

Another Opportunity to Share Jesus

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A season of great opportunity

These are unprecedented times as the world has been halted by the Coronavirus (COVID19). All of the sudden, people have had to stop their normal routine, and many of us are practicing stay at home orders and social distancing. As the virus continues to spread around the world, many people are in a panic because it has reminded them of two important things: First, that we are not in control. And second, that we will all die.

But for the follower of Jesus, these are two realities we live with every day that bring us comfort and strength as we follow Him. Jesus is our King and in control. Jesus is our Savior and has conquered death and given us eternal life. So as a Christian, I don't need to panic, but rather I want to tell others about Jesus and the hope that He has given me. I want to be wise and share Jesus with others.

Ephesians 5:15-16 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Right now the world is living online.

Just because the world is staying at home doesn't mean they aren't going anywhere...they are online. They are using technology to connect with family and friends. They are on their phones, tablets, computers, and televisions more than ever. Some are busy, some are bored, some are hopeless, some are scared—and I think we are all humbled by not knowing what will be next. We are all searching for answers during this times of uncertainty, and this is a great opportunity for the Church to share the answer we have: Jesus!

I have been so encouraged by how churches all over the world are doing online services. They are flooding the internet with the good news of Jesus Christ, and people are responding and turning to Jesus for the first time and receiving salvation during these online services. And although I am proud of all the hard work pastors are putting into making online worship services happen, I believe that God wants to use the whole body of Christ to share His Gospel....God wants to use you!

1 Peter 3:15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect

So let's continue to go and make disciples

People are reaching out to family and friends to find comfort and community during this time. Humanity was made for relationship because we were made in the image of God who is Father, Son, and Spirit (Gen 1:27). So, with all of us being isolated through social distancing, people are lonely and reaching out to their relational network for more community and comfort. People are even open to chatting more and interacting online with strangers just to find community in this season. And this is where God's people (YOU) can rise up and use technology to share Jesus with the people in your life.

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Jesus knew that this virus was coming and is still in control and has a plan...and His plan includes His Church: YOU! As followers of Jesus, we want to go where people are and share

the good news of Jesus with them. Right now, this includes using technology to share Jesus with others. I believe that we have a great opportunity—as the weeks go by and more and more people are social distancing, we can bring hope through community with technology. Whether that be through a phone call, having a face time conversation, using social media, or a video conference call...there are so many great ways to be connecting with people! And although the method may be different than what we are used to, we still have the same mission: to make disciples.

Here is a simple tool

As we are all figuring out how to use technology in new ways, there is definitely a learning curve—but don't let this new form of communication scare you! I want to share a simple tool (or process) that can help you run an effective relational meeting. This applies whether you are having a simple FaceTime conversation with a friend, leading a larger conference call with unbelievers, hosting a social media chat group, or a leading virtual small group meeting for your church. This process helps us use technology to share Jesus in the relationships God has specifically placed in our lives during this season. So, let's not be afraid of technology, but rather use it for God's glory.

1 Cor 9:22b-23 I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Go through five P's - Process, Pray, Practical, Point, Plan.

Process

As people are jumping into your meeting, help them process what is in their heart and be prepared to ask them questions. They can be fun and light hearted: *“What has been your favorite meal you cooked since you've been at home? What album are you are listening to this week? How are you filling your days with a new schedule?”* Just ask open-ended questions, and as people join your call, they can jump right into the conversation.

Once people have all arrived to your meeting, you should start to transition into some more serious questions to help people process. *“What is bringing you encouragement in this time? How are you all really doing this week? Is there anything you want to share with the group? What are your greatest concerns right now?”*

The questions can go on and on, and I would say that this should take up about half of your meeting time. Let people talk, and just listen (Prov 20:5). You don't have to have answers and don't need to solve anything. Just listen and help people process life and speak from their hearts (Luke 6:45). And as one person shares, the others will listen too. and this creates real community and is a beautiful gift to many right now....the ministry of presence.

I am reminded of James 1:19 where it says, *“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.”* We don't need to fight and argue over our opinions all the time. We see this happening all around us on social media. It's okay to just let people share and help them process by listening and saying nothing.

Pray

As you are listening to people answer questions and pour out their heart, write down ways you can be praying for them. Be listening to the Holy Spirit speak to you as you are listening to them share about their life and situation. And talk to God silently in prayer as you are listening to people answer questions (1 Thes 5:17). As you hear concerns, fears, and pains, be sensitive

and empathetic. Don't interrupt people with a quick fix or a short answer. Just listen and allow the Holy Spirit to minister in people's lives as you silently pray.

Then when people are done sharing, ask them if you can pray for them out loud. Some may say yes, and some may say no. But ask. And then pray for them...right in the call and out loud so they can hear. Your prayer doesn't have to be long, elaborate, or fancy. *"Jesus, please help and comfort them. Thank you that you love us. In Jesus name, amen."* This is a great prayer to pray (Matt 15:22; 20:30). Of course you can say much more in your own prayer, but don't feel like you have to preach at this time. You can just pray, and that will be effective!

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Practical

This is a beautiful time to ask HOW CAN I HELP? Rather than going straight into preaching mode and throwing verses at the situation, get very practical...ask how you can help. It is often said, *"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."* The Bible would tell us that proclamation is very important, but we are to do this in love and care for people (1 Peter 3:15; 1 Cor 13:1-3). Meeting practical needs is an important way to love people.

1 John 3:17-18 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Let's show people we really love and care about them in deed and truth. *"Is there anything I can do? Can I help you with that problem? What can we do as a group to support and encourage you?"* You may not be able to do everything, but you can do something and should be looking for opportunities to do good works in this time (Gal 6:9-10). God wants His Church to be generous and loving with our resources along with our words (1 Tim 6:17-19). And even when you can't fully meet a need, fear, problem, or concern—simply asking these types of questions shows people that you care.

Proclaim

We not only want to bring encouragement through meeting physical needs but also our with words of encouragement.

Prov 16:24 Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

I specifically choose the word proclaim rather than preach because we don't have to have a long sermon for every problem. The point of proclaiming is to point people to Jesus and not focus on our preaching ability. We can proclaim Jesus in many more ways than just preaching. Maybe we want to share a song, message from our church, or an article that ministered to us. Maybe we want to just read a simple verse to them like Rom 8:39 or Psalm 46:1 or a whole psalm like Psalm 23 or Psalm 91. Maybe we want to just share our experience of how God encouraged us when we had the same type of fear. It doesn't have to be a hour-long message that we are trying to articulate. Rather, we are simply being led by the Holy Spirit to proclaim Jesus and His hope.

Whatever the case may be, focus your words on pointing people to Jesus—who is the Ultimate Savior and His Word which brings life (Rom 1:16; 12:2; 2 Tim 3:16; Isa 55:10-11).

Plan

As you finish your meeting time, start to plan the next one. Simply ask “*When can we meet again?*” You want to continue to be in conversations with people about Jesus during this time, and simply asking this question will help. Keep the door open to meet again, and schedule the next meeting before you end your current meeting.

As well as planning your next meeting, take the time to make sure you are following up on any action steps that need to happen before the next meeting. If someone asked for a grocery run, then schedule it out with them right there, or if someone asks to talk to you privately in the meeting, ask them what time would be good for them to do that and schedule it. Basically, we need to follow up with loving action before we close our meeting.

Gal 6:9-10 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

God wants to use you!

This is an amazing opportunity that God has given us as His followers. Whether it be during COVID19 or not, He has sent us as empowered missionaries to proclaim His gospel to others (ROM 10:14-15). As people are constantly hearing bad news and daily discouragement, let's take time to share some good news! The glorious gospel of Jesus Christ! Let's remind people of the great eternal truths that we have in Gods Word (2 Peter 1:12-13). And let's use this moment in history to tell as many people as we can about our Living Hope: Jesus!