

HEARTBEAT

The Hope in Christ Church Monthly Newsletter

Volume 27 May 2020 Issue 5

Overcoming Depression and Malaise During Covid-19

By Pastor Scott



If you are like me, one of the great challenges of the current stay-at-home orders has been an increasing

battle with depression. Depression has many symptoms and it is often described by people with many other words – malaise, lack of excitement or energy, feeling “blah,” a sense of worthlessness, etc. But behind all of these words is often the root of depression. Depression comes on for many reasons – maybe it is a sense of loss, powerlessness, the inability to change the present or the overriding fear that the future will be the same.

Often it comes from forgetting who God is and what his character is like. When we forget that God is: good, loving, involved and present in our life and world; and we feel that He is distant, angry, judgmental and full of wrath - it is natural to fall into depression. What normal person wouldn't lose hope and excitement, or feel powerless and unable to change the future when confronted by a God without love? Add to this the reality that our sin is ever

before our eyes – we can't escape the chastening conscience which reminds us of the lies told, the lusts harbored, the anger coddled, the forgiveness withheld, the spite nourished, etc. – and without a true understanding of God, depression is bound to surface in all its ways.

This is one of the reasons it is so important to study the character of God. Exodus 34:6-7 is a great place to start. In this passage, God reveals his character to Moses after the nation of Israel has sinned grievously with the golden calf – but what he declares is that he loves, forgives and is merciful, to name a few attributes. Growing in our understanding of the character of God is essential for getting out of this kind of depression. Surely there are other aspects of forgetting who God is that can also lead us into the depths and so I am including a *Navigator*'s tool on the names of God on pages 4 and 5 of this Heartbeat to broaden your understanding of the Lord during this time. Consider taking a name a day and reading, reflecting, praying and thanking God for how He is present with you in all His manifest ways, even when locked in your home. For those wanting an ever-deeper study, consider Stephen Charnock's *The Attributes of God* or Ligonier's *The Attributes of God*.

But there is another reason depression often comes upon people. It is the reason closest to my personal struggle and it results from a having an identity rooted in something other than Christ. Too much of my value and worth is found in my accomplishments, my ability to ‘help’ someone or to ‘see’ someone’s response and so have my emotional cup filled. But as the shutdown has continued, God has been stripping away all the external band-aids that I have piled upon my scabbed and wounded psyche. And as each band-

aid is removed, the wound underneath feels bigger and greater and more raw. Years of failing to attend to the real issues of the soul can have that effect.

In many ways this is no different than when I remove a real bandage from a real scab that I had forgotten to put salve on to enable the separation to occur easier. Sure, some hair is always lost from the bandage, but without the salve the scab gets ripped off too. And that is what happens every time we turn to something other than our Christian identity in order to find our value. And it is so easy to do. We apply band-aids by purchasing stuff, working harder, taking more schooling to improve our sense of importance, living to make others happy with us, comparing our accomplishments to another's, looking at the bank balance, etc.

But when it is all stripped from us – as the shutdown has clearly done – then it is like all the bandages are being slowly ripped from our wounded souls. For many, the result is a painful realization that the foundation of life has been built on something other than Christ. Without the opiates to numb our souls, we easily slip into melancholy and hopelessness.

But might it be that God is orchestrating the present situation in order to cleanse and purify his church from all that is unhealthy and detrimental to living the victorious Christian life? If we are willing to dive deep into who we are in Christ, the Christian will find that this time, though not easy, can become an opportunity to get rooted into the truth of what it means to be a child of God. I have been finding the opening chapter of Ephesians to be particularly helpful for re-establishing my identity in Christ. In this chapter alone, there are more than a dozen descriptions about who the believer is in Jesus Christ and none of them have to do with anything I do or anyone else does, or anything the world provides. They are all based on who God says I am and what he has done for me. Let me list just a few. I am a saint, faithful in Christ, graced, given peace, blessed, possessor of all spiritual blessings, chosen, holy, blameless, predestined, adopted, a son of God, redeemed, forgiven, spoiled (lavished)...

Consider taking Ephesians 1 and parsing out every description of the believer. Then as your list develops, ask yourself how believing this would change the way you live. How would it change the

way this time of isolation could be approached? How does your life reveal ways that you don't believe this identity is enough? Then pray for God to grow your true identity so that when the lockdown is lifted, you can give the world a picture of true Christian joy. Or consider working through some of the resources that **Desiring God** has on our identity in Christ. Jerry Bridges also has a wonderful book on identity in Christ as does Melissa Kruger's **Identity Theft**.

So, people of God, use this time to confront the lies which you have believed. Let the isolation drive you deeper in your understanding of God and your understanding of who you are in Christ. This will lead to the end of depression's insidious grip upon the soul. That doesn't mean it won't try to resurface in the future, but it does mean that when it tries, you will be prepared to meet it head on with the truth of the scriptures and the glory of God's grace.

¹ https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg_charnock/attributes_p.pdf or
<http://digitalpuritan.net/stephen-charnock/>

² <https://connect.ligonier.org/library/the-attributes-of-god/108949/about/>

³ <https://www.desiringgod.org/topics/identity-in-christ#>

Happy MAY Birthday!

- | | |
|----|------------------|
| 1 | David Richards |
| 6 | Junior Johnson |
| 9 | Elaine Snapper |
| 14 | Cathy Alff |
| 18 | Peter Senti |
| 19 | Lanny Speyer |
| 24 | Megan Speyer |
| 24 | Connie Koepp |
| 28 | Michael Koepp |
| 31 | Elaine Barringer |

Family Promise Update

On March 23, Carolyn Roy, Family Promise Director, hosted a Zoom meeting to bring all the host and supporting congregation volunteer coordinators up-to-date as to how homeless families are being served as we experience the "Stay-in-Place" policy implemented to fight the spread of the Coronavirus.

As you know, our assigned week of March 15 was heavily impacted. By the middle of the week, all volunteer shifts with families were ended. We were able to bring some meals and buy some groceries to support the one family, a mother and two daughters, who were cared for in the Center House by the Family Promise staff.

As you can imagine, Family Promise has had to make some significant changes to follow COVID-19 guidelines to ensure the safety of both the guests and the volunteers. With congregations closed, the FP staff has been hard at work developing different ways to help the families. First Christian Church, our host church, has offered their space on a semi-permanent basis and are now able to house 2 families in fully separate rooms for the foreseeable future. Besides beds, each room has been equipped with a microwave, couch, small table and chairs, mini-frig, coffee maker, electric kettle and a TV with access to Netflix. Because FP is in transition, volunteer needs are changing and evolving too.

In a time of physical distancing, we will most likely be asked to bring prepared meals for dinner and provide breakfast, lunch and snack items. More info will be forthcoming as we get closer to our week of service.

**Our next scheduled week to serve is
May 24 through May 31.**

We are thankful to First Christian Church and Family Promise Staff members, especially Carolyn Roy and Marikka Matheny who, when it seemed like FP would come to a standstill due to COVID-19, took action and made the above transition happen. We truly are an interfaith coalition!

As volunteer coordinators, we will keep you updated.

Ali Laninga, HICC Coordinator

**Lorraine Brouwer and Herman Laninga,
Assistants**

Consider donating a portion of your stimulus check to Family Promise of Whatcom County.

By doing so, you help us prepare and provide for current and future needs of families experiencing homelessness in our community.

TWO WAYS TO DONATE:

1. Online through interfaithcoalition.org and specify "Family Promise" in the Comments box
2. Mail a check payable to Interfaith Coalition* and write "Family Promise" in the memo. Mailing address is Interfaith Coalition, 910 14th St Bellingham, WA 98225

Call to Prayer - 2020 U.S. National Day of Prayer

2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

The U.S. National Day of Prayer falls on Thursday, May 7. We have helpful resources for prayer available online at:

<https://network.crcna.org/worship/annual-day-prayer>

This year, we are hosting three virtual prayer gatherings on May 7 via Zoom Conferencing. You're invited to attend any of the three prayer gatherings: 10:00 am, 2:00 pm, and 7:00 pm Eastern Time.

Sign up! Simply [fill out this form](#) for the time slot(s) that you would like to attend. You will be mailed a Zoom link for the gathering within several days before the meeting. Questions? Email Denise Posie at dposie@crcna.org.

Bring your Bible and unite with God's people in praying for our nation!



**Navigator
Discipleship
Tool**

God is...

30 DAYS OF PRAYING the Names and Attributes of God

Though God is infinitely far above our ability to fully understand, through the Scriptures He tells us truths about Himself so that we can know Him, and be drawn to worship Him. Take a description of God and meditate on it for a day.

① JEHOVAH

The name of the independent, self-complete being—"I AM WHO I AM"—only belongs to Jehovah God. Our proper response to Him is to fall down in fear and awe of the One who possesses all authority. *Exodus 3:13-15*

② JEHOVAH-M'KADDESH

This name means "the God who sanctifies." A God separate from all that is evil requires that the people who follow Him be cleansed from all evil. *Leviticus 20:7,8*

③ INFINITE

God is beyond measurement—we cannot define Him by size or amount. He has no beginning, no end, and no limits. *Romans 11:33*

④ OMNIPOTENT

God is all-powerful. He spoke all things into being, and all things—every cell, every breath, every thought—are sustained by Him. Nothing is too difficult for Him. *Jeremiah 32:17,18, 26,27*

⑤ GOOD

God is the embodiment of perfect goodness, and is kind, benevolent, and full of good will toward all creation. *Psalm 119:65-72*

⑥ LOVE

God's love is so great that He gave His only Son to bring us into fellowship with Him. His love encompasses the world, and embraces each of us personally and intimately. *1 John 4:7-10*

⑦ JEHOVAH-JIREH

"The God who provides." Just as He provided yesterday, He will provide today and tomorrow. He grants deliverance from sin, the oil of joy for the ashes of sorrow, and eternal citizenship in His Kingdom for all those adopted into His household. *Genesis 22:9-14*

⑧ JEHOVAH-SHALOM

"The God of peace." We are meant to know the fullness of God's perfect peace, His "shalom." God's peace surpasses understanding and sustains us through difficult times. It's the product of fully being what we were created to be. *Judges 6:16-24*

⑨ IMMUTABLE

All that God is, He has always been. All that He has been and is, He will ever be. He is ever perfect and unchanging. *Psalm 102:25-28*

⑩ TRANSCENDENT

God is not simply the highest in an order of beings (this would be to grant Him eminence). He is transcendent—existing beyond and above the created universe. *Psalm 113:4,5*

⑪ JUST

God is righteous and holy, fair and equitable in all things. We can trust Him to always do what is right. *Psalm 75:1-7*

⑫ HOLY

God's holiness is not a better version of the best we know. God is utterly and supremely untainted. His holiness stands apart—unique and incomprehensible. *Revelation 4:8-11*



THIS TOOL IS MEANT TO BE SHARED. To download a copy visit navlink.org/names-of-God
Sources: *The Knowledge of the Holy*, by A.W. Tozer; *Names of God*, by Nathan Stone; and *God of Glory*, by Kenneth Landon.



Navigator Discipleship Tool

God is...

⑩ JEHOVAH-ROPHE

"Jehovah heals." God alone provides the remedy for mankind's brokenness through His son, Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the physical, moral, and spiritual remedy for all people. *Exodus 15:22-26*

⑩ SELF-SUFFICIENT

All things are God's to give, and all that is given is given by Him. He can receive nothing that He has not already given us. *Acts 17:24-28*

⑩ OMNISCIENT

God is all-knowing. God's knowledge encompasses every possible thing that exists, has ever existed, or will ever exist. Nothing is a mystery to Him. *Psalm 139:1-6*

⑩ OMNIPRESENT

God is everywhere, in and around everything, close to everyone. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord." *Psalm 139:7-12*

⑩ MERCIFUL

God's merciful compassion is infinite and inexhaustible. Through Christ, He took the judgment that was rightfully ours and placed it on His own shoulders. He waits and works now for all people to turn to Him and to live under His justification. *Deuteronomy 4:29-31*

⑩ SOVEREIGN

God presides over every event, great or small, and He is in control of our lives. To be sovereign, He must be all-knowing and all-powerful, and by His sovereignty He rules His entire creation. *1 Chronicles 29:11-13*

⑩ JEHOVAH-NISI

"God our banner." Under His banner we go from triumph to triumph and say, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). *Exodus 17:8-15*

⑩ WISE

All God's acts are accomplished through His infinite wisdom. He always acts for our good, which is to conform us to Christ. Our good and His glory are inextricably bound together. *Proverbs 3:19,20*

⑩ FAITHFUL

Out of His faithfulness God honors His covenants and fulfills His promises. Our hope for the future rests upon God's faithfulness. *Psalm 89:1-8*

⑩ WRATHFUL

Unlike human anger, God's wrath is never capricious, self-indulgent, or irritable. It is the right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil. *Nahum 1:2-8*

⑩ FULL OF GRACE

Grace is God's good pleasure that moves Him to grant merit where it is undeserved and to forgive debt that cannot be repaid. *Ephesians 1:5-8*

⑩ OUR COMFORTER

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the "Comforter," and the apostle Paul writes that the Lord is "the God of all comfort." *2 Corinthians 1:3,4*

⑩ EL-SHADDAI

"God Almighty," the God who is all-sufficient and all-bountiful, the source of all blessings. *Genesis 49:22-26*

⑩ FATHER

Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father" (Matthew 6:9), and the Spirit of God taught us to cry, "Abba, Father," an intimate Aramaic term similar to "Daddy." The Creator of the universe cares for each one of us. *Romans 8:15-17*

⑩ THE CHURCH'S HEAD

God the Son, Jesus, is the head of the Church. As the head, the part of the body that sees, hears, thinks, and decides, He gives the orders that the rest of the body lives by. *Ephesians 1:22,23*

⑩ OUR INTERCESSOR

Knowing our temptations, God the Son intercedes for us. He opens the doors for us to boldly ask God the Father for mercy. Thus, God is both the initiation and conclusion of true prayer. *Hebrews 4:14-16*

⑩ ADONAI

"Master" or "Lord." All God's people ought to acknowledge themselves as His servants, with His right to reign as Lord of our lives. *2 Samuel 7:18-20*

⑩ ELOHIM

"Strength" or "Power": He is transcendent, mighty and strong. This name displays His supreme power, sovereignty, and faithfulness in His covenant relationship with us. *Genesis 17:7,8*



THIS TOOL IS MEANT TO BE SHARED. To download a copy visit navlink.org/names-of-God
Sources: *The Knowledge of the Holy*, by A.W. Tozer; *Names of God*, by Nathan Stone; and *God of Glory*, by Kenneth Landon.

To all the Sunday School Kids and Young Adults,

I just want to say I miss your hugs, seeing your beautiful faces, and being able to talk to you. I also miss being in the classrooms setting up lessons and teaching.

But during this pandemic, while you're at home a lot more than you usually are, and not going to some of your favorite places, you have the opportunity to experience things in a different way. You're going to school differently, you're worshipping differently, you're communicating with friends differently, and many other things as well are different.

One thing is the same. God. God is the same. This is a time when you need to be relying on God throughout these changes in your life, and put all your trust in Him. Hold tight to your faith that things will be all right. He loves you just as much as He did before the pandemic, and that will never change. You can find more ways during this time at home to put your faith and trust and love of God into helping others; your family, your friends, your neighbors.

You all are so special to me, and I know that you've probably already been doing these things.

I want you to know I love you all.

I found this picture from Christmas that allows me to see you all in one place, any time I want!

Take care of each other,

God loves you!

Mrs. Button



A Personal Pandemic Observation

By Pastor Don Recker

We've all been exposed to the world of viruses on a daily-basis till it's coming out of our noses - figuratively and literally!

In his latest masterful book, *The Body*, British author Bill Bryson's chapter "Microbial You" explores wonders of the microbial world, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protists.

We know viruses are so infinitesimally small as to be undetectable to optical microscopes - thus, until recently, were relegated to the realm of the theoretical - until the invention of the electron microscope which provides those bumpy pictures of the corona virus, now so familiar to us all. Bryson helped me put the lilliputian-sized virus in perspective with this comparison:

"(Viruses) are ... terribly small - much smaller than bacteria and too small to be seen under conventional microscopes. If you blew one up to the size of a tennis ball, a human would be five hundred miles high. A bacterium on the same scale would be about the size of a beach ball." (p. 32) Wow, how clear and memorable!

In the New Earth, God's people with scientific talents will have eons to study our Creator's microbial world, largely a mystery to us now, but given a glimmer of recognition now that we're experiencing a global pandemic stemming from that world! We are inclined to think of God's wonders in terms of the macro-spheres of mountains, seas, night sky, solar system, and galaxies. Isn't our Creator's majestic and inspiring touch more-than-equally evident in the microbial world, something too long ignored, but highlighted for me with the onset of Covid-19?

Should We Return to Normal After the Stay-at-Home Orders Are Lifted?

By Pastor Scott

We all want life to return to normal. We all want things to get moving, for stores to reopen, life to get busy and everything to be the same as it was 6 weeks ago. I understand that desire and I have the same yearning. But life can never return to normal. You can never go back. Just ask me, I have tried. As a child, my family moved a lot, and one particular time we moved from Spokane to Wichita to Spokane. I was in Kansas for 6 months. I started school in Washington and finished in Washington, but had 6 months in another state. I remember clearly dreaming about returning to my school in Nine Mile Falls, about seeing all my friends, about the fun things we would do, about how that first day would be like it had been before the move, but none of it panned out. It is impossible to return to a reality that existed in the past. You see, time keeps marching on and people are changed by the experiences of life - new feelings emerge, new hopes, new desires, new passions and along with the new, old things die off, get forgotten, or are purposefully abandoned.

This reality has come to mind many times in the past few weeks and it has caused me to start asking people a few questions: What things do we need to keep as a church that have happened as a result of the stay at home orders? A corollary question might be, what things do I need to keep as a result of the new life God has blessed me with over the past weeks?

It is easy to fall prey to the attitude that there is nothing beneficial in the current situation. And truly there are many difficulties that we want removed. But there are also wonderful gifts. Let me name a few to get your thoughts rolling. The move to digital services has brought about a few neat realities. Recorded services make it easier for those who are sick, at home, or out of town to stay connected to our body. Do we need to record our services live as we go forward so that we can serve those in our body who can't make it into the service

for some reason? Zoom has enabled an exponential growth in our congregational prayer times. Would we be wise to hold a zoom prayer time each week so that people can pop in from the comfort of their home, or on a lunch break at the office? Should we hold some of our elder, deacon or council meetings via zoom to rid people of the need to drive in the dark? Our families have been leading worship as families, and I believe that many have enjoyed seeing the family dynamic in our worship. Do we need to consider having family units lead worship on Sunday mornings even when we start meeting again live? What other benefits do you see?

It might seem easy enough to return to normal church life, but is normal life the best for moving forward? If we believe that God is sovereignly in control, then we must ask these kinds of questions and seek to find what lessons God is wanting to teach us during this time. We must embrace the good changes that have happened and jettison the old ways so that we don't fall prey to an agnostic atheism that says this was just chance and God wasn't up to anything.

A final thought worth considering about 'returning to normal' has to do with reflecting upon the biblical reasons why God sends disease and famine. The scriptures are replete with the declaration that these things come from the hand of God in order to turn people to repentance (Dt 28, Rev 9, 15, 18). And it is the people of God as much as the pagans who deny God, who are in need of repenting. To declare that we want to go back to life as normal is to declare that we want to return to the way of living that necessitated God bringing plagues and sickness upon us in the first place. So be careful about just filling your life back up with all the things that you used to do. God is leading each of us as individuals and as a church to adopt new ways of managing our time, educating our children, praying for our world...

Items of Interest from the April 8, 2020 Council Meeting

By Herman Laninga, Secretary

1. For now, services and all other meetings are being held electronically until such time as Governor Inslee announces an end to "stay-in-place." A big thank-you to Brian Koning for spending a great deal of time putting all the elements of our services together electronically each Sunday.
2. A slate for Elder/Deacon nominees has been finalized for presentation to the congregation. If all are approved by the congregation, we will draw lots for Deacon first and then for Elder as follows: Currently standing for Deacon (2 needed): Barbara Zylstra, Dan Obbink and Brian Koning. If Dan or Brian are not selected, they have agreed to then have their name placed in the drawing for Elder. Also currently standing for Elder (1 needed) are Jay Kaemingk and Mark Ruiter.
3. Two people have responded to our ads for open staffing positions. Morgan Roberts has indicated an interest in the Education Director role, while Loy Cidilio T. Mije from Brazil has applied for the Outreach Director position. These positions were scheduled to close April 30 however, due to the Coronavirus restrictions we are extending the deadline at least until the May Council meeting. Again, if you know of someone who would be a fit for either of these openings please let Pastor Scott or an Elder know immediately.
4. Deacon Jennifer Boer, with the approval of Council, has applied for the Payroll Protection Program (CARES Act) for our church. In light of the current uncertainty about the length of our shut-down this is a proactive step to be used if needed.
5. Christ The King church approached us about creating and placing a large sign in our lawn thanking the first responders in our community for the risks they are taking daily for all of us. This was unanimously approved by Council.

Deacons Digest

By Elaine Snapper

1. At the April meeting there was a Benevolence Opportunity Update.
2. Deacon Candidate Responses: Barb Zylstra has accepted the deacon nomination. It was suggested that the elders may ask elder candidates if they would stand for the role of deacon.
3. CARE Act Relief: Deacons are in agreement to pursue financial relief through the Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP). Jenn will work on gathering the information needed to proceed and will present it to the council on its next meeting.
4. Congregational needs in light of current crisis: Rochelle and Tena will be in contact with those whose work hours were reduced/affected by work shut downs.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER ZOOM

The National Day of Prayer in the United States will be on Thursday, May 7, this year. The annual day of observance was designated by Congress in 1952 and requires the president to encourage all Americans "to turn to God in prayer and meditation." We can hear this as an urgent call to prayer. Join CRC pastors, members, and staff in a Zoom prayer meeting at either 7 a.m., 11 a.m., or 4 p.m. PST. Learn more and register at network.crcna.org/prayer/call-prayer-2020-us-national-day-prayer.

SERVE COMMUNITY MEALS

Community meals will be served every Tuesday evening at First Baptist Church in downtown Bellingham. During this time of crisis, those who need a meal will be offered grab-n-go bags of food (a hearty sandwich or wrap, fruit, and bottled water) each week in order to abide by the official health guidelines. If you or your (very small) group are healthy, and would like to help prepare Tuesday afternoons and/or serve those in need between 5 and 5:30 p.m., please contact Jim Parker at (714) 785-5488 or jameswparker@hotmail.com.