

AFRAID TO DIE? WANT ANSWERS?

I'm hearing this worrying statement spoken a lot, "You know, the number of Covid-19 cases is spiking in our area." My reply, "Yes!! Didn't we kind of anticipate it?" But I go on to say, "If our nation doesn't get back to work, we'll be dealing with an economic depression."

We will see sickness and death from depression, suicides, and cardiac incidents instead of disease and death from the virus. Not to mention delayed necessary surgeries, physician visits, and diagnostic procedures."

My unsaid thought, "Along with illness and death related to an economic depression, there could be more violence. Some who've received government financial assistance in the past months might demand the government feed and support them."

As a nurse, I agree the elderly and those in poor health should continue to shelter in place. Those who are healthy and secure should be assisting them with shopping and other needs to help protect them.

Novel or new viruses usually lose strength and disappear after approximately two-thirds of the population has been exposed to or have experienced the infection. There are reports from physicians in Pennsylvania and Italy of the virus losing its virulence. In recently contracted cases of Covid-19, patients are not as severely ill.

It was wisdom to do the social distance for two months to slow the initial spread and allow health care resources and our nation to handle the ramifications of a pandemic more efficiently. Policies and procedures needed enactment to protect those most susceptible or in fragile health.

The past weeks have been a time of spiritual growth for me. In my years as a hospice nurse, I watched many people die and cared for their bodies after death. My experience and much contemplation have brought me to a place where I'm at peace with the fact I could contract the Covid-19 virus and die.

As I chose to believe God's promises for me, my cascading thoughts of "what if" stopped, and I began to hear the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit leading me in a hopeful direction not only for the present but also the future. Wise, responsible clarity for myself, and others began to take shape.

Eventually, we will die physically. As I seek God's presence and direction daily, He reminds me I'm securely resting under His wings. Nothing will take me home to Him one minute sooner or later than He has planned. (Psalm 91) Therefore, I am not looking to man or a bunch of rules to save me.

I'm 67 years old, considered elderly, and have white hair and wrinkles to prove it. Despite my age making me more vulnerable to the virus, I'm sensing God's leading not

to fear going out but to follow His direction. I sense a need to share this message of hope.

God's reassuring promises have erased my imagined fears concerning the virus. Meditating on the truth of God's words have given my physical body more stamina and my emotions a resolve to follow God's directions despite any threat to my health. (Proverbs 4:20-22, Psalm 34:4)

Currently, I'm working part-time caring for the sick, visiting the library, retail stores, and neighbors as the Holy Spirit encourages. As I listen on the phone, in the community and observe posts on social media, it's evident many are experiencing pervasive fear. Whenever possible, I speak encouragement, hope, and prayer. (Proverbs 15:30)

When I hear people's worries, struggles, and challenges, I often ask if I can pray for them right then. They seldom turn me down and are encouraged just by hearing their names and concerns laid at the feet of Jesus in believing prayer.

Unrelenting fear can cause mental illness, emotional confusion, and physical decline. A mind filled with pervasive fear believes Satan's lies and becomes more confused. An individual living in this condition carries an atmosphere of hopelessness, discouragement, and expectation of doom that's easily spread to others.

Jesus accomplished victory over Satan, so each of His children could experience lives overflowing with satisfying fullness. (John 10:10) These truths should give us cheerful, reassurance working healing in our bodies, minds, and spirits. (Proverbs 17:22) If you choose to believe God's words and not man's or the devil's lying whispers, His promises are yours.

We need the fragrance of Christian fellowship and unity to encourage and spread the great news of what God wants to do for us now and what He has done for our eternity after we shed these earth suits.

Hebrews 10:35-39 encourages us not to lose our bold, courageous faith, because for sure it will bring a great eternal reward. If you ask, I promise, He will give you the strength, joy, and endurance for the challenging days ahead. This kind of faith gives one a sense of mountain-top freedom instead of sinkhole confinement.

Those who God calls to work, encourage, and live outside of the home should do so without fear. Of course, keep some distance from others when physically together, wash hands and wear a mask when appropriate. And stay home if you have even a hint of sickness.

This pandemic allows God's children to love others with boldness and courage. Creative giftings and God-given opportunities can open conversations with individuals who are looking for spiritual and eternal answers.

My neighbor walks every day, and we often wave at each other and share a few words. He's an ex-marine with COPD and not in the greatest of health. Today he shared that he's become a hermit of sorts because of the virus.

He shared that his great-grandparents and their families lived through the Spanish flu, and no one died. He wondered if their prayers, hard work, and care for one another protected them. I agreed with his conclusions. He seemed to be looking for encouragement not to be a hermit anymore. He left with a smile instead of the usual somber look he has.

Lately, I've been pondering the Jerusalem wall rebuilders' story in Nehemiah 4. They had to surrender their time, talents, and treasures as individuals and as a community to restore and transform their city into a place of freedom and security. Who doesn't want freedom and security?

Their threat wasn't a virus. Some of Jerusalem's neighbors and even some of the Jews threatened to stop their city restoration with violence. As the leader of the rebuilding effort, Nehemiah first prayed to God for protection.

He organized groups of people to be workers or armed look-outs day and night. He reminded them it was God fighting for them. Families and communities came together to accomplish what seemed an impossible task.

God was true to His promise. The completed restoration was successful without violence. A unified people of Jerusalem were able to experience greater freedom and security through their obedience to God's direction.

These God-given rights always come with a cost. Why? Because the enemy of our soul, the devil, world, and our very own flesh want to take freedom and security away, often through fear. The bondage of unrelenting fear never comes from God.

He's a gentleman and always waits for us to say, "I want to do it your way, Lord. Show me how and I'll get right to it." He made everything, knows everything, and is everywhere; that decision seems like a "no brainer."

As I choose to live in the presence of God, unbelief and fear become unreasonable. Fear is a lying weapon used by Satan. Acting without God's presence, the human spirit cannot overcome fear alone. Resting in the Psalm 91 presence of God drives fear from my thoughts and actions.

So, besides all that power and authority He wants to share with us, there's that Christ died for me and you detail, forgiving us of all our fears and failures. Once I admit

faults, change my mind, and surrender to His overwhelming love-filled gift of Christ's blood for my freedom, my brain becomes free of confusion and fear. Through God's work in me, I no longer stress about sickness and death.

Now, is it possible I will become sick with the virus and die? Absolutely! Is it possible I might lose my life through persecution for placing my trust in Christ? Absolutely! It happens around the world every day and has happened in this country since the birth of our beloved nation.

God's word tells us a servant is never greater than his master. If that's true, then as a servant of God, I can expect to suffer because I identify with Jesus. (John 15:18-21) I want to work in unity with Him as He directs, just as Nehemiah and the people did in restoring Jerusalem. Such a fantastic concept. I'm chosen as God's partner to live in union as one, empowered by trust in the One who loves me enough to give His life for me. (Galatians 2:20)

You ask, "How can you be so casual about possible suffering and death?" My reply, "Don't we suffer for those we truly love?" I've witnessed compassionate spouses caring for sick loved ones for years—the feeding, washing, dressing, and around the clock tending done because of love. I remember stories recounting the kindness, faithfulness, and joy once experienced through the one now lying ill and dying.

These caregivers all joined their loved ones in suffering as they tended to their needs. We should be willing to join Him in His suffering by coming alongside people who need to know the love of God, filled with trust in God rather than fear, and especially need to know forgiveness.

Obediently joining Jesus in the business of relieving the oppression of others by serving and speaking truth intimidates the enemy. Our confidence in God's help in the face of threats and suffering for Him brings positive transformation to individuals, families, and communities. (Phil. 1:28-29)

It's in genuinely knowing God that man can experience mountain-top freedom and security no matter the suffering or the prison. Because His presence is there with us, joining us in our sufferings, cheering our lives with purpose, and providing all that's necessary to transform lives around us.

My inspiration to willingly risk my life/health comes from reading and meditating on God's Word. I fellowship with the Holy Spirit by asking questions and waiting for answers. Sometimes the answers come later in my sleep, as I work, or as I write in my journal. His reassurance often comes as I sing and pray my gratitude to Him. God desires and enjoys our attentive presence. His presence is far more rewarding than social media.

If you agree with this message, be assured God will show you where He wants you to be. He will give your life a satisfying purpose. His identity in you will remove fear and

confusion. Suffering and possible death will become a joy set before. He will center your thoughts and your heart on His unfailing love for you! Because you are the joy set before Him and the object of His love. (Hebrews 12:2-3)