

**The Church Doctor® Report provides a quick read of strategic and influential information. This information is free to share as long as the source is respected: The Church Doctor® Report, [www.churchdoctor.org](http://www.churchdoctor.org).** (To sign up: email [johnwargowsky@churchdoctor.org](mailto:johnwargowsky@churchdoctor.org))

## Plagues and Triumph: Pandemics and the Growth of Christianity

Years ago, I read Rodney Starks' *The Triumph of Christianity*. As Christ-followers, we can learn a lot from the two plagues that hit the Roman Empire in the second century AD.

The Romans who were wealthy were experts in social distancing! When the plagues arrived, they fled to the remote countryside. They left the masses of poor people behind to suffer and to die.

The Christians had a different worldview:

- Life is sacred.
- Mercy is the way of life.
- Sacrifice is the platform for mercy.

This is what believers do. This is who Christians are.

So, as the wealthy fled for the hills, the Roman masses suffered from disease. Christians, with a resurrection mindset and eternal perspective, stayed behind to care for those who were sick.

### Calamity Clarifies

It's so easy for comfortable humans to ignore their Creator, much easier to ignore their Redeemer—and even easier to take no notice of His followers—and their churches.

When the Roman plagues ended, the wealthy people returned to the cities. They were astonished to discover what was undeniable: The Christians had stayed and prayed,

Kent R. Hunter is the founder of Church Doctor Ministries and has spent decades helping Christians



and churches get organized to make disciples for Jesus Christ. He is the author of numerous books including his two most recent books: *Restoring Civility: Lessons from the Master* and *Who Broke My Church? 7 Proven Strategies for Renewal and Revival*, both available on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

[www.churchdoctor.org](http://www.churchdoctor.org)

Email Kent: [kenthunter@churchdoctor.org](mailto:kenthunter@churchdoctor.org)

cared and comforted, blessed the sick, and buried the dead. Like the popular contemporary song says, “You’re the God who stays...when the whole world walks away” (*The God Who Stays* by Matthew West).

The result? The wealthy, influential Romans discovered that Christians are heroes. Many discovered the real Hero, the One who beat death once and for all. The Christian Movement was greatly advanced throughout the Roman Empire.

## Persecution

Does it feel like a form of *persecution* that you cannot physically gather with friends at church for worship? Is that your focus, your worldview? Look, it’s easy for all of us to drift into the “poor me’ spiritual consumer mode.” I get that. It’s a real temptation.

Consider this: In Acts 8:1, there is a news report about some bad times for the followers of Jesus. “There was a *great* persecution of the church in Jerusalem.”

I don’t know about you, but I don’t think persecution is “great” at all! Yeah, I know, “great” means huge, right? Hold on: it was really “great”—awesome—as well.

Read on in Acts 8. What was the result? “The believers were all scattered.” Does that sound like your life, your church, today? What is great about that?

Yet, look at what Scripture adds: “The believers were all scattered, preaching the Word.”

## Spiritual Worldview

1. If your church is streaming worship on the Internet, are you inviting your unchurched friends to tune in? Look: They can “try church” in their pajamas and drink coffee.
2. If you *have* invited friends to virtually join you for church, are you following up, providing them the opportunity to discuss the message with you? Are you following up by texts, email, or phone?
3. Are you focused on the *scattered opportunity* to reach unchurched friends who have never felt comfortable entering a church building? Right now, you are looking through that window of opportunity! Can you just say, “I’m praying for you?”
4. As unbelievers in your social network watch the same news reports about the unbelievable number of deaths, has it led you to connect virtually with those who show no signs of faith—to talk about life, death, and eternity?
5. Are you simply a Christian consumer in this perfect storm to share your faith? Are you taking Jesus’ invitation, “You will be my witnesses...”?
6. As you deal with the plague, are you focused on the spiritual doughnut, or the hole? For each of us, Jesus might be challenging us: “problem or opportunity?”