

COPING DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



The current restrictions that the lockdown has placed on people are far from over. While in some countries people can move around again to a limited extent, there are many other countries where the lockdown is still in effect. Initially, staying at home seemed like fun, but the novelty soon wore off and many negative aspects surfaced. Here are a few, and we will look at what the Word of God says about each.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

If you live in a society where social closeness is the norm, then social distancing is very strange. Whether you live in an area with many people close to you, or you just happen to share time close to those you love and appreciate, social distancing just does not feel right. It is even worse where families have been separated - you were away from home when lockdown procedures were put in place and you cannot get home; or a family member is in hospital and you cannot visit them. Humans are not meant to function in isolation for long. Right now, you may crave to hear someone else's voice and to see a familiar face in person.

What does the Bible say about social distancing? A long time ago, social distancing was common practice. Leviticus 13 tells about leprosy, an infectious skin disease. If a person was diagnosed with leprosy after being examined by a priest, they had to separate themselves from others and live outside the camp (Leviticus 13:45-46). Worse still, if the person had to be around other people, they had to shout, "unclean, unclean", to warn everyone. More than what Leviticus 13 required, the prevailing culture imposed even stronger social distancing. Lepers were despised and avoided.

A leper was not allowed to come within six feet (This sounds like today's rule, doesn't it?) of any other human, including their own family. The disease was considered so revolting that the leper was not allowed to come within 50 meters of anyone when the wind was blowing. They lived in a community with other lepers until they either healed or died. This was the only method people knew of to contain the spread of contagious forms of leprosy.

This form of social distancing happened during the old dispensation. Jesus changed that:

After He came down from teaching on the hillside, massive crowds began following him. Suddenly, a leper walked up to Jesus and threw himself down before him in worship and said, "Lord, you have the power to heal me... if you really want to." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the leper and said, "Of course I want to heal you—be healed!" And instantly, all signs of leprosy disappeared! Then Jesus said to him, "Don't speak to anyone, but go at once and find a priest and show him what has happened to you. Make sure to take the offering Moses commanded so they can certify your healing. – **Matthew 8:1-4**

This is a text that many sermons can be written about. Let us look at the text closely. The leper walks right up to Jesus, exactly what he was not allowed to do, because of the crowds. His situation is desperate. He wants to be healed, and he wants it now. He knows Jesus has the power to heal him. Then Jesus reached out. He touched him! This is the worst social distancing crime you can commit. The man is completely healed but Jesus asks the man to still follow the rule of Moses and go to the priest to confirm that he has been healed.

Jesus understands that social distancing is not easy for us. You may not have COVID-19, but you are bound by social distancing rules. Let Him touch your heart today and heal you from inside. Spend time with Him and accept that He has the power to heal completely.

PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Being confined indoors has its problems. Natural sunlight, via contact with the skin, produces Vitamin D. Your body needs this. When you are not exposed to natural sunlight for prolonged periods, the level of Vitamin D drops. Just ask those who live in the northern hemisphere where prolonged periods of no sunlight, or very little of it, require the use of special “mood lamps” to help them cope. Of course, the lack of Vitamin D, although it starts with the body, soon has a psychological effect.

If you think that there is nothing in the Bible about the healing power of sunlight, read here:

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. – **Malachi 4:2**

Enough Vitamin D allows us to perform at our peak – like young calves leaping with energy. You see, The Word of God is relevant for all aspects of our lives!

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

The isolation is wearing you down, isn't it? Initially you may notice an increase in weight – you have more access to food than when you were at the office. The silent enemy that creeps up on you starts with what was mentioned earlier. Vitamin D is not really classified as a vitamin but as a hormone and it is important for brain function and emotional well-being. Around us people in lockdown are starting to just “lose it”. It is as if the brain just cannot cope with the "new normal".

Vitamin D ensures that we sleep well. Think about this for a moment: are you sleeping well at night? Probably not. It does not only have to do with the stress of the current lockdown situation. Of course, the financial pressure that people are experiencing, because of loss of income, is enormous, but your biggest reason for not sleeping well is due to of a lack of Vitamin D. Spend as much time as you are legally allowed outside to replenish this vital requirement. Read more about sleep patterns on www.thesleepdoctor.com.

What does the Bible teach us about sleep? There are many references, but this one summarises it well:

I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me. – **Psalms 3:5**

David had many issues in his life, but he firmly believed that when he went to bed, he would sleep, because God sustained him – he did not just sleep, but during sleep his body was able to recover, rebuild and replenish. In the morning when he woke up, this happened:

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life. – **Psalms 143:8**

He did not get up, he woke up. There is a big difference! The first thing he does is to contemplate God's goodness for him.

The Creator still knows best and His design for us is just perfect.

BOREDOM

Indeed. We are slowly but surely getting bored to bits, some more than others. You can only watch television so much and since there are many things you cannot do right now, those gaps in your programme must be filled with something else. This leads to overdoing certain things and we end up unbalanced. You simply must find new things to do. Use the time you would have loitered to learn something new.

Again, the Bible teaches us about boredom, or rather how to overcome it:

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. – **Colossians 3:23-24**

Boredom leads to sin. Work leads to reward. Find something worthwhile to do during lockdown!

OVER-EXPOSURE TO THE MEDIA

When we became aware of COVID-19 it was a novelty, and we took in as much as we could. While some of the information dished up in the news was helpful, soon politicians made sure that it turned into a reality show. The number of deaths reported was staggering and one cannot help but feel sad that so many people died when it could have been prevented. Some of what we see in the media may be true, but a lot of it is a lie. The devil rules by deception, and so far, many people have been deceived.

DOES THE BIBLE ADDRESS THIS AS WELL?

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. – **Philippians 4:8**

Comments on this may irk some people. Just look at the highlighted words for a moment:

True – How much of what we see on television or online media is true? Most of it cannot be trusted. What is often clearly false is presented as truth.

Honest – How honest are people? Remember the last time you voted? Try to name anything your candidate promised to do that has resulted in something good.

Just – How much of what we see on television and in the media is fair? It really seems that people get away with whatever is not just, in the name of entertainment or self-enrichment.

Pure – Have a look at the average programme, and you will see that the order of the day is to promote everything that is impure! There are no programmes that promote good values, but we are glued to our screens to see the bad things people do.

Lovely – Have you seen a lovely movie recently? Instead, the media depicts violence as perfectly acceptable and the norm. Anything other than that is considered mediocre and not a crowd puller.

Good report – When last have you seen someone on television that portrays honesty and integrity as things which people can report about? They are not given airtime because good people do not bring in money. The bad guys do.

We should not forget the last part of the text: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. You must evaluate what you see on television. If it portrays a positive virtue, watch it. If there is any praise, then consider it. Not everything we see is necessarily bad, but we must decide whether we want to expose ourselves to it and whether it edifies us. The media is cunning, and the devil plays a big part in it to deceive people. Just take any action movie or series and count the number of deaths in the first few minutes!

Jesus said that He came to give us life, and in abundance:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it in all its fullness. – **John 10:10**

After a few weeks, most people have stopped watching television. They are not interested anymore to see how many people have died of COVID-19, how governments are lying to their people about the real problem, and how evil is seen as a better alternative than good.

Finally, there are so many better things to do with your time. Find a good movie, read a good book, get a new hobby, listen to music or do some exercise. Let the endomorphines start to work for you.