

MESSAGE: FOCUSING ON WISDOM – NOT WORRY!

**PASTOR DON MATHENY
MARCH 15, 2020**

Text: Job 28:23-24, 27 (MSG)

God alone knows the way to Wisdom, He knows the exact place to find it. ²⁴He knows where everything is on earth, He sees everything under heaven. ²⁷He focused on Wisdom, made sure it was all set and tested and ready.

Text: 2 Kings 6:15-17 (MSG)

Early in the morning Elisha's servant got up and went out. Surprise! Horses and chariots surrounding the city! The young man exclaimed, "Oh, master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶He said, "Don't worry about it - there are more on our side than on their side."¹⁷Then Elisha prayed, "O God, open his eyes and let him see." The eyes of the young man were opened and he saw. A wonder! The whole mountainside full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha!

We know that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has become a worldwide concern and is on the top of everyone's minds.

It is most important for you to know, from the outset, that we are monitoring the situation very closely with the Health and Government Agencies, seeking to follow closely official instructions.

We are not being instructed by Social Media. We are referencing and following *only* official/legit statements/directive posts and encouraging all government recommendations to be followed so as to protect ourselves and others, being a voice of hope to those around us.

We did call and seek advice from governmental authority as concerns our Encounter weekends regarding the requirements necessary for the events to be held, requirements which we are meeting diligently.

We are dedicated to offer a clean and safe environment - our facilities are cleaned regularly. In addition to hand soap available in the restrooms, we also have a supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizers available for use in each of our services.

We are encouraging social distancing as we gather, yet believing that even as we do so, we will enhance our spiritual closeness.

Our plan is to continue our weekly services and all that's ahead – 3rd Thursday this week, as well as the Ladies encounters - but are committed to carefully observe the situation.

All that being said...

In these perilous times, we must learn to navigate the road between anxiety and wisdom.

This is especially tough as anxiety or worry often has a way of masquerading itself as wisdom.

How many precautionary measures are actually sound judgment and how many are excessive, such that they spill over into irrational fear and panic?

With the increasing Coronavirus cases, now a global pandemic, many believers wonder how to respond to the increasing alarm.

What would God have us do in the face of a growing international health crisis?

How should we help a panicked world?

First, to Focus on Wisdom and Not Worry:

#1: Remember What We Know

When facing something sudden, especially uncharted, it's important to be reminded of what we already know.

First, we remind ourselves that God is in control!

He is not in a state of panic.

He sees everything under heaven.

He opened the eyes of Elisha's servant (focused him) to see the real state of the matter!

We know that worry is not our friend, and panic is not meant to be our way.

Solomon reminds us; *If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small (Proverbs 24:10 AMP).*

May it never be said that God's people are governed more by fear and worry than by faith.

Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrows, it empties today of its strength (Corrie Ten Boon)

In times of crisis, the world needs steady people who are strengthened by God's grace and selfless by God's power.

Worry accomplishes nothing except weakness of heart and mind.

Luke 12:25 (ESV); *Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?*

It's been said that 90% of the things we worry or become panicked about never happen, and the other 10% are outside our control.

While we remain on alert against this virus, worrying won't change our circumstances or lower the possibility of infection. It won't help us fight off illness or move us to action.

Worrying about COVID-19 (or anything else) will only increase trouble.

Rather than worrying and being anxious, Jesus calls us to respond with prayer and faith in Him

Matthew 6:33-34 (MSG); *Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. ³⁴Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.*

Philippians 4:6-7 (MSG); *Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. ⁷Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.*

We need not worry, ultimately, because we know the One who has defeated sin and death (**1 Cor. 15:55-57**).

Remind yourself continually: it takes the same amount of energy to worry as to pray.

One leads to peace, the other to panic. Choose wisely!

Secondly; to Focus on Wisdom and Not Worry;

2: Love Well and Trust Him

If God calls us to worry about anything, it's how to love people well.

The psalmist encourages us; *Trust in the Lord and do what is good; dwell in the land and live securely* (**Psalms 37:3 HSCB**).

Worry is common to the common man.
We are not common!

God has called us to face troubles and threats with courage, leaning on Him.

Prayer-infused confidence, compassion towards those affected, and selflessness should mark how we talk about the coronavirus.

Why?

Because our Savior put on flesh (**John 1:14**) and stepped into our sickness, sin, and death.

He healed the sick and cared for the hurting.

Example of Loving Well - Food/Meal left at the doorstep of those who are having to self-quarantine.

Send a text, write a note or make a call and let them know they are not alone or forgotten.

Show the love of Christ to them in this practical way.

To Focus on Wisdom and not Worry;

3: Guard Against Carelessness

As believers, we are not to be reckless.
God delivered us from recklessness.

Neither Christ's love nor God's Word encourages careless risks, but both promote obedience.

Loving the sick doesn't mean we intentionally infect ourselves or others.

Proverbs 22:3 (NLT); *A prudent person foresees the danger ahead and takes precautions; the simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.*

With infection a legitimate risk, responding to the coronavirus means taking small practical steps ...

- Washing our hands for at least 20 seconds at a time, using soap and water (Please don't let water run the whole time).
- If no soap and water are available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or ash.
- Stay home if we're sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your forearm when coughing or sneezing.
- Seek appropriate medical care should flu symptoms arise.
- Should loved ones or friends get sick, care for them through prayer, encourage with Scripture through texts.
- Follow the example of those who've acted faithfully in responding to these situations. For instance:

The church of Jesus in Wuhan China, the virus's epicenter, is faithfully leading even today. Facing both increased persecution and now coronavirus, it would be totally understandable if the Chinese Christians went underground.

Yet according to reports, Christians in Wuhan are "out in the streets." They give out masks, they share that they are Christians, showing the love of Christ. World Magazine also reported how members of one Chinese church have been

ministering to medical personnel, delivering food and supplies to quarantined families!

They led a dying woman who was visiting Wuhan to Christ, and then filmed her memorial service for her family back home. The transcript of the service has already received tens of thousands of page views.

Praise God for their faith and courage. Please pray for our brave Chinese brothers and sisters.

Finally, as we watch the world react to this crisis—itsself a stark reminder of our mortality—let's press on!

We truly have nothing to fear—not from the coronavirus, natural disasters, or anything else.

Walk in God's strength, live ready for heaven.

Love the brotherhood.

Do good to all men.

Use your health to serve wisely.

Jesus is sovereign over it all.

And we are immortal until God's work for us to do is finished!