

## ☞ Protocol in a Pandemic

The Coronavirus pandemic has been the headline on almost every news source every day. Everyone is affected in one way or another and there is a lot of uncertainty. What's going to happen? How long will this all last? How should we respond? Those are good questions and I can't answer the first two, but I can direct you to scripture that answers the third question, "How should we respond?" This word is always true, but takes on even more meaning in today's climate.

### ☞ 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

**Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. 14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. 16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 do not treat prophecies with contempt. 21 Test everything. Hold on to the good. 22 Avoid every kind of evil.**

In 1 Thessalonians Paul deals a lot with the Second Coming of Christ. Apparently, some in Thessalonica were concerned that they had missed it. As well, some others were so focused on the Second Coming that all they did was watch for his return. With all the events happening in the world recently, many are thinking about the Lord's return in a whole new light. It might be good for us to consider what Paul said to the Thessalonians. He encouraged them that they hadn't missed it, but that they should keep themselves busy while they wait. In chapter 5 we find these concluding remarks with instructions that are still valid for us today...

#### 1. ☞ **Respect Leaders** v. 12-13

Verses 12 and 13 speak to this. Show respect and high regard for leaders. This is especially directed towards leaders in the church but also applies to governmental leaders. In fact, Romans 13 talks specifically about how governmental leaders are established by God and should be respected and obeyed.

David was a good example with King Saul. In his case, the king was not only a poor leader, but was actually out to kill David. And yet David showed him great respect. Even when it seemed that God had given him the opportunity to eliminate Saul, David said, *the Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord's anointed.* (1 Samuel 26:11)

As followers of Christ, we should do our best to show respect and to cooperate with our leaders. Here's the truth: leaders are dealing with situations they have never had to face before. They are being forced to make difficult decisions and it is impossible for them to please everyone. It's easy to sit on the sidelines and criticize, but that is not the Christian ☞ way. We are to **pray for our leaders, respect them and follow their lead**. Here's more

truth: they have more information than you have and are making decisions that are far more informed than the average person. Let's lift our leaders up in prayer; let's show respect; and, let's do our best to cooperate with their decisions.

### ☞ **Hebrews 13:17**

**Obey** your leaders and **submit** to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

If you are concerned about corruption and poor leadership, here in America we have systems in place to hold leaders accountable and we are free to use those methods. But, ultimately, God will judge all leaders. Our responsibility is to respect and follow to the best of our ability. I know for some, this is a strong word, so let me lighten the mood a bit.

*Harry S. Truman received a lavender envelope with a regal wax seal and flowing purple ribbons. Opening it, the President found a letter from the King of Saudi Arabia, whose salutation began, "Your Magnificence." "Your Magnificence," Truman repeated, laughing. "I like that. I don't know what you guys call me when I'm not here, but it's okay if you refer to me from now on as 'His Magnificence.'"*

### 2. ☞ **Live in Peace** v. 13

*Peace rules the day when Christ rules the mind.*

I'm now seeing and hearing of people fighting over supplies, especially toilet paper, because of this pandemic. That kind of behavior is rare in our area, and I say, let's keep it that way. Let's live in peace. As "normal" is becoming less and less normal, keeping the peace is going to require more and more intentional effort. Ephesians 4:3 says to make ☞ every effort to **keep the unity** of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Galatians 5:14

☞ The entire law is summed up in a single command: "**Love your neighbor as yourself.**"

### 3. ☞ **Be Active** v. 14

Verse 14 warns to not be idle nor timid, but to help the weak and be patient with everyone.

This is good for us to keep in mind in our current crisis. It might be tempting to just hide out and weather the storm. Now, I think we should do our best to keep the virus from spreading, but we should not refrain from serving. In fact, if someone comes to mind that ☞ may need help during this pandemic, **reach out with a text or phone call to see how you might be of assistance.** That is "being the church" in a time when we can't "have church." God designed us to help and serve others, so don't quit your calling.

This is also a good time to share your faith. Philemon 6 says, "I pray that you may be ☞ **active in sharing your faith**, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."

As I said in a recent Facebook post, people are looking for answers and they are tuning in to spiritual outlets for encouragement. Leverage your online connections to share the Gospel. Post positive, godly messages on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This is our time to shine.

4. 📌 **Be Patient** v. 14 = Long suffering – suffer a long time...  
*Don't gripe immediately if someone bugs you; be patient.*

With so many restrictions and changes to our normal way of life, our patience will certainly be tried. Make a conscious effort to be patient with everyone. And, that goes even when they rub you the wrong way or offend you. Ephesians 4:2 is pretty blunt 📌 when it basically says we should **put up with each other**.

*Perhaps the most important trip you will ever make is going the second mile.*

Our patience is also being tested in the unknown timeframe presented by this pandemic. How long will restrictions last? Will there be even more? We will likely be frustrated and 📌 might get impatient, but it's time for us to simply **trust God and wait on him**.

*The great New England preacher Phillips Brooks was noted for his poise and quiet manner. At times, however, even he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him feverishly pacing the floor like a caged lion. "What's the trouble, Mr. Brooks?" he asked. "The trouble is that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't!" Haven't we felt the same way many times?*

5. 📌 **Be Kind** v. 15  
**"The Golden Rule"** - **Luke 6:31** do unto others as you would have to do unto you.

Ephesians 4:29, 32

📌 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for **building others up** according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

*-- George Washington Carver... How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.*

6. 📌 **Be Joyful** v. 16 = calmly happy; **cheerful**  
Philippians 4:4 says, **"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"**

*Accentuate the positive. Is there a cloud in every silver lining or a silver lining on every cloud?*

☞ Now, I'm not suggesting we be cavalier about this virus, but let's **look for the good and keep our focus on the Lord.**

Nehemiah 8:10

...the joy of the LORD is your strength.

7. ☞ **Pray continually** v. 17 = without interruption; permanently

*Our strength comes from him. Pray simply to **connect with him.***

We also should be interceding for the world around us. We may have limitations due to governmental restrictions, but our prayers aren't limited by social distancing or ☞ quarantines. Our prayers do actually make a difference. Join in with the **Pray for Minute** that we are doing **every day at 7pm**. Pray for this pandemic to end; pray for leaders; pray for the sick to be healed; pray for God to be glorified.

James 5:16...

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be ☞ healed. The **prayer** of a righteous man **is powerful and effective.**

8. ☞ **Be Thankful** v. 18

*It's the antidote to complaining and bitterness. Ever catch yourself being grumpy and didn't even like it about yourself?*

☞ **Psalm 103:2-5**

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not **all his benefits**— 3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, 4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, 5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

☞ **"Count your Blessings"**

*Thanks opens the door (Psalm 100:4... enter his gates...) It changes your focus from your gloominess, to His goodness.*

9. ☞ **Keep the Fire** v. 19-21

With the church not meeting together, it could be easy to cool off spiritually, but we can keep the fire in our hearts.

Keep the fire... How do you keep a campfire raging? **Stoke it; add to it**

It's the Spirit of God that burns in our hearts, so we need to **keep on being filled with the ☞ Spirit.** Ephesians 5 tells us to keep on being filled by speaking to each other with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs... here again, we can share bible verses and encouraging words online. It also says, to sing songs to the Lord. There are tons of ways to

do that even without us having church. Sing! And the scripture says to give thanks in all things. This takes us right back to the last point. Be thankful. Make a list of your blessings. ☞ Say them out loud. Share them with others. So, there you go. **Encourage others, sing to the Lord, express gratitude** and keep the fire.

#### 10. ☞ **Avoid Evil** v. 22

Several things come to mind here. With more time isolated from others comes more temptations. There's something about meeting with others that helps us be accountable ☞ and stay on the straight and narrow. So, **guard your heart**. Friends, reach out to friends and ask the hard questions that will help each other remain faithful.

☞ Another temptation to evil will be to **grumble, complain and accuse**. Those attitudes and actions are works of the enemy and must be resisted. Don't give in to the temptation. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

Galatians 5:24-25

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and ☞ desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us **keep in step with the Spirit**.

*More simply... Keep out of your life all that will keep Christ out of your mind.*

☞ We are the Church. Let's follow the commands for us; let's adhere to Protocol in this Pandemic:

1. **Respect leaders**
2. **Live in peace**
3. **Be active**
4. **Be patient**
5. **Be kind**
6. **Be joyful**
7. **Pray continually**
8. **Be thankful**
9. **Keep the fire**
10. **Avoid evil**