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In this article:

- What COVID-19 has cost.
- What is God up to?
- Time to reboot
- The Christian postures of people
- The church becomes the resource of choice

“Rebooting the Church”

There should be little doubt that we’re living in unprecedented times, with the COVID-19 pandemic leading the way in creating this circumstance. Witnessing our country almost fully shut down for an extended period of time caused everyone to experience challenging life changes. Even at this current time, months following the original declaration of the pandemic, many industries still suffer. Two specific and most noticeable industries are show business and professional sports. Movie theatres are empty, while the latest tabloids declare that Hollywood is broke having no jobs and no money. Professional sports are being played in empty stadiums creating enormous financial losses.



One additional component of our communities that has also suffered has been the church. Churches have had to scramble to identify means in which to protect the congregational method of worship that we are biblically instructed to follow (Hebrews 10:24-25).

From these examples, along with a very long list of additional consequences from COVID-19, comes the question, “What is God up to by allowing this international disaster?” There is a myriad of answers available to this single question, coming from a variety of experts in their fields of endeavor; simply go on line and pick your favorite. One response that came from a pastor, which I thought was most insightful was that God has created the opportunity for us to “reboot.” Whether it be the church, show business, professional sports or any other industry, like a computer operating system that is no longer functional, organizations throughout America are being encouraged by God to reboot by dumping programs that are not working (fitting to the Lord) and reload those that meet with His approval and blessing.

Corruption, politics, violence, injustice and greed have come to dominate within the hardware and software of so many operating systems (ways of doing business) within American industries. The Lord says, “Enough!” It’s time to reprogram how we exist in a manner that glorifies His name. To lead the way in this movement, the Bride of Christ Jesus, the church, stands to be the key provider of guidance. A reboot for the church stands to have the church become more significant in the lives of people. In summary, the church doesn’t stand in condemnation by our Lord but in full opportunity to make a bigger and more profound difference within our country! Lets identify how.

People within our country who consider themselves Christians have fallen into one of four postures as they relate to Christ Jesus and the church. Those postures are “life from God,” “life over God,” “life for God,” and “life under God.” Those living “life from God” do seek the Lord’s blessing and favor but choose to not be particularly interested in God. A simple example of this would be a church member telling their pastor, “Every morning I wake up and pray for God to expand my job and business, and He has.” Those in the posture of “life over God” have abandoned God in favor of following various authors proven formulas and organizational principles leading to controllable and measurable outcomes. This posture could be realized through a seatmate on a cross country flight saying, “I really don’t think much about God.” The third posture, “life for God,” is the most celebrated of the four postures, made up of people who dedicate themselves to accomplishing great things in God’s service. An example of this would be a pastor making the comment about his congregation, “They’re just lazy. What my congregation needs is some motivational preaching so they’ll share their faith with their neighbors.” Finally, the fourth posture is “life under God,” which is learning what God approves of and work vigilantly to remain within those boundaries. “Cause

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and effect” are in play where we obey God and He blesses us. An example of “life under God” would be a neighbor visiting across the fence stating, “If we can just stop these liberal judges, God will certainly bless our country again.” Having these four Christian postures in mind, to date, the church has been working to move people living life “over” God to “under” God while convincing others to live “for” God and not just “from” Him.

Most interesting footnotes to these four Christian postures is that “life from God” is easily considered “consumer Christianity.” “Life over God” is “secular Christianity.” “Life for God” is “achieving accomplishments to earn accolades Christianity.” And, “life under God” is “imposing values Christianity.” All are attempts by people to best control the world in which they live in order to alleviate fear. Such control is plainly fiction; faith is the opposite.

The research and development of these four Christian postures comes from Skye Jethani, author of the book “With: Reimagining the Way You Relate to God.” The title represents the key lesson point of this article and stands to be the cornerstone opportunity for the church. That is, for all people to live the fifth posture of Christianity, which is “life with God.”

Job 36:15 helps us make sense of our pandemic while setting us on the best course, which is living each moment “with” God. This verse states, “*He delivers the afflicted in their affliction, and He opens their ear in time of oppression.*” God is using this current crisis in America to create an urgency within each person to live a deeper and richer relationship with Him. Such adversities are our bridges to walk closer with our Lord and Savior! To hear God, we must be with Him. Mr. Jethani provides a clear indication of what it means to have “life with God.” Such instruction provides clear direction on how the church should reboot.

First, we must treasure God. For the church to lead people down this path is to consistently and continually present a ravishing vision of Jesus Christ. Biblical scholar in theology and missiology Benjamin L Corey writes in his book *Undiluted: Rediscovering the Radical Message of Jesus* that the church has drifted away from its first love, as Jesus warned the church in Ephesus. The church, on the whole, spends its energy on asserting man-made doctrine, legalisms and unique interpretations of scripture in an attempt to demonstrate their way as the best way to heaven. In short, the hardest thing for people to find in most churches is Jesus! Mark 7:7 brings validity to this scenario: “*Our worship is in vain because our teachings are but rules taught by man.*” Instead, the theme of congregational worship should be to bring people to Jesus. A great story in support of this cause comes by Father Dale Fushek, in his book *The Unexpected Life* where he tells of the time he travelled with Mother Teresa to Phoenix and he asked during the flight what words of wisdom she would share that would help his team inspire young teenagers to live a strong Christian life. Her response was simply “Bring them to Jesus.” When people, young and old, come to see who Jesus is and what He is like, treasuring Him becomes a natural outcome.

The second step in rebooting the church is teaching and practicing the act of uniting with the Lord. Mr. Jethani states that union with God is solely based upon our faith in Jesus. To know Jesus and understand all that He did for us on the cross demonstrates God’s unyielding desire to be united with us; the cross provides us this capacity.

The third and final step in “life with God” is to experience Him. There are two main resources to be used for God’s desired experience with Him. First we must experience the full and accurate truth of God through the Word, taking its entirety into full account and making sure that our conclusions are consistent with all of the Bible and not merely parts of it. Note how Eliphaz, Zophar, Bildad and Elihu each held elements of truth in their discussions with Job but their ultimate advisements were incorrect as they were buried in false assumptions and conclusions. The second step of experiencing God is through our prayer life. Prayer must be known as more than communication with God. Prayer is communion, defined as being in prayer, adoration, song, worship and receptive to diving breathings. While on life’s surface we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating and meeting the demands of external affairs, it is this deep level of communion where the real business of life is determined. Christian maturity is achieved when these two levels of mental and spiritual consciousness become one. One of the best stories of this level of maturity in communion with God came in the form of a CBS television interview in the 80’s when news anchor Dan Rather interviewed Mother Teresa and asked, “What do you say to the Lord when you pray Mother Teresa?” She responded, “I don’t. I listen.” Somewhat bewildered, Mr. Rather went on to ask, “Well then, what does God say?” Mother Teresa responded, “He doesn’t. He listens.” Mother Teresa concluded by saying, “If you don’t understand this,

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there is no way that I can explain it.” While this story demonstrates this level of closeness with God, a story about Billy Graham that took place in 1982 on the Today Show illustrates the importance of constant prayer and communion with the Lord. The assistant producer of the show told Reverend Graham’s assistant that the studio had set aside a room for Mr. Graham to use for prayer prior to the filming. His response was first to thank the CBS team for their considerations stating that, “The room would not be necessary since Billy was already in prayer, was in prayer on the way over in the car and was praying during his breakfast meal.” You see, Billy Graham realized that the few minutes set aside by the studio could not contain the fullness of his communion with the Lord.

By our daily, in depth involvement with Bible study and prayer we finally experience God, for we are truly with Him in each moment of each day. To be on the right frequency with God requires these two measures. “Life with God” is treasuring Him above all else and not just using God in time of need. To love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind is “life with God.” When the church attains and maintains the discipline of “life with God” as it’s theme, people are set free from fear for they realize that they are already living within the eternal perspective of life. God becomes the object of our desire and we become the objects of His love, the love that provokes wonder, illuminates discoveries and ignites joy. Such love is courageous, generous and unending. “Life from God,” “life over God,” “life for God” and “life under God” will all pass away. But “life with God” shall never end!

The Lord has drawn many elements together over the past month that has allowed me to produce this article. The Lord has made it clear that He plans on doing many miraculous things through His church in these last days, all for the purpose of bringing people unto himself who are lost. May we truly and faithfully do our part to treasure, unite and experience our Lord and be on watch for the great things that He is about to do through His church! Amen.