworkers, your friends, and your neighbors. Maybe even mail them a good old-fashioned letter! Ask them how they are doing and see if they need anything. Many people might have anxiety, lost their jobs, or are sick and cannot go out. You can be used by God by simply talking to them or running an errand.

GET CREATIVE

We can also get creative and think about other new ways we can connect with people. Bake bread and bring it to your neighbors, mail letters to people, or even start a neighborhood Facebook group. These things really are not any different than what we should already be doing as Christians. We just have to approach things in a different way now, that's all.

This leads one to wonder. Have we built such routine into our lives that we think we are being missional, and, when thrown off course, we realize we are not being missional to the extent we should be? What are you going to do about it? Let's make "the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16, ESV).

FROM THE PHILIPPINES TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH



AN INTERVIEW
WITH VIRMZ

First of all, can you introduce yourself and where you're from?

My name is VirMZ and I grew up on the island of Negros, Philippines, but lived on Cebu Island for few years before I left the Philippines. I currently live in Cape Town, South Africa.

Explain how Jesus saved you. How did meeting Jesus change the trajectory of your life?

I grew up going to church, and I always believed in God, but I didn't really have a relationship with Jesus. It was when I moved to Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in 2001 to work at a Christian youth hostel for a year that I realized I was doing things for God. I saw the emptiness in others as they tried to fill their lives with what Amsterdam had to offer, which made me really examine the purpose and meaning of life. The people I worked with were so genuine and passionate about Jesus, and it really stirred a hunger in me. I wanted what they had. I went to an Alpha for Students Conference in London (UK) in 2002 and that is when I can really say things became very personal to me. It was then that I did not only understand the love of God, but also experienced it and surrendered my life to the Lordship of Jesus.

Explain your role and involvement with Youth with a Mission (YWAM).

Today I am part of the leadership with YWAM Muizenberg in Cape Town, South Africa. I have many different hats that I wear. I coordinate a ministry called Nations2Nations, but I also run a Backpackers Discipleship Training School between Asia and Africa.

How did you get your start with traveling? Where was the first place you went and why?

I always had a passion for traveling. While I was in college, I studied Travel and Tourism and I knew it was for more than just traveling. God had given me a heart for young people and missions. I love people and cultures. The first country I visited was Indonesia when I was 20 years old (also 20 years ago this year). I was there as a steward at the Christian Conference of Asia. Later on, I realized that God placed that passion for travel in me. As I traveled, I saw His heart for the nations and understood His redemptive purposes for different people groups. When I found out about the Youth Hostel Ministry in Amsterdam, it was something that resonated with my heart and I applied to work there for a year.

What are your favorite and least favorite parts about traveling?

I love meeting people and cultures. My least favorite part is packing different types of clothing for different climates when you travel to multiple continents ;-). Other than that, you have to be flexible and open. Then you will enjoy every bit of it as you learn and grow through your experience.

How many countries have you been to? Which one was your favorite?

I have been to over 80 countries. It's hard to pick a favorite, but I'd say The Netherlands. God taught me so much and grew me a lot by taking me there. It was formative in my early years in missions and made the rest of my travels afterwards easier. I do love South Africa too, as it's the place that God has called me. I've lived the longest there outside the Philippines. Recently, I traveled to Japan. I'm really fascinated with this nation. God has given me a heart to see many Japanese encounter Him!

Being a missionary means that you're often away from friends and family, which can be pretty challenging (especially during holidays or family events). How have you coped with that, especially coming from such a family-minded culture in the Philippines?

The first few years were really difficult, especially Christmas, as Filipinos celebrate it very differently than other nations. As the years went by, I learned to see more of what I gain than what I have to give up. God has given me many families around the world, and I am so blessed with amazing friends. I love the quote from Jim Elliot, "Wherever you are, be all there." Having that attitude helps a lot! It's also important to understand that as we journey through life, we will always miss something, or there's some longing for something. Knowing that God is more than enough, that He fulfills those needs, enables you to develop joy and contentment in the journey.

What goals do you have for your future?

I want to see more connections between Africa and Asia. I believe South Africans are called to go to the nations and hold some of the keys to unlock some of the unreached people groups in Asia. I'm working on being more intentional and strategic in mobilizing South Africans into Asia. Also, as missions has changed a lot, I want to inspire Africans and Asians to fully engage with God's heart for the nations.

Are you connected to a local church? If so, how has the church helped you discover your calling to missions?

When I lived in the Philippines, I went to Bradford UCCP and many members there were very supportive and helped me in my early years in missions. In South Africa, I go to Shofar Christian Church in Cape Town. My church loves missions, and I've had the opportunity to do a few trips with my pastor. My small group is amazing too, as they always pray for me and welcome me back when I return from my trips.

What would you say to a college student who claims Christianity is boring or restrictive?

Christianity is so far from boring and restrictive! If you don't have that, then you probably aren't living fully surrendered to Jesus. If we see Christianity as a religion then it is boring and restrictive, since religion is when we hope for a reward and fear punishment. When we are in a relationship with Jesus, it's so dynamic and full of adventure. Jesus gives us life in abundance, but we have to live a life not only having Him as a Savior but also Lord of everything. It's not always easy, but knowing He is with us and fills us with joy and hope makes this journey of faith so meaningful and purposeful regardless of the circumstances.

What practical advice can you give to a college student who would like to serve God in the mission field?

Grow in intimacy with Jesus. In that place, we capture His heart and we respond to His call. We do not do it because we have to or we want to be accepted, but rather we respond in love and obedience to Him. Engage in prayer. God reveals His heart and imparts His love to us for nations, peoples, and situations through intercessory prayer. In the season of study, learn God's heart for the nations and the biblical basis of missions. Go on exposure trips and short-term missions, visit missions' organizations, meet missionaries, and hear their stories to learn from them. Ask God what your part is and what training you should get if He is calling you into missions. If He is calling you to stay where you are, then stay, because that arena of life is worthy of a calling too, if that is your obedience to Him. Look how to engage locally and get involved globally in every season of your life.



FAITH OVER FEAR

FACING OUR FEAR OF THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Eyes suddenly open and palms feeling clammy, I wipe the tiny bead of sweat from my forehead. I roll over and the clock reads 3:02 a.m. My heart beats loudly in my ears and I take a few deep breaths, hoping to slow it down. I roll onto my back and stare up at the ceiling in disbelief, thankful it was just a dream. Have you been there? The nightmare

felt so real, and you woke up in a cold sweat. Fear and anxiety have an incredible physical effect on the human body, and our world is no stranger to fear these days. The coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected all of us worldwide, causing stress on individuals and our families. What does fear do to the human body? To learn more, I connected with Matt Hansmeier, M.D.

“IN TIMES LIKE THESE, FOR THE CHRISTIAN, WE PROVE WHETHER OUR PROCLAIMED TRUST IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IS SOMETHING WE ACTUALLY BELIEVE IN.”

from Duluth, MN, who has been practicing urgent care medicine for several years and working with college students.

WHAT FEAR DOES TO OUR BODIES

Most of us have a general idea of how our bodies respond in a moment of fear. Our hearts beat faster, our hands get clammy, and maybe we'll start to sweat. Dr. Hansmeier shared a few more physical symptoms which can occur in response to stress and anxiety, such as mind-racing, tachycardia (elevated heart rate), shortness of breath, chest pains, memory changes, abdominal pain, nausea, aches in neck and shoulders, and much more. I also learned that the effect can be even more serious than we may think.

“When our minds perceive something stressful, there are signals sent to the sympathetic nervous system which then triggers a cascade of hormones that ultimately produce the physical symptoms associated with a hyperarousal state. When these symptoms go unchecked, it can produce detrimental effects on our ability to fight infections, mood disorders (such as prolonged depression), memory changes, and often leads to extensive and expensive medical testing to rule out other disorders without any identifiable physical cause.” – Dr. Hansmeier

I was curious to know if there are additional effects on our health if fear remains for an extended period of time, and Dr. Hansmeier had insight on this, too.

“Imagine running a car or motor with the gas pedal to the floor for a prolonged time and the wear-and-tear that would do to an engine. That's essentially the same principle when it comes to physical detriment to the human body when in sustained hyperarousal state. Some of the more common effects of prolonged fear

and unresolved anxiety result in clinical depression, weight gain, frequent migraines and headaches, and difficulty with digestion...”

I'll spare you the gruesome details there.

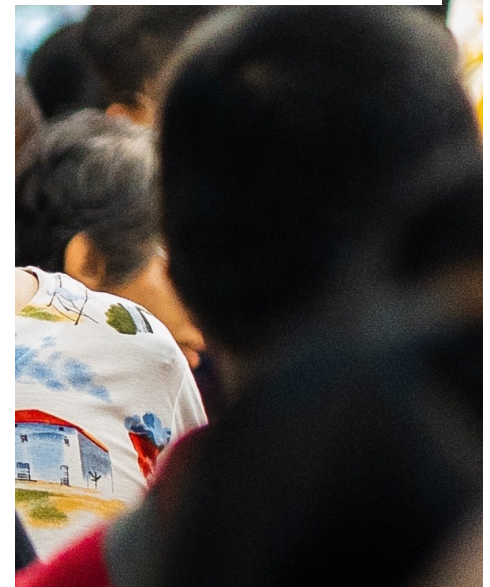
PUTTING FEAR INTO PERSPECTIVE

The threat of COVID-19 is real, and it is natural that our bodies respond to this threat with a little bit of fear. The root of our latest anxieties may be this worldwide virus reminding us of our own mortality or that of our loved ones. But it should also remind us of what was true all along: we are not in control of our lives. In times like these, for the Christian, we prove whether our proclaimed trust in the sovereignty of God is something we actually believe in.

OUR RESPONSE TO FEAR

When a crisis enters our lives, it reveals what we fear most. For many people, it's death or economic hardships. However, our greatest fear should be a lack of right standing with God. Don't waste this fearful time; let it cause you to really think about death. Ecclesiastes 7:2 says, “It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.” Fear can often show us how weak our faith and trust in God actually is, yet God is gracious and merciful, even to those struggling with belief issues. God wants us to trust Him, and sometimes He uses fear as a means to draw us in.

Don't put your body through the stress that fear and anxiety bring. Instead, pursue God. Admit you don't have control and submit to His. Romans 12:12 says to “rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” (ESV). Patiently endure suffering. Trust God. Have faith in Him. That's our part.



PSALM 27:14, NKJV

**WAIT ON THE LORD;
BE OF GOOD COURAGE,
AND HE SHALL
STRENGTHEN YOUR
HEART; WAIT, I SAY,**

PSALM 94:19, NKJV

**IN THE MULTITUDE OF
MY ANXIETIES WITHIN
ME, YOUR COMFORTS
DELIGHT MY SOUL.**

DEAR WORLD

A Message of Encouragement

Dear World,

It is likely that you are afraid, uncertain, and confused. Life has not gone according to your plans. Times are hard. If you are anything like me, on any given day you look at the news, and a quick read of the most recent headlines is enough to overwhelm you. Headlines full of all the terrible, tragic, and terrifying things that are going on in the world. Crisis surrounds us at all times. I understand the fear, dissatisfaction, and doubts. I know how it feels to be in a panic, unsure of what move to make next.

Currently, the world is facing a worldwide pandemic. It has been said that the entire world is facing an unseen enemy that endangers our hope, joy, peace, and livelihood. It would be easy to let such circumstances burden us to the point of incapacity. The deluge of bad news seems never-ending because our communication is instant, constant, and global. This means we get more bad news than anyone ever has before. There are times where I want to crawl to a corner and just give up.

What are we to do? You see, the problem is that we were not made for bad news. God did not design our souls to believe, trust, and share the bad news all around us. We were created by God to be hearers and bearers of good news, not to become entombed by the chaos and crises that we are surrounded by.

You probably want to know how this is all going to end. Even better, you would probably like to control how everything is going to play out. By this point, you probably have reached some level of frustration at the realization that you don't get that knowledge or control. I want that, but I don't get to have it. Instead, I must learn to be content knowing the One who does know and does have control. And I know that He loves us.

I know what it means to be afraid. I don't know what the future holds, but I do know the One who holds the future. In uncertain and wavering times, He remains constant and unchanging. In times with no hope, He holds out hope. It is tempting to look for some sense of security in all kinds of ridiculous short-term answers. We think we can sanitize and wipe away the mayhem. In a mess that seems to be without any real answers, He presents Himself as the only solution.

Uncertainty and fear are to be expected. Jesus has been winning a battle against an unseen enemy, sin, which has threatened the life of every human being since the Garden of Eden. Trust Jesus. He can ultimately make you okay despite being surrounded by calamity.

Sincerely,

A loving Christian



TAKE A BREAK

put your feet up

ENTERTAINMENT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS



“Canceled, closed, postponed indefinitely” is something we only want to hear when

we’ve procrastinated on that semester-long project that’s due tomorrow. It is, for sure, not something we want to hear concerning our downtime. Nonetheless, at the brink of mass shutdowns, temporary substitutes found their way onto our screens and into our homes. Check out these fan faves.

LIVESTREAMING CONCERTS

Many people dream of seeing their favorite artists, some paying hundreds of dollars to do so. While concerts were canceled, many insisted that the show must go on. Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitch, and other platforms became the new stage. We’re talking about all the Johns: John Legend, John Mayer, and, yes, even Elton John all live-streamed their very own concerts.

BACK TO THE 50’S

Drive-in movies...who would have thought! Yeah, I know. We would’ve had to leave our houses for this one. But, all from the comfort of a car, some were lucky enough to enjoy this experience. Not only did already established venues make a strong comeback, but some movie theaters temporarily converted to meet this popular interest.¹

YES, WE’RE STILL WATCHING

There’s always great anticipation for a new movie that piques our interest. “When will it be in theaters?” “When can I rent it?” Many new films ended up bypassing theaters and came streaming straight into our homes. Guess what that meant? No more “reminders” to turn off our phones. Yes! We could activate the blinding light of a thousand angels! Intermittently,

of course. And all without missing any of the action. However, our roommates still side-eyed us over those pita chips...

THEE THEATRE, THEE THEATRE

I tell ya, actors didn’t stop breaking their legs. Compliments of the Metropolitan Opera, classics such as *Peter Pan*, *Macbeth*, *Norma*, and *Don Carlo* streamed on the Met website on a 23-hour schedule. We’d best have that top hat and monocle ready! Because I’m sure the community has become a theatre connoisseur in no time.

SPORTS OF COURSE

Did you miss March Madness, the anticipation of the Olympics, or the opening of baseball season? Well, no worries, ESPN has got our backs. They decided to stream Disney films. Okay, Disney sports movies, but movies nonetheless. Turn to ESPN and you just might find movies like *Angels in the Outfield*, *Miracle*, or *The Rookie*. Sure, reruns of old games didn’t go away, but I’m not joking about the Disney thing. Catching a movie on ESPN is not as out of left field as initially thought.

BOOKED SCHEDULES

For the bookworms whose punishment growing up was to play outside, their dreams came true. Many libraries and other nonprofit groups provided free e-books and other electronic resources during this time. Among them were the Internet Archive and the National Emergency Library. Read them and weep while you can.



¹kutv.com/news/local/utah-movie-theater-converts-to-drive-in-during-coronavirus-outbreak
²deadline.com/2020/03/espn-fills-the-coronavirus-sports-gap-friday-night-disney-films-1202893700/

A LIFE NOT THEIR OWN

ACTION WHEN DISRUPTION HIT HOME

Like much of the rest of the world, it seems like everything is canceled: weddings, events, travel, church, school, and most businesses. Christians are no strangers to life issues in the world. Christians have a calling in all seasons. Listed below are three short stories about how Christians are living out their faith around the world during COVID-19.

In China, Persecuted Church Brings Hope Amid Coronavirus Epidemic¹

The Chinese Christian community knows all about persecution. Recently, they've experienced a heightened level of oppression, and yet when the coronavirus showed up these Christians were ready to continue putting their faith into action by loving their neighbor. One account records a group of Christians distributing face masks and Gospel pamphlets to passersby on the streets. A pastor from Wuhan, where the virus had its initial outbreak said, "While the real situation is possibly more severe and complicated than what is known, regardless of what circumstances we are in, we should not worry and fear all the disasters, pandemic, and death "because He is the Lord of our lives. If He does not allow [it to happen], we will not even have a single hair fallout from our heads."

Rediscovering the Power of Prayer In Italy²

There is a heavy fine to pay for leaving your home without a valid reason in Italy. This season of exile has helped Italian Christians discover three facets of prayer that they often neglect in times of abundance. One Italian Christian records prayers she's learning during this time: prayers of lament, prayers of intercession, and prayers of silence. As humanity struggles to contain fear amidst this anxiety-provoking pandemic, lament feels newly relevant to us. It helps us realize that "gain"

in this world is not the main focus or point of our lives. Despite denominational differences, Italian Christians are unifying and praying for their nation, citizens, and healthcare workers. They've created a common fund to help those in economic need and fasted for their country. "Lord, I'm dumbfounded. I don't know what to say." When words fail us, we can be still and know that God is God. Christians in Italy, like everyone else, are hoping things go back to normal sooner than later, but in the meantime are looking for this pandemic to humble their hearts and teach them the prayers of the weak, concerned, and the speechless.

In Ukraine, Christian Group Steps in to Feed Needy Jews Confined by COVID-19³

Already poverty-stricken in Ukraine, Christians for Israel, a Dutch-based organization, is stepping up to provide immediate food aid to elderly Jews confined by the pandemic to their homes. With the banning of large groups, many soup kitchens have had to close, forcing people who want to help to get more creative. The group aims to deliver more than 300,000 meals throughout the country in the coming months. The help is welcomed considering the political climate keeps citizens in the dark about accurate numbers and how the virus will affect people's livelihoods.

LET'S UNITE WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS AROUND THE WORLD AND PRAY. ACT ON WHAT GOD IS TELLING YOU TO DO IN THIS SEASON, AND CONSIDER HOW YOU CAN LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR WELL.

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NICK THE HICK

Another rant from your favorite redneck



UNATTAINABLE EATING HABITS

Eating healthy is so gull dang hard. I always start with good intentions and healthy ingredients, but somehows end up off the low calorie train and back to flavor station. Take oatmeal as breakfast for example. You grab your bowl, ladle some glops in and take a bite. You think, add some butter, not bad, add some peanut butter, progressin, throw a few raisons in, closer, add sugar, almost there, preheat the oven, add flour, grab a cookie sheet, form into balls and bake 15 minutes. Cookies. Eating healthy led to cookies. Again. Lunch comes. Colorful fresh vegetables. Take a bite, decide to add a little ranch. No problem, just a flavor enhancer. Dump vegetables in bowl, fill with ranch and eat with fork. Before you know it your healthy lunch turned into another 1000 calorie consumption. Surly supper can't flop. Meat. I hold strong, gonna eat this boneless skinless chicken plain the way the good gym members intended it. Goes well until you accidently drop it in the flour bowl from the morning. Since your half way there you heat up some oil and wala an artisan bun and pickle and you got yourself a chicken sandwich. Enough for now, my diet starts tomorrow.

CHRISTIANITY IS MORE THAN A CLUB

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