



# Faith — OVER — FEAR

## Prescription for a Crisis

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**O**ur world has moved into fear and crisis levels like I have not seen in my lifetime. Seeing the empty shelves in grocery stores, one would think people are preparing to not leave their houses for months. The level of anxiety that has taken hold of us is seismic. Just as the coronavirus is highly contagious, fear is also contagious. Fear has a way of hijacking our rational brain and catapulting us back to old “flight, fight, or freeze” thought patterns. At that point, we no longer think clearly or make reasonable decisions.

What are we to do? How are we to react? I see two levels of response to keep in mind—on an individual level and on a national level.

### PERSONAL RESPONSE

**Understand the purpose of suffering**—As long as we are in this body of flesh and on this side of eternity, we will suffer—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. No matter what the level of pain we are experiencing, suffering is the avenue by which God does His best work, if we let Him. We must be willing to accept suffering from His hand. If we do, Elisabeth Elliot reminds us, “. . . out of our deepest pain will come the strongest conviction of the presence of God.”

**Look for God’s invitations**—The word for *crisis* composes two signs: *danger* and *opportunity*. In the midst of this world crisis, ask God what opportunities He is inviting you to personally take. Is this an opportunity for greater trust in God’s promises? Or moving beyond fear to sacrificial love? Or relinquishing the security you’ve placed in temporal things? Or in your health? What is He inviting you to learn and relinquish?


**Limit the amount of news coverage**—The news is helpful to keep abreast of what is happening in the world. It is also strategically designed to frighten us so we stay tuned in for fear of missing something. Be aware of what is going on internally when you listen to the news. When you find yourself getting stressed, it may be time to shut it off. We must be intentional about what information we take in and whether that information feeds our faith or our fears. God instructs us to be so mindful of our thinking that we take every thought captive and think as God desires (2 Corinthians 10:5).

**Remind yourself of God’s gifts and provisions**—The Jewish people recited the Psalms as a way to remember the events where they witnessed God’s steadfast, merciful love over and over again. Psalm 46, in particular, is a magnificent reminder of the God we serve.

**Be responsible**—If you have been exposed to someone with the virus or have symptoms, be careful not to put others at risk. This is love in action. Even if you have cold symptoms that seem mild, it is important to check in with your medical care provider to see if you have been infected. We are not used to thinking about how our actions and health

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could affect others. Now more than ever, we need to think about how our choices will affect those around us. If you are buying hand sanitizer, for example, buy only what is needed so that others can purchase it as well. Fear can fuel greed and a hoarding mentality. We must resist this temptation and remind ourselves that God is the provider of everything we need.

**Be mindful of the world**—One way to slow the virus is for people to take protective measures, such as staying away from large events and crowds. Many people are going into self-quarantine if they have been exposed to someone with the virus. If you are in isolation, be sure to stay in contact with loved ones and friends so that you do not become discouraged.

**Increase your times of prayer**—In times of desolation, spend more time in prayer and spiritual practices. In prayer, we are placing our deepest fears into the heart of our omnipotent God, who is faithful to hear, respond, and bring peace. If you usually spend time each morning in prayer, you may want to carve out another time during the day. Take even 10 to 15 minutes, perhaps at noontime or midafternoon, to recall the goodness of God and bring your concerns before Him. (You might want to put an alarm on your phone as a reminder.) Also, reading a devotional periodically can be a source of strength and encouragement.

## NATIONAL RESPONSE

**Be a first responder**—Throughout history God's people have been on the front lines of crises. With God's light within us, we are to be first responders. Through our loving words and actions, we can be a powerful testimony in the world, reminding those around us of the true God who is not silent or inactive. He is just as present with you now as He has been in the best times of your life. Let's be the people who move beyond fear to speak words of hope and encouragement. Think of yourself as a redemptive agent in the world to do good in all ways and all situations.

**Allow yourself to be humbled**—During this crisis we see the same sorts of questions being asked: Where did it start? Who is to blame? How can it be controlled? With everything going on, it is curious to me that people are not crying out to the Creator God Himself for protection and provision. We are still very much in the mindset of how we can figure this out. Repeatedly throughout the Scriptures, when God's people cried out to Him in distress, He abundantly responded. For this to happen now, we must first humble ourselves before God. From indications thus far, we have not allowed ourselves as a nation to be humbled.

**Intercede on behalf of our country and the world**—We must plead for God's intervention. Abraham interceded for the righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16–33). The prophet Amos cried out to God on behalf of Israel (Amos 7:2–3). Daniel prayed and confessed on behalf of his people (Daniel 9:1–19). There is a singularly important place for us to stand and admit that we are complicit with the sins of this time, culture, and world. We come to God, confessing our sins as a nation and as a people of this world, asking for His forgiveness and redemption. In 2 Chronicles 7:13–14, God wakes up Solomon in the middle of the night with these words of promise:

*When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

May we not miss this opportunity to be children of God, shining His light in this dark world.



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