

Pastor's Perspective: How should the Christian respond to COVID-19



By Guest Columnist John Vaughn, Pastor, Cross Roads Baptist Church

Special to Pelahatchie News

"Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials." James 1:2 CSB

The COVID-19 virus has caused a massive stir both in the United States and around the globe. Both mass worry and total apathy are responses that are sailing across social media and popping up in our everyday conversations. People respond to trials and pressure-filled circumstances in various ways. Some panic, some ignore, some even reject the problem's existence.

We do not get to choose our trials, but we do get to choose how we respond to pressure filled circumstances. This, of course, raises the question, "how should the Christian respond to COVID-19?" In James 1:2-8, James, the brother of our Lord, provides all believers a manual in how to respond to trial.

First, in verses 2-3, James says to count or consider trials as joy knowing that when faith is tested, endurance or patience is produced. What James is saying here is that the follower of

Christ has reason to rejoice in any problem that they may face. This, of course, is not joy in the trial itself, but the potential strengthening of faith brought about by trial. You too can rejoice in any trial that comes your way, because God can use it for your growth and His glory.

Notice specifically here that James does not say "if" you fall into a trial, but "when." Pressure-filled circumstances and difficult situations are inevitable in a fallen world. You cannot control a world-wide pandemic; you cannot even control whether or not you will end up contracting the virus that is spreading across the nation as we speak. But you can control your response. Will you rejoice, or will you crumble?

Second, James says in verse 4 to let patience, or endurance, have its work in you that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James began in verses 2-3 by commanding believers to consider trials a joy, because of the potential growth or endurance that may be produced by them. Here he turns to point to the goal of trials: maturity. In a trial, you grow. In a trial, you prepare to face the next trial. In a trial, you learn to lack in nothing. In a trial, you are matured. And in trial, you

can draw nearer to Christ.

This is what James says you can rejoice in. However, the road to maturity through trials is endurance. You must endure the trial to experience the maturity and joy produced by it. There is no growth in a trial that you go through in fear, in unbelief, in apathy, or any other sinful posture or attitude. Endure with confidence and joy, knowing how God can use this trial to grow you. Not in fear, not in apathy, nor desperation.

Lastly, James tells the believers to whom he is writing and, by extension, us, to ask God for wisdom when facing trial and struggle. Now, notice that James does not say to ask God to protect you from contracting COVID-19. He says to pray for wisdom, not safety, not health, not provisions, but wisdom. Why? Because you need God's wisdom more than any of those and more than the wisdom of any man.

Politicians and medical professionals will not provide you with the wisdom needed to endure this national emergency. Only God can. You can take the advice of the wisest of men only to waste your trial because you never asked God for His wisdom. It would be better for you to contract the virus, depend on God's wisdom, and come out on the other side mature and lack-

ing nothing than to make it out of this struggle unscathed but still immature and unwise. Do not waste your trial, ask God for His wisdom in confidence.

James ends by saying that the one who asks with doubt is chaotic, unstable, and double-minded, which literally means double-souled. Many will, in creed and word, say that in this trial they are relying on God, but functionally, and by their action will prove that their dependence in this trial is on the world and themselves. They will pray for wisdom and help, but will do so in doubt because their reliance is divided between God and the world. That person is unstable spiritually and divided between God and His wisdom and the world, and its wisdom and James say they will not receive wisdom from God. Friend, in this trial, will you ask God in faith and confidence for wisdom, or will you, in doubt, be divided between Him and the world's wisdom?

The trial has arrived on our doorstep; will you waste it, or will you rejoice in it, grow through it, and rely on God above all else? (I saw this devotion a while back and saved it for future use. Now seems like a good time to share it. The author is unknown. Be sure to take your family to church or watch a service on-line.)



AUGUST SCHEDULE

Sunday Worship Service

9:00 a.m. - In Person Worship Service with Limited Seating in the Sanctuary. Overflow seating in the Fellowship Hall and Student Center. No Childcare or Sunday School. Service broadcast live on the Cross Roads Baptist Church Facebook page.

Wednesday Prayer Meeting

6:00 p.m. on the Cross Roads Baptist Church Facebook page

Morning Devotions

7:30 a.m. on the Cross Roads Baptist Church Facebook Page

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Obituaries

NAME	AGE	CITY	DOD	Arrangements
TB Earrey	84	Morton, MS	6/28/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Loren Darhlene Sones-Jones	56	Forest, MS	6/29/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Dale Hollingsworth	76	Lake, MS	6/28/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Bessie Rose Walker	71	Morton, MS	6/30/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Hatie Robinson	69	Morton, MS	7/6/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Jamie Huff	55	Morton, MS	7/10/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Mike Butler	69	Morton, MS	7/12/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Jerry Purvis	66	Brandon, MS	7/19/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.
WT Smith	73	Pelahatchie, MS	7/20/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.
Nadine Stroud	75	Lake, MS	7/21/2020	Wolf Funeral Serv.



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Sunday School 9:30 am Worship 10:30 am, 6:00 pm • Wednesday Youth & Children 6:00 pm Adults 6:30 pm