

Bringing Your Concept of Christianity into Clear Focus

By Bob Young

The end is not yet in sight. The coronavirus pandemic is an international health crisis. The challenges of combatting the virus are constantly before us in the news, on the internet, and in personal conversations. Below the surface and less visible, the virus has brought into focus the nature of our world and the nature of our societies and cultures. Further, the spread of the virus has exposed our spiritual stature and how deeply we are committed to living out each day the kingdom of God in our lives. Either our kingdom life and kingdom values are continuing, or we are distracted and disabled from our daily kingdom tasks as disciples.

I fear that many Christians have become near-sighted. I fear that churches have laid aside any vision for reaching one, let alone for reaching multitudes. I hope I am wrong, but I am telling you what I see in the churches.

In this new world situation, opportunities to advance the gospel abound. A brother from Ecuador wrote me, "God is opening a great and effective door in this time, we must take advantage of technology to reach more souls, to understand the grace and the sovereignty of God." You will not be surprised to learn that the church where he attends continues to reach out with the gospel and that souls are being baptized into Christ.

On Sunday, I attended a pre-launch meeting to kick off the Digital Evangelism Campaign of the churches in the Dominican Republic. Souls are being won by the preaching and study of God's word.

A church leader in Colombia wrote me, "The coronavirus has us inside our houses, but we are evangelizing from our houses because this pandemic has served to cause unbelievers to now seek the Almighty."

Here's a vision checkup!

- Is most of what you see and think about related to you and your circle – family, friends, local church?
- How hard is it for you to focus on others who are seeking Jesus at this time? (Are you continuing to pray, make contacts, teach, and baptize?)
- What do you see most clearly when you look at our world? Follow-up question: Is God clearly in view?

Spiritually-minded Christians remain calm and courageous in the face of crisis, adversity, danger, and threats. When we understand God (God is God) and when we understand who Jesus is (Mark 4), fear is dispelled. It is easy to think we are further along in our spiritual journey than we really are. In times of crisis, much of what we think, say, and do is quite superficial! In times like these, we get a clear look at our true spiritual condition.

I see in the coronavirus an opportunity for kingdom-first disciples to shine. I mention four things that will help you evaluate your Christian walk as a disciple.

- Disciples pay increased attention to their spiritual lives and their relationship with God, spending time in prayer and Scripture.
- Disciples take care of their own, both in their physical families and in the body of Christ.
- Church history reminds us that the disciples took care of the multitudes when plagues swept through the population, even at the risk of their own lives.
- Disciples increase their outreach, because many who fear a virus that can kill the body do not know the One who controls eternal life and death. Many who were previously uninterested in spiritual things have suddenly developed a keen interest.

In times like these, "We do not lose control of our lives. What we lose is the illusion that we were ever in control in the first place" (quote from Barbara Brown Taylor). God is in control. Do your actions reflect fear, or do they reflect your trust in the Lord? What concerns rule your heart?

I encourage you not to lose sight of kingdom life and kingdom values. Avoid the disabling distractions that would pull us away from daily kingdom tasks. Stay balanced! Seek God's eternal purpose. Our vision may be fuzzy, but this is a time when our idea of what it means to be a disciple (Christian) is in clear focus.