

Many of you have reached out to me because you are feeling upset and scared. You've asked for some sort of outlet. Unfortunately, I can't provide one. What I've heard is that many are struggling because the sense of normalcy is missing. Normalcy being the feelings of stability, connectedness, control, and understanding of what is going on. Events like the Coronavirus, The Great Recession, 9/11 and others destroy the sense of normalcy for many people.

That is they will destroy the sense of normalcy if you let it.

You are able to fight back against the chaos and confusion. While you can't control the world around you, you are able to control how you react to it. First, I encourage you to watch and read through the spiritual messages that have been posted on the church's website. The messages are designed to refocus on what is stable and safe. There are also several things you can do to control your own chaos.

The following list are some activities I recommend to help stay sane and calm in the chaos. Note: While I'm not a mental health counselor, I did marry one. This list was prepared with help by Korissa.

1. Lower Expectations

We live in a world of great expectations. For those that are very Type A personalities, the next few words will sound like blasphemy. *It's ok, to not be ok.* I encourage you to responsibly plan for the future, take care of your family, and engage in whatever work you can. But, at the same time, don't be too hard on yourself if some things fall through the cracks. Your value is not found in what you're able to accomplish or how prepared you are. We are living in stressful times, cut yourself some slack.

2. Stick to a Schedule

If you're still able to leave the house and work this probably doesn't apply. If you're stuck at home going stir crazy, sticking to a schedule might help. It provides a structure to your day that will give you a sense of normal. It's also helps you pace out your energy so you spend it on productive items rather than worrying. Are there a few projects you've been wanting to accomplish? Now, might be the time to schedule those out while you're at home. It's a great time to catch up on some reading. A strong devotional schedule will help. Morning devotionals, prayer sessions, and spiritual journaling are all great ways to schedule your day and help manage the stresses you feel.

3. Exercise

Exercise. It's important all the time, but physical exercise will not only give you more toned muscles, a great cardiovascular system, and stronger lungs, but it will make your brain healthier. *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain* by John Ratey MD describes how 30 minutes of exercise 5 days a week is necessary for your brain to function optimally. My time riding my bike is my prayer time, I listen to the Bible on Audiobooks. I listen to nothing and

declutter my mind. Some of my best ideas and sermons have come while exercising. You might not need to bike, but everyone needs exercise.

4. Take Time to Connect

Now is a great time to spend focused energy with your family. The news can wait. Netflix will still be there later. Spend some quality time with you family. Puzzles, card games, telling stories, or taking walks with your family will build memories that last a lifetime. They will also build stronger relationships - a much better alternative to worrying. Strong relationships help us deal with stress. If you don't have family nearby, phone calls, FaceTime, Skype and other services are a great way to stay connected.

Since church has been temporarily postponed, one of your natural places to connect is missing. Take the initiative to connect with those around you. You will feel better because of it. Be smart, face-to-face gatherings are *not* recommended, but you can still connect and keep recommended distance.

5. Take Time to Disconnect

Disconnecting from the buzz of social media is just as important as connecting with those you care about. While we all want to stay informed, giving our minds a break is necessary to maintain positive outlook and mental health. Memorizing Bible verses, engaging in a craft or activity, taking a walk or engaging in prayer time are all some positive ways to fill the time that would have been spent on social media. When you do reconnect, rather than turn to Facebook for information, use trusted sources like the Kentucky State website for Covid-19 updates (kycovid19.ky.gov).

6. Think of Others

While I'd hope you would think of others always, be intentional about living an "others-focused" life. Know of someone that needs a pick me up? Give them a call. Send them a card. Know of someone struggling, maybe a homemade meal would help ease the difficulty. When you focus on others, your life will have more meaning.

We are here for you. We are a strong church community, we will get through this together.

Blessings,
Prescott and Korissa