

Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

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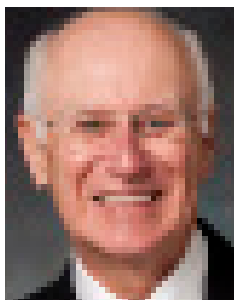


**Your Church Can
THRIVE
in a Global
Pandemic**

BY J. LEE GRADY

Jesus Will Have the **LAST WORD** About This Pandemic

We cannot be fearful. We must continue to share the love of Christ in these uncertain times.



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@DougBeacham](#).

I write this column towards the end of March. The operative words in our thoughts and on our lips are COVID-19, sickness, change, toilet paper, shortages, fear, uncertainty, economic crisis, opportunity, social distancing, quarantine, cancelation, online services and postponed. Life as we know it has changed.

But there are other more positive words in our thoughts and on our minds these days: Jesus, “Place of Hope, People of Promise,” faith, love, generosity, sharing, caring, praying, discipleship, mercy and, of course, Easter.

Pandemics and plagues have been part of the human experience from the beginning of time. The Bible describes the ten plagues that struck ancient Egypt in Exodus 7-11. Those were instruments with a dual purpose of judgment and deliverance.

The plagues had a devastating social, economic and biological impact upon the Egyptians. And while God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, the people of Israel suffered judgment during their wanderings in the wilderness because of their failure to trust and obey the Lord (see Numbers 11:33; 14:37; and 16:46).

Human history records a devastating list of plagues, including the Antonine Plague of 165-180 A.D. Probably smallpox, upwards of 5

million people died throughout the Roman Empire. The Plague of Justinian in 541-542 A.D. was the bubonic plague, and perhaps 10 percent of the global population perished. The Black Death of 1346-1353 devastated Europe; some historians say half the European population died in that horrible crisis.

The pages of the *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate* describe the suffering, death, church service cancellations and prayers when the Spanish Flu of 1918-1920 sickened an estimated 500 million people.

An estimated 100 million people died around the world. (You can read about that pandemic [here](#))

The 2020 coronavirus has impacted nearly every nation. Even developed countries in Europe and North America have not escaped the damage.

You've probably heard the phrase, "When America sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold." We can only pray for and find ways to help the billions of people living in parts of the world without the medical care available to us. If our medical system is stretched to the breaking point, imagine the impact elsewhere!

So what do we do? We continue to fulfill the mission for which Jesus Christ came into the world. We continue to be carriers of God's love and mercy. We care for our neighbors and families. We act wisely, but we do not cower in fear. We pray for those in governmental authority and those who serve on the front

lines of medical care. Instead of hoarding, we find opportunities to share.

We do this because of our faith in what occurred on Good Friday and Easter. Death and destruction do not have the final word. Jesus took death and destruction upon Himself on the Cross. As Hebrews 2:8, 9 reminds us, "but now we do not yet see all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who . . . for the suffering of death . . . that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."

"Death and destruction do not have the final word. Jesus took death and destruction upon Himself on the Cross."

The death Jesus "tasted" was the death that entered the world in Genesis 3, when human pride arrogantly defied the word of the Creator. Jesus took the awful taste of death into Himself and allowed it to do its terrible work in His body. Yet He arose on the third day victorious over it. He who tasted death became the Bread of Life for us!

As I write these words, knowing they will not be read until later in April, I have no idea what the future holds between now and then. Will the scourge have abated? Will life return to normal? Will we still be avoiding large crowds and each other? Will I be healthy? I don't know the answers to these questions.

But I know this much. Jesus is still the Savior of the world. God has promised that even in the

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Place of Hope. People of Promise.

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last days when plagues will abound, He will not give up on redeeming His creation (Revelation 9:18).

I am more confident than ever that the Holy Spirit has caused us to be "Places of Hope filled with People of Promise." God has called us to be generous with our faith, our resources, our hope, our attention and our love.

The last words of the Bible are: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21). The gospel message begins with the Word becoming flesh, dwelling among us, "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

So great is this grace, this amazing grace, that the Risen Jesus Himself, interceding from heaven, told the Apostle Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). So there it is, after all the thoughts and words, the last word: Grace. God's amazing grace! Amen. ☐

How I Know We Serve a **GENEROUS GOD**

God has blessed me in amazing ways—and now I am helping others to be generous.



BY B.S.
MOSES
KUMAR

B. S. MOSES KUMAR and his wife Dora serve as founding pastors of the Donald Memorial IPHC Church in Hyderabad, India. Since 1976, Kumar has served the IPHC in South India as Assistant Field Superintendent for a decade, and as Field Superintendent for 5 years. Presently he is serving as the President of the Hyderabad Bible College, and as General Superintendent of the Pentecostal Holiness Church of South India. Moses and Dora have two daughters, two sons and seven grandchildren. You can reach him at bsmoseskumar@gmail.com.

I grew up a poor boy in India, with a rural pedigree. I hardly had any resources to start my early college education. Both my parents, who were elementary school teachers, retired just at that time, and the only source for my college costs was 30 rupees for a month! That is a very small amount in U.S. dollars.

Yet during those lean years the Lord put iron in my soul. To my surprise I passed my pre-university courses. For the 3 years of my graduate studies, IPHC missionary Joan Donald tried to find support for me each year. How faithful and generous was the Lord! He never left me.

After four years in ministry with two bachelor's degrees, I completed a masters degree. After 18 years, I completed my Bachelors in Education, and I earned a post-graduate certificate to teach English from the a prestigious university in Hyderabad.

After 25 years I completed my Masters in Theology from the University of Wales. Later I earned my first Doctorate in English Literature. And when I turned 65, I received my Ph.D. in Theology!

What more can I say about His generosity in my life! Both of my doctoral dissertations were published in India. And my book on *An Interpretive History of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church in India* was published by LifeSprings Resources with no costs for me, as the Lord generously moved people to underwrite the project. (Even the Indian reprint was sponsored by a generous friend!)

All who know the God of the Bible know Him to be generous. Deuteronomy 31:6 says: "Be strong. Take courage. Don't be intimidated. Don't give them a second thought because God, your God, is striding ahead of you. He's right there with you. He won't let you down; he won't leave you" (The Message).

This is what made my 45 years of ministry possible and enjoyable, with no regrets! He has provided for my needs and fulfilled my desires. This could be His reward—this side of heaven, I feel—for my wholehearted labors in His kingdom!

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE GENEROUS

Not all people were generous to me in terms of money, but certainly they were in terms of showing love, encouragement and affirmation. God placed different people in my life and orchestrated resources from His abundant supply. Mrs. Virginia Hamilton and Kingsway Christian Center in Baltimore, Maryland, funded my theological studies. Syd Doyle and the Ashford Christian Fellowship in Kent, England, supported us when my wife was ill.

Donavan Ng and the Wing Kwong PH Church in Hong Kong supported my urban church-planting ministry in Hyderabad and beyond. The Lord even moved upon B.E. Underwood, while he was presiding bishop of the IPHC, to bless us with a monthly personal pledge during the most difficult years in our early ministry at Hyderabad.

God is generous and so are His people! None of my supporters responded to any plea from me, but only as they were moved by God. What a blessing when people are sensitive to His promptings. You will never know the impact of the seed you sow into lives!

Only God knows how many pastors struggle financially in other nations. In the history of the IPHC, the pioneer missionary in South India, Kenneth G. Donald, wrote an enlightening article, "What's Wrong with Foreign Money for National Pastors?" published in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* in 1977. He claimed that "indigenous" is a bad word if it prevents Christians in one country from sharing with fellow believers in another country.

It was out of my own personal struggles that I wrote my dissertation on "Developing Self-Supporting Churches" for the University of Wales. We don't want overseas churches to become dependent. But we should encourage generous giving!

When I began my career as a pastor in 1976, the first salary I ever received from the mission was a meager 175 rupees. Yet the average salary of non-graduate schoolteachers then was about 1,800 rupees. Apart from being insufficient, it was humiliating. It raised serious questions about my self-worth.

In those early years, the new General Supervisor for the IPHC in Asia visited us, offering powerful ministry. But when we presented our needs for more support for pastors at the end, he remarked that every church should develop a sense of ownership, even though we had never been trained in this!

The earning capacity of a person in ministry was limited to what the mission could give, with no options for betterment. After 10 years of ministry in a couple of villages, I was hardly drawing 500 rupees. For years my wife and I struggled, even as we had more children. I asked the denomination for support and some was granted. Somehow we survived on the equivalent of \$150 a month.

As our costs of living kept increasing, we continued

to struggle. I strongly decided never to ask anyone for an increase, but to pray instead.

Then in the year 2000 I introduced a four-phase plan to the South India Conference, two years after my election as the Conference Superintendent. According to this Plan, each local church was challenged to adopt a four-year journey to attain 25 percent of its support each successive year. We agreed that every year we would forego 25 percent of mission support so that we could become self-sustaining.

I implemented this plan in faith within the proposed time frame at Donald Memorial PH Church. Our generous Lord honoured our sacrifice, with an increased blessing. Consequently, the church reached self-supporting status by April 2003.

Today I am entirely supported by the local church, even as I fulfill other roles. We pay our bills, support other ministers and contribute to South India Missions Ministries. The more we taught the importance of generosity, the more God blessed us!

I have learned my lessons about honesty, integrity and stewardship. I learned to tithe not only from monetary blessings, but also from blessings in kind, since my wife and I often receive other types of gifts. For instance, when people bless us with new clothing, we find the average cost and tithe from that.

When my airline ticket is sponsored, I tithe from the cost of it. I could never afford to travel overseas with my own personal resources. But I have been blessed by our generous Lord to visit 14 countries!

Recently when I was visiting an Assemblies of God church in India, I was impressed by a slogan about giving that they had posted. It said:

"Your tithe is your obligation to God. What you give beyond your tithe is your offering. Your offering is the seed you sow for your future needs."

This quote has stayed with me, and I often share it with others. Generosity is your key to blessing. And God's generosity blesses not only the recipient but also the giver! □

“God is generous and so are His people! ... What a blessing when people are sensitive to His promptings. You will never know the impact of the seed you sow into lives!”



Changing a nation: Women at the Donald Memorial PH Church in Hyderabad, India, celebrate International Women's Day.



We Are Missing Some **PIECES** in the Church **PUZZLE**

We think we know how to do church. But we have misplaced these five vital disciplines.



BY CHRIS
MAXWELL

CHRIS MAXWELL served 19 years as a lead pastor in Orlando, Florida, after five years of youth ministry. He is now in his fourteenth year as Campus Pastor and Director of Spiritual Life at the IPHC's Emmanuel College. He speaks in churches, conventions and schools, and is the author of ten books, including *Pause With Jesus*, *Underwater* and *a slow and sudden God: 40 years of wonder*. His latest book is his second collection of poems—*embracing now: pain, joy, healing, living*. You can reach him at chrismaxwell.me.

Do you enjoy jigsaw puzzles? When our hands grab the puzzle's pieces, we hope to put each one in the correct place—as quickly as possible. We see the individual images and all the open spaces. Then we set the parts where they fit. Frustration arrives when we struggle to complete the task quickly and correctly.

It gets especially difficult when we can't locate a piece of the puzzle. Have you ever tried putting together one of those 1,000-piece puzzles, only to discover that a few of the key pieces were lost?

In most of our ministries, we have designed our planned and expected structures. We know the parts. We know their places. We plot them, rehearse them and carry them out. And we invest effort to do them well. We know how to do church!

But could we be missing healthy parts in this puzzle we call church? Are some spiritual disciplines never put in place for deeper encounters with God? Consider these five components of Scripture and church history and ask yourself, "Why do we frequently avoid these pieces of the puzzle?"

1. WAITING.

Biblical narratives feature the normality of waiting. God's pace differs from ours. We hear a word, a promise or a confirmation. Then we expect immediate results. God says it, but then what happens? God confirms it, but then what happens? Sometimes nothing—at least nothing noticeable. Years or even decades pass while we glare out our windows of limited vision.

Delays aren't fun. But waiting—seeing God's "not yet" as a spiritual discipline—can develop our character and prepare us for the new adventures we crave.

Think about it this way. You must learn to see waiting as a time of strengthening your life. Instead of seeing your painful delay as a waiting room—where we only think about when the next text or call or knock on the door will happen—view it as a *weight room*.

The workout of waiting, though not always enjoyable, can be a time when our spiritual muscles prepares us for the place God will guide us. We might not appreciate the delays. But we can change our perspective. Let us wait joyfully and peacefully, putting our trust in God's timing.

2. GRIEVING.

In counseling sessions, my clients often apologize for crying. Though I'm sorry for their inner pain, I am grateful they are no longer clutching their hurt inside. They need to cry!

Shedding a few tears can be a vital step toward healing. Crying doesn't indicate defeat; it might open a door from denial and guide us into a new hallway of hope. It can be pain released appropriately.

I love the hearts of pastors who rush to joyful times after the death of a follower of Christ. Yes, there are positives about death. Bodies are permanently healed. Strength is completely restored. Struggles have ended. Permanent joy has arrived.

But I'm afraid we rush the grieving process. We often forget the family and friends who are still hurting. We could potentially, though not intentionally, convey guilt to people who feel sad.

Maybe God would prefer we urge His people to follow their minds and emotions through a therapy of grief. Maybe before we force the transition of mourning into dancing, we allow space for sorrow.

David's poetic prayers carried hurt, pain, doubts and anger before they were turned into national hymns. Jesus wept for Lazarus. Paul knew disappointment. So why are we in such a hurry to get beyond our own grief?

Before a rapid rush toward a shout of praise and a positive confession, can't we welcome sadness? Can't we allow the body to flow in the rhythm of grief that God created it to experience? Can't we welcome psalms of ascent as well as psalms of lament? Can't we weep together, and possibly, be healed together as we mourn?

3. ASKING.

Yes, this seems more fitting for today's church gatherings. Asking God for miracles. Asking people for money. Asking worship teams to entertain us. We love to ask!

But let's ponder "asking" differently. Rather than only asking God to do something for us, what if we ask God what He would have us do? What if we ask ourselves why we do what we do, and why we are the way we are?

What if we ask others how we can pray for them? What if we ask our leaders how we can assist them? What if we ask friends and people in the community to give us their thoughts about us, our church and our reputations? In many cases we have forgotten to ask the most important questions!

Think about how Jesus responded to questions with more questions. Open a biblical passage today and study—asking what truth is there, why it was there for them and why it is there for us. Stare outside today, asking what God wants done differently and how you're a part of the answer. Ask. And receive.

4. LISTENING.

The best follow-up for asking is listening. Instead of processing what our own next statement should be, what if we just listened to God and to others? What if we put down our smart phones and really listened—with caring hearts, attentive minds and loving attitudes.

Consider these reminders of the value of listening:

- "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." – Stephen R. Covey
- "Friends are those rare people who ask how we are, and then wait to hear the answer." –Ed Cunningham
- "You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time." –M. Scott Peck
- "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19, NIV).

Maybe you have a short attention span and your mind wanders during conversations. Work to pay attention. Practice your ability to listen and repeat what is stated. Ask God for ears to hear. Ask God to help you become, like Him, a good listener.

5. DREAMING.

Another needed experience is the call to dream. This isn't a justification for selfish ambition. It's an invitation to see yourself in the larger story of God's kingdom. Dreaming involves processing where you belong, reflecting on your gifts and talents and interests, pondering why certain tasks give you deep joy and noticing possibilities all around you.

You need a vision. Not just a vision about church buildings, bigger attendance and a larger budget. You need a vision about the building of God's kingdom and about your place in the narrative. You need a dream about how God wants to empower you with His presence so you can be a witness locally and globally.

Begin today. When life feels so puzzling, find the missing pieces. You will find them by waiting, mourning, asking, listening and dreaming. Realize the importance of these pieces. Grasp like you've never comprehended before how important you are in God's puzzle of grace. Yes, begin today to solve this puzzle. □



"Jesus wept for Lazarus. Paul knew disappointment. So why are we in such a hurry to get beyond our own grief?"



PASTORS: You Are Also Called to Be PROPHETS

God's ministers are called to bring radical change through the power of the Spirit.



By JASON
McCARY

Ordained in 1997 with the IPHC's Spirit Life Conference in South Carolina, JASON has functioned in various roles including Discipleship Ministries Director and Director for the School of Ministry at the Upper SC Conference (2015-2019), lead pastor at REALife Church in Greenwood, S.C. (2003-2016), Spiritual Life Director at Southwestern Christian University in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (2000-2003), youth pastor in Greenwood, S.C. and Oklahoma City (1993-1999), and adjunct instructor at several Pentecostal academic institutions. Jason holds a B.S. in Biblical Studies (Southwestern Christian University, 1999), a Master of Ministry (Southwestern Christian University, 2003), a Master of Theological Studies (Pentecostal Theological Seminary, 2015), and is currently a Doctoral candidate at Southeastern University. He and his wife, Marcia, have two children.

Jesus was most often identified as a prophet. Some mistook Him to be John the Baptist or a resurrected Elijah. Though more than a prophet, Jesus never refused this designation.

The function of Jesus and other biblical prophets was primarily a shepherding role. Their often ill-received words and works were endeavors intended to guide, care, correct and restore. Some of Israel's greatest prophetic leaders were, indeed, actual shepherds.

The prophets usually warned of impending judgment, yet they trusted in the mercy of God's justice, believing that God would be in their *today* and *tomorrow* who God had been in their *yesterday*.

The prophets can be understood as both seers and sayers, preachers and performers of God's word, who arose in times when the world around them was rapidly changing. Consider some of the greatest prophets:

- Isaiah's call came in a moment when King Uzziah had died and the nation was in a vulnerable state.
- The shepherd Amos was called by God to leave his homeland of Judea and boldly prophesy to the Northern tribes of a divided, exiled, and swiftly changing Israel.
- Moses' call came when a newly empowered Egyptian Pharaoh suddenly intensified cruelty upon the Hebrews.
- Daniel's ministry began as part of the first wave of the Israelite deportation to Babylon.
- Jesus engaged a religious and political society where a fear of Rome produced spiritually poor leaders who extorted and marginalized their own people in the effort to maintain peace.

All of these prophet-shepherds were *hearers and doers* of God's word. Their love for others was manifested in courageous sacrifice. We need these same prophets today.

The church needs insightful prophetic shepherds who not only *hear* and say but also *see* and *do*, and who understand God's story as the Church's story. It is impossible to gauge how briskly the world around us is changing, and for the sake

of God's future, much should be gleaned from the ministries of these past *seeing shepherds*, particularly the world's Greatest Prophet and Good Shepherd.

How can we be these prophetic shepherds? Here are a few directives:

1. Understand that your calling is to be a 'seeing' shepherd and a prophetic pastor.

Though a majority misperceived Jesus, He was, in fact, the promised heir of Israel's infamous, prophetic and priestly shepherd-king, David. The once and for all Shepherd-Deliverer, the One greater than Moses, had come. The 'I Am' of Moses' burning bush, the Good Shepherd echoed by Ezekiel, was leading His sheep in the *new exodus* towards the land of promise in God's *new creation*.

Isaiah's anointed, Suffering-Servant had "bore the sins of many" and was "making intercession for His transgressors" (See, Is. 53:12). Yet, we are His body, the sign of Christ's presence in the earth!

Jesus offered sight to the blind. Through Jesus, God touched the untouchables, forgave the condemned, healed the wounded, and restored the rejected. Today's ministers must also be about the Good Shepherd's *eye-opening* business.

First, we need fresh *insight*, our eyes re-opened with a renewed vision of God and a revived revelation of God's character so we can offer new 'sight' to others. We need to cry aloud to Jesus again, "Son of David, have mercy on me," imploring Christ to touch the eyes of our understanding and enable us to see everything and everyone with greater clarity and merciful precision.

2. The Church today needs ministers who are sayers and shapers, preachers and practitioners, of Christ's gospel.

The prophets' principal messages were for a people of God whose *world* was usually changing but whose *minds* were not. A transforming of the mind is what God was after through the prophets. The prophets called for a correction of affections, a reformation of hearts and a sanctification of love.

Likewise, Jesus' ministry centered on the religious Jews, and those relationally connected to Israel's story, who were living in an ever-shifting and very secular Greco-Roman world. What Jesus said and did, like the prophets of old, was disruptive and counter-cultural. Such prophets lived for what they could, by faith, see—an alternative kingdom that was in the world but not of it.

Christian ministry today requires such foresight! In most local church settings, the lead pastor is the primary leader of spiritual formation. Preaching and liturgy are essential aspects of discipleship because hearing and receiving God's word reshapes the heart.

The word "prophecy" in its most common biblical use, is preaching or proclamation. Yet, faithful liturgy is more than spoken, sung or recited words. Just as the church exists as a counter-culture, the minister's lifestyle should counter-culturally suggest to parishioners what kinds of *desires of the heart* are pleasing to the Lord.

That is, sheep will usually imitate the ambitions of their shepherds. In this politically charged, socially networked and super sensitive world, ministers must exercise a keen awareness of how words and works will positively or negatively impact others for the sake of Christ. How easily can our incautious words and actions ostracize the very people we desire to reach with the gospel?

3. As a prophetic shepherd, you must be full of the Holy Spirit, walk in wonders and celebrate signs, but also appropriately interpret those signs.

Jesus was a Pentecostal Prophetic-Shepherd. He was a man of the Spirit whose reputation as a prophet was due to the signs which accompanied His ministry.

Jesus trusted that His disciples would manifest greater signs as they multiplied and carried out His prophetic ministry. However, a danger with signs is that even when witnessed and experienced, signs can still be misinterpreted or disregarded.

Biblical prophets accomplished great exploits; tragically, those powerful signs did not usually result in the Israel's repentance. So too, Jesus' religious objectors continually demanded more and more miraculous signs for their convincing, yet they discounted and misinterpreted the signs for

which they begged.

Today, *signs* are needed and should be celebrated by the church, but the church must also rightly interpret the signs of God's presence, which like most signs point towards a greater reality ahead.

Today's ministers need prophetic *hindsight*. We can leap forward into the future when rightly *re-membered* to the signs behind us. Hindsight is 20/20 only when we remember our past accurately. The ancient Israelites had no shortage of songs and stories, poems and practices to remind them of their history with God. But, they seemed to remember their story wrongly.

A misinterpreted image of God led to the misunderstandings of past signs and stories to the extent that prophets such as Isaiah contended: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past" (See, Is. 43:18). Jesus, God in the flesh, was rejected by God-fearing Jews whose wrongful perception of God's character led to a wrongful remembrance of their story and to a present blindness of the reality of God standing right in front of them.

Prophetic shepherding requires a right remembrance of what is *behind*, an insightful gaze into what lies *ahead*, and a discerning assessment of present reality. For us Pentecostals, our past is filled with powerful *signs* that God has, mightily, been with us. Our short Pentecostal history is a story of divisive walls crumbling, color-lines being erased, the marginalized being restored and the hurting healed.

We are a people who continue to celebrate the miracle of God's new touch, new tongues and new times. May we rightly interpret the signs God has given us as we poise for the future as *seeing shepherds*, called by God for such a time as this. □

"Jesus offered sight to the blind Today's ministers must also be about the Good Shepherd's eye-opening business."

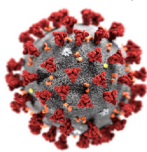
Your Church Can **THRIVE** in a Global Pandemic



When we look back on the dark clouds of 2020, I believe we will see a silver lining of hope.



BY J. LEE GRADY



J. LEE GRADY is an author, traveling minister and former editor of *Charisma* magazine. Author of several books including *10 Lies the Church Tells Women* and *Set My Heart on Fire*, Lee leads The Mordecai Project—a missionary organization that focuses on bringing the healing of Christ to women who are abused and marginalized. Lee has been ordained in the IPHC since 2000, and he and his wife, Deborah, live in LaGrange, Georgia. You can learn more about his ministry at leegrady.com.

Pardon my vulnerability, but I have a huge confession to make. I'm an extrovert. I thrive when I'm around people. I love crowds and parties. I prefer a minimum of seven hugs a day and I'm known to have two- and three-hour conversations with friends.

That's why I've been miserable during this recent era of "social distancing." Telling me to stay away from other human beings is like depriving me of food. I have been climbing the walls.

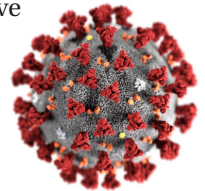
I hate it. But I get it. I know we have to protect others from the spread of the dreaded coronavirus. I have an elderly mother in a nursing home, so I know I have to take precautions so that older people don't get infected. I'm washing my hands. I'm limiting contact. My travel schedule has been cleared. I know I have to tolerate some cabin fever until the worst kind of fever is no longer a threat.

I hope by the time you read this the pandemic will be over. But in case it lasts several more weeks, as government officials are claiming it will, I have to endure this. So I've been looking for the best ways to not only survive but also thrive during this global virus scare. Here are some of the steps I have recommended to my friends in ministry:

1. STAY FIT.

Your immune system will be stronger if you are exercising. If your gym is closed, do a daily routine at home. You can literally fight off disease by staying active. And don't let stress drive you to binge on junk food.

And remember: This is not just good advice during a crisis. As a minister you need to consider that caring for your body is good stewardship. You must take care of the holy temple God gave you, so you can live as long as possible and bear the most fruit for His kingdom.



2. LIMIT YOUR NEWS INTAKE.

You don't have to listen to the news every 10 minutes to get a virus death toll, watch the stock market or hear politicians argue about who's to blame for this crisis. So much of our media has been spreading stress-inducing hysteria—and the people in your church have probably been subjecting themselves to a steady diet of it.

All this panic being stirred up by the media can actually make people sick. Tune it out. The more your mind is cleared of toxic anxiety, the better chance you can actually offer hope and inspiration during a national emergency.

3. STAY POSITIVE.

Joy is a medicine. Laughter releases endorphins into your system and strengthens your immune system. I'm not making light of a pandemic. But you are more prone to get sick if you are living under a pessimistic cloud. Share jokes, watch comedies, keep smiling and rejoice in the Lord. Also, read Paul's letter to the Philippians, which is called "the epistle of joy" because the word "joy" or "rejoice" appears in it 16 times.

4. TRUST THE LORD.

The world is not ending. This too shall pass. The Bible says the best antidote for worry is prayer. Relax, give God your fears and quote Scriptures that build trust in His promises.

Also, don't focus on conspiracy theories or silly rumors of martial law. Even though "corona" means "crown" in Spanish, this virus is not in charge. Jesus is on the throne!

I happened to be speaking at the IPHC's Emmanuel College just when the crisis was beginning in early March. One of the students I prayed with that week had been listening to a steady diet of conspiracy theories and doomsday rhetoric. He was panicking! I calmed him down and advised him to read Psalm 2, which reminds us that when men try to impose their wicked agendas on the world, the Lord laughs at them.

5. LET GOD RESET YOU.

Whenever our normal routines are disrupted, we get an unexpected

opportunity to reevaluate priorities. Even though this virus is a killer from hell, God can use it. The familiar passage in Romans 8:28a (NASB) should be a watchword for us now: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God."

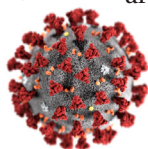
I have already realized during this crisis that I've been too busy. The coronavirus is helping me slow down and breathe. I am even finding the time to finish a book project. This inconvenient interruption in our schedules can actually be a chance to recharge. Listen for the Holy Spirit's voice as you spend more time in solitude.

6. DON'T STOP CHURCH—BUT DO CHURCH DIFFERENTLY.

Right now in most communities, the government has asked people to limit the size of all gatherings. In my state of Georgia, our governor has asked that all gatherings be limited to 10 people or less. This may last until the end of April—or even longer.

This is having a huge impact on churches. Most congregations in the United States have switched to online services, while many smaller churches are still meeting—either because they

aren't worried about contagion or they don't have the capability to broadcast online.



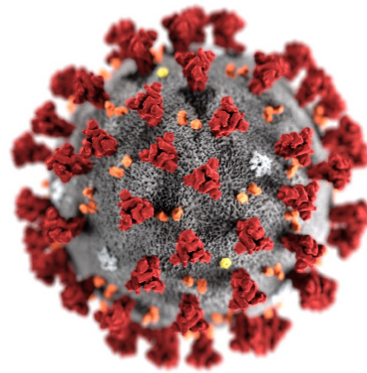
I believe this crisis can actually work to our advantage. What if we used

the coronavirus pandemic as an opportunity to divide our churches into small groups? And what if we gathered regularly in those groups, either online or in person, to pray for our nation and the world?

Isn't it interesting that most churches can't meet for a Sunday services right now, but we are still allowed to meet in small groups? God wants us to gather in clusters so that we can call heaven down to earth in a time of crisis!

When small groups meet for prayer, individuals don't have to sit close to each other or hold hands. Social distancing is wise. But fear should not stop healthy people from praying together for an end to this crisis.

If you choose, you can also



"Perhaps the Holy Spirit is using this global disaster to change our ineffective methods."

gather your small groups in smaller online communities. You can "meet" using Zoom or another online communication app.

In the book of Acts, after the first ingathering of Pentecost, believers met in homes for closer fellowship, teaching and prayer (see Acts 2:42, 46). This warm environment provided the nurture that new believers needed, so they could grow, and it provided an intimate place where believers could unite in prayer for God's intervention.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit is using this global disaster to change our ineffective methods. Just because your big services are canceled doesn't mean you can't gather groups of people in homes to pray or study the Bible.

Let's ask the Holy Spirit to break our old mindsets so we can embrace His fresh strategies. My prayer is that we will look back on the pandemic of 2020 and thank God for all the helpful lessons He taught us in the middle of a global health crisis. ☐

