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The Power of Spiritual Hope

In the last few months, this Church Doctor has interacted with hundreds of Americans—at church consultations, teaching several conferences with socially distanced crowds, and at livestreamed webinars where participants submitted questions electronically. I have traveled through airports watching hundreds of masked people—always watching, learning, diagnosing—from the perspective of a Church Doctor.

One visual that represents the time in which we live: In the men's restroom at the airports, I noticed, without exception, male travelers socially distance at the urinals—using every other one, without signs, instructions, or barriers. Humans are adaptive!

COVID Fatigue

Recent news flashes report vaccines are promising and on the way. Does that provide enough *hope* to cope? In theory, perhaps. In reality, none of us knows when we, personally, will get the novel coronavirus. Uncertainty drags on!

There is no scientific data, but it seems that sometime around the end of September, many people came down with COVID fatigue. We saw the numbers of new cases

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skyrocket, just as physicians predicted. As this destruction drags on, Christ-followers have an increased evangelistic opportunity to reach non-Christians in their social networks. This season of opportunity won't last forever—once COVID realities become an awful, distant memory. However, for now, can you hear Jesus saying, “Look at the harvest fields; they are ripe and ready for harvest” (Matthew 9:37)? As usual, some Christians, some churches, will take advantage of this opportunity. Yet, many will sleep right through it. What will you do?

Remember this: Distressed unbelievers are receptive!

The Power of Hope

As COVID wears on and wears us out, the most powerful tool in your spiritual arsenal is *hope*. Paul's letter to the Colossians has a powerful insight for this season of COVID fatigue.

First, the backstory. Ancient Colossae had a lot of people who had heard about Jesus—His life, crucifixion, and resurrection. Many had heard the basic facts of the Jesus story. Yet, like many unbelievers in your social network, a good number of Colossians dismissed Jesus as unimportant. To them, Jesus was an important person, just like many other historical figures: Buddha, Moses, Socrates, and Muhammad. Jesus is *important* to many, but not *central*.

What triggers change in people who know about Jesus as a historical figure, but don't receive Him as central to their lives—and to eternity? *The entry point for your conversation with non-Christian friends is hope.*

Jesus is the hope of the world. Okay, that's academic. But He is your personal hope—stronger than vaccines, more powerful than death itself. He is your eternal hope—beyond health, politics, a pandemic, beyond death itself. Eternal hope is your “confidence”—a word that literally means “with faith.” This is your most powerful message to fellow unbelievers. As the pandemic drags on and pandemic fatigue takes its grip, eternal hope in Jesus is your spiritual vaccine during this window of opportunity.

Yet, this season won't last forever. When the pandemic fades, the window will close. For now, if you “...have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honor Him as Lord.... Be ready at all times to answer *anyone who asks you* to explain the *hope* you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15-17). Be assured: Even if your unchurched friends don't know how to do it, right now, many are asking!

Share your hope!