



What to do with your Quarantine?

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For many weeks now, people in the United States and around the world have been confined, to a greater or lesser degree, in a quarantine. We are being kept from our places of work and places of worship, and we are being kept apart from family and friends. By this point, most of us are probably longing for the day when we can return to some sense of normalcy.

Yet this is far from the first time the world has experienced something like a quarantine. In fact, the world has almost always been in a quarantine of sorts, starting in the first few pages of the Bible, when Adam and Eve were “quarantined” away from the Garden of Eden. Consider what the Lord said to Adam while he was in the garden.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis 2:15-17)

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, they were expelled from the garden and not allowed to return (Genesis 3:23-24). Just as you and I might long to go back to our jobs, our families, or our church, all of humanity yearns to go back to the paradise of Eden. Yet we remain quarantined in a broken world. It is not a pandemic that keeps us in exile; it is the virus of sin. For thousands of years, man has been trying to work his way back to the garden through technology, medicine, religion, attempting to "lift himself up by his own bootstraps"—but he has failed at every turn. Why? Because the sin virus cannot be "cured" by human effort, but only by the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb (Romans 3:25, Ephesians 1:7).

How then should we live, both in this brief quarantine due to COVID-19 and in the greater quarantine due to the sin that infects every facet of this fallen world? Let's consider some examples of people in Scripture who found themselves quarantined for one reason or another:

- Jacob was quarantined away from his home, in his uncle's land (Genesis 27).
- Joseph was quarantined in a pit, and then in a prison, and then in a palace (Genesis 37, 39-41).
- The Israelites were quarantined in a desert for forty years (Numbers 14).
- Naomi was quarantined in Moab (Ruth 1).
- Jonah quarantined himself on a boat, and then God quarantined him in a great fish (Jonah 1-2).
- Daniel was quarantined, along with many from his nation (Daniel 1).
- The apostle Paul was quarantined (more than once) in a jail cell (Acts 16).
- Jesus was quarantined in a tomb (Matthew 27-28).

In each of these historical events, people were placed in unfamiliar territory, away from loved ones and out of their comfort zones. Some responded with fear and doubt, others with faith and trust.

- Jacob deceived his host (who had deceived Jacob).
- Joseph interpreted dreams, ministered to kings and prisoners, and made no complaint that we know of.
- The Israelites grumbled and complained.
- Naomi became bitter and disenchanted, but later found her faith renewed.

- Jonah repented and prayed (though his spiritual high did not last long).
- Daniel became a royal advisor and kept his faithful witness.
- Paul preached the gospel to his captors and wrote letters to churches.

Some responded well to their quarantine, others less so. What will you do with your quarantine? How will you respond?

Let's first make sure that we are not murmuring or complaining. For most of us, this season will be only a brief interruption of our normal routines. By contrast, many believers around the world live their entire lives in exile from their own societies. Those in underground churches in Asia live daily under the threat of persecution. Christians in the Middle East know they could be arrested at any moment. Instead of giving in to fear or frustration, let us seek to follow the examples of Daniel and Paul and Joseph, who used their time in quarantine to fellowship with God and proclaim His Word. Even when we are delivered from this pandemic, we will still be living in this world as strangers and sojourners (1 Peter 2:11), and like Abraham, we must look for a city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). Our true citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 2:20), where we are seated together in heavenly places with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). May our response during this season reflect these profound truths.

And what did Jesus do during His quarantine in the tomb? He defeated death, hell, and the grave! He broke the viral power of sin that separates us from our perfect Creator. He was willingly infected with our “virus” so that he could become our cure (2 Corinthians 5:21). Those who call upon His name, believe that God raised Him from the dead and confess Him as Lord are forever inoculated from the “wages of sin” (Romans 3:23, 6:23, 10:9-13).

At some point, we can expect to read the headline, “VACCINE DEVELOPED FOR COVID-19!” That will be good news, and certainly cause for rejoicing. But this will be a temporary cure for a temporary ailment. The better news—indeed, the best news—is that because of Jesus’ precious sacrifice, you and I can finally be released from the quarantine of sin, and we can live forever with Him. If you have never called on Christ to save you, make today the day of salvation and know that this temporary quarantine will someday give way to eternal glory.