

FIRST-PERSON: Nothing new under the sun

by Leo Endel, posted Thursday, March 19, 2020 (one month ago)



EDITOR'S NOTE: Leo Endel is executive director of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention.

ROCHESTER, Minn. (BP) -- The stock market has tanked; we are hiding from a virus in our homes; people are afraid; people are dying. Schools and restaurants have been closed and events cancelled. We are glued to our screens to learn about the latest statistics or the newest guidelines. We can't shake hands, and we must keep six feet between us.

The fear and uncertainty of today take me back to the morning when terrorists killed 2,977 Americans and injured more than 6,000 others. There are thousands of painful stories within these numbers that continue to bring pain to the lives of the victims' friends and families. For them, the pain never completely goes away. For most of us, 9/11 changed the world in small ways, and we have adjusted. We sense COVID-19 will lead to similar societal shifts and changes, but again, I'm confident we'll adjust.

I found myself initially thinking that these are unprecedented days. But are they really?

The writer of Ecclesiastes grounds us to reality:

"History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. Sometimes people say, 'Here is something new!' But actually, it is old; nothing is ever truly new. We don't remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now." (Ecclesiastes 1:9-11, NLT)

Unprecedented? I don't want to discourage you with a listing of the epidemics, tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, wars and famines of human history. You can look them up on Wikipedia. The numbers are staggering. The days we now live in are not unprecedented, nor will they continue forever.

So, what can we learn and do while we're hunkered down in our living rooms?

1. Remember God is in control. (Job 42:2, Isaiah 46:10)
2. Know that God will use these troubles to your ultimate good. (Romans 8:28)
3. Know He will take care of you. (Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 6:25-27)
4. Know we can have peace even in the crisis. (Philippians 4:6-7)
5. Enjoy the time with your family.
6. Look for safe ways to help others. Do others have needs you have the means to meet? Maybe you could drop off a sack of canned goods or toilet paper for a neighbor or church member in need.
7. Reach out to your church family, especially to those who are alone.
8. Let your church help you if you have a need.
9. Take advantage of extra time to pray and read Scripture.
10. Participate in your church's Facebook Live feeds or broadcast worship services and leave a "like" or a comment to let the rest of the congregation know you are with them.
11. Keep giving to your local church. Your church's expenses won't decrease much; they might even increase as they try to help church members whose employment may be curtailed due to business closures. Consider digging deeper and give extra in gratitude to the Lord that you still have a job.

In a time of great trouble Jeremiah wrote these words:

"Because of the LORD's faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness! I say, "The LORD is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in him." (Lamentations 3:22-24)