

Pandemic Ponderings: What Have You Been Doing for the Past Two Months?

By Bob Young

Most of the U.S. has begun to ease restrictions. People are returning to restaurants, bars, malls, beaches, and other public places in large numbers, escaping the isolation and distancing of the past two months. After two months of being cooped up due to fear, getting out of the house is a way to ignore the fear, lessen the fear, or even pretend it doesn't exist.

What have churches been doing during the past two months? I share what I have observed. Church leaders have tried to keep church members safe and comfortable during the pandemic. Meetings of members have continued with the use of technology – Sunday morning worship, small groups, ministry and leadership meetings. Members have been encouraged to maintain contact with one another. Church leaders have comforted members who felt troubled or fearful.

The last part of the last chapter of Acts tells us that during Paul's Roman imprisonment, he spent two years in his own rented house. (Two years, not two months!) Most likely, Paul could not leave the house. The Bible says he welcomed and taught those who came to him. For two years, he kept doing what he was doing before his imprisonment. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's purpose in life, the task he had accepted, was to proclaim Jesus. That was his goal when he traveled freely on missionary journeys. That was his goal when he was imprisoned. In prison, Paul kept on doing what he was doing before. The circumstances did not matter. The circumstances did not change his calling, his purpose, or his activity. He kept doing the same things—proclaiming and teaching, with boldness and without hindrance.

Time for some lessons.

First, churches that are inwardly-turned during the pandemic are that way because that is the way they were before the pandemic. The pandemic gives churches an opportunity to evaluate ministry. Is our ministry mostly for us? Are our outreach efforts building-centered, church-centered? Is the primary ministry of our church focused reaching the lost? Has evangelism increased or decreased? Why?

Second, if church members have struggled with fear and frustration during this time -- we who know salvation through our Savior and steadiness in the storms of life because our Anchor is steadfast -- can you imagine the feelings of unbelievers? Churches that are serious about imitating Jesus' compassion have seized the moment to offer the world peace on earth and good will to all through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Third, the pandemic has given churches an opportunity to evaluate personal interactions with unbelievers. Churches that want "people" (generic) to know that the church exists and that it is a place of love and caring are seeing little change in connections with unbelievers. (To say that we exist and care is pretty much the goal of every business in town!) Churches and Christians who seek personal connections with unbelievers are reaping the harvest.

Fourth, the pandemic has multiplied our opportunities. With technology easily accessible, even with limits on social interaction, the difference between churches and Christians who are connecting with the lost and those who are not is whether there is a fire within for the lost and for the proclamation of the Good News. Many Christians are finding this to be a remarkably fruitful opportunity for the kingdom to bring people to Jesus.

Fifth, most Christians are doing during the pandemic exactly what they were doing before the pandemic. The pandemic brings into clear view the focus of life. In my contacts on the mission field, seminars, Bible studies with the lost, teaching and preaching, evangelism, discipleship, and baptisms continue. One digital campaign reached 1000s with the gospel message; a virtual campaign had 20+ unbelievers present the first night; individual Christians are using phones, technology, personal visits when permitted, and every method possible to contact lost friends, family members, neighbors, and acquaintances.

What are you doing during the pandemic? Probably you are doing what you were doing before the pandemic.

A more important question! What will you do after the pandemic? Will you recommit to Jesus' purpose (seeking and saving the lost), Jesus' instructions for prayer (pray for the harvest and harvest workers), and Jesus' commission (go make disciples)?

If you are doing these things, keep doing them regardless of circumstances.

If you are not doing these things, now is a good time to begin!

The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few! May we carry the gospel forth boldly and without hindrance!