

Maintaining Sound Spiritual and Mental Health in the Midst of Crisis

Compiled by Rev. Les Welk from Ministry Resources International

I serve on a national committee appointed by Doug Clay, General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, with a focus upon “The Minister and Mental Health.” The current national and worldwide crisis spurred by the coronavirus pandemic prompted the committee to brainstorm the following list of practical steps to maintain sound spiritual and mental health in the midst of the crisis. These are my personal takeaways and thoughts from that interchange with accompanying Biblical references.

1. **Meditate upon God’s Word** – “Thinking God’s thoughts after Him” is a reliable way to approach life and crisis because it reveals the ways God approaches such matters.

*Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, **but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.** That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. Psalms 1:1-3*

2. **Worship is a weapon against worry** – When we worship and express thanksgiving to the Lord we are lifted above the crisis into His presence and we are afforded a divine perspective and peace this world quite simply cannot provide.

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, **by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,** present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:4-7*

3. **Limit uncensored exposure to newscasts and social media blitzes** – The world’s approach to crisis is to sensationalize and fixate on the negative. Regulate your intake of such information and focus upon that which brings promised peace. Psychologists call it “Reciprocal Inhibition,” the idea that when presented at the same time with a stimulus that induces anxiety and one that diminishes anxiety, a person will benefit from reduced overall anxiety. The Bible calls it “peace from the Lord that passes all understanding.”

***You will keep in perfect peace** those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Isaiah 26:3*

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if **anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Phil. 4:8-9*

4. **Interject humor** – Finding humor and laughter in the midst of crisis is a healthy distraction and acts like a medicine to the heart, mind, and soul.

***A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.** Prov. 17:22*

5. **Stay connected in the face of “social distancing” mandates** – Even though we may be required to maintain adequate social distance from others, and we cannot be together face-to-face or in gatherings, the importance of human connection persists. Be creative as to how this can occur through modern technologies. God designed members of the Body of Christ with a purpose to support one another.

*But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, **but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.** If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. I Cor. 12:24-26*

6. **Find someone to serve** – The reciprocal benefits of serving others encompasses the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of our personhood. Serving others is a ministry of grace that mitigates the self-focus that often accompanies crisis.

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as **faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.** I Peter 4:10*

Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. Prov. 11:25

7. **Go outside, exercise, and visit the park** – Unless mandated otherwise, we can maintain necessary “social distance” and at the same time enjoy the benefits of physical exercise, a healthy change of scenery and environment, and an opportunity to worship God in “His Sanctuary.”

*Praise the Lord. **Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.** Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and*

dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Psalm 150

8. **Properly place our hope** – We tend to use the word “hope” as an expression of a desired outcome or personal preference. This is a watered-down use of a strong Biblical concept. The Biblical definition of “hope” is “confidence in that which is certain.” The only certainty that I know of in life is the One who gives it in the first place. My hope is rooted in the Lord, the One who never changes, and the One who is trustworthy, absolutely. Trusting in ourselves, in government, or even in the most reliable humans is an improper placement of hope.

Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

Psalm 62:5-8

9. **Sorrow and mourn the losses** – Loss and its accompanying sorrow are characteristic markers of moments and seasons of crisis. One of the keys to navigating loss is to adequately acknowledge it, and then properly mourn and sorrow the loss. The Lord’s distinct promise is that he will respond with His closeness and comfort.

*Blessed are those who mourn, for **they will be comforted.** Mt. 5:4*

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Ps. 34:18

10. **Take time to listen to God** – In the midst of crisis, the tendency is to turn prayer into a monologue. Our felt needs dominate, and we are compelled to cry out, even plead with God for relief in a one-sided conversation. Yet, prayer is actually a dialogue, which includes the art of listening. We benefit when we purposefully take time to hear God’s personal responses to our cries for help, and we show love and worship to God as we attentively listen to His voice.

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. Jer. 33:3

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