

Hello New South Friends,

I hope you are well in these strange days. In days past, I've send something nearly every day. I will not be doing that in the days to come - maybe just two things a week, or as the times warrant. I don't mean to overload you with this information, but these are unprecedented sorts of days...strange days. So forgive the intrusions.

I find, and you probably do too, that this experience is something of a test for many people who have never really had to endure hardship. Of course for those who have lived through war, poverty, grief, or for those who live alone under normal conditions...to them, this is not as devastating as all that. Nevertheless, our role is to comfort, heal, and console while always pointing people to the bigger picture and our greater Savior.

So thank you to you who are caring, praying, creating, adapting, adjusting, and seeing new opportunities and invitations from the Lord in this season.

You will notice that the adrenaline of the past 10 days will probably be wearing off this week, and the reality that this is not something that will disappear in a week or two will begin to settle. With that in mind, can I make some suggestions to you?

1. Make sure you get some rest.

That may sound odd, since your schedules have likely become much clearer than normal, but rest is not the same as doing nothing/wondering what to do. Take some time to think and breathe and sleep and exercise. The fact is, the sort of tension that surrounds events like this can be really difficult. We need to find ways, and help our people find ways to diminish the tension that comes with all this unknown. One way is to encourage limiting how much news and social media you watch. Take time to disconnect.

2. Focus on groups.

Pastors... most of our programs, events, large gatherings are gone. Thankfully our call is to simply "go and make disciples," so this is the time to really focus on small groups (of all kinds). Get leaders up to speed on ways to connect and meet in our current reality. Figure out a system for people to be connected and cared for. Use your small groups to be creative with reaching out during this time.

3. Focus on outreach

These are unusual times, but they are bringing unusual opportunities for connection and conversation with people with whom we don't normally interact. Let's be aware of those opportunities and take them for the sake of the gospel.

4. Simplify

With so much of our world being dismantled, why not see this as an invitation to simplify? Last week there was a post that read, "I had no idea how much I'd be giving up for Lent." This could be just the spiritual invitation we need to really let go of things that don't matter and hold on to things that really do. Could it be that the pruning we're experiencing will bring greater fruit?

5. Understand grief

As a culture, we are in the midst of a season of grief, which takes many forms: anger, depression, sadness, denial, bargaining with God, etc. As we all grieve things that are lost, extend the grace of Jesus to one another.

6. Use care in the information that you pass along

There is much "helpful" information being passed around via social media and e-mail, but much of it is not factual and is actually frightening, and passing that along can do more harm than good. Please check the names and the origins / source of the information for validity before passing it along. For example, I cut and pasted into a search engine the first couple sentences of an article that came to me, and that led me to five different supposed authors of that piece - all nurses and doctors - none of which were valid. It Also, I've found just about every piece that ends with, "Please pass this on to your friends." to be false. :-)

*Notice of full disclosure: I stole/borrowed/adapted a fair amount of the above from Supt. Pam Braman of Genesis Conference, FMC.

7. Regarding conference business:

Much more will be announced in the coming days regarding how we're going to approach annual conference, appointments, interviews, the days ahead, etc. So watch for that.

8. A bit of Wilmore news:

As of this Sunday, Wilmore is adding to our online worship a little more of a full-fledged service. You can check those out, if you like, by [clicking here - the Wilmore FMC YouTube channel](#). there are also links to messages at wilmorefmc.org.

Blessings to you all,

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