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## COVID-19 and Loving Others

One of the areas of focus for Andy at Wycliffe in recent months has been leading their Coronavirus Crisis Committee. Recently, the pastor of our local church in Texas asked him to share some thoughts about this in writing, which the pastor later used as the basis for his sermon. We would like to share these thoughts with you, too.

One of the things that is obvious right now is that good, well-meaning people are all over the map regarding how they feel about COVID-19. People vary in their level of comfort vs fear, personal responsibility vs. inevitability, and opinions regarding the seriousness and/or risks of the pandemic, the impact of the measures taken by our government (local, state, federal), the wisdom of the approach of different businesses, and much more.

In times of uncertainty like this and with radical disagreement on so many pressing issues the norm, the easiest thing for most of us is to identify those that agree with us and stick together with them. It's also easy to be critical of anyone who is at a different point from ourselves on this spectrum. However, Christ calls us to unity and love for one another. What does this look like in times like this?

- Even if you disagree with how someone is approaching the pandemic, consider what can you do to make them feel most comfortable?
  - “I don't want to be around people unless they have a mask on, but my friend hates wearing a mask and doesn't think it's necessary.” Can we find a way to stay further apart (10 feet or more) and then have a face-to-face conversation without masks?
  - “I think our small group should just go back to meeting as usual, but a couple people say they aren't ready to return.” Are you willing to be creative with spacing (outdoor meeting), wearing masks even if you don't want to, and avoiding close contact to make them feel safe?
- Avoid judging others for how they feel about this, including the use of descriptions like irresponsible, fearful, reckless, or panicked.
- Avoid shaming others for how they approach this situation and don't try to force them to respond like you are. Be careful not to invade the personal space of someone that feels like they need a bit more than usual without commenting about it. Avoid rolling your eyes or sharing critical Facebook comments about those that aren't following certain guidelines.
- Consider this an opportunity to serve others. What freedoms or concerns can each of us set aside for the benefit of another?

There is no single righteous or godly approach to this pandemic. Each of us should prayerfully and with the best information we can obtain make decisions how best to act while protecting ourselves, our families, and our neighbors, all the while giving grace to those who are more or less strict in their behavior. This is a time to learn how to accept others, even when we fundamentally disagree with them. The disagreement is not bad, but using it as a means to criticize others or embrace bitterness is wrong. Let's strive towards love, acceptance, and unity.

## Prayer for a Friend

We have a good friend that loves Deaf people. She is in her 80s and is the last living member of her family. Let me share her story with you, which Wycliffe plans to use in an upcoming fundraising campaign.

*As a young girl, I loved my grandparents. However, communicating with two of them was a challenge, as both were Deaf. I know that my grandfather loved Jesus and he used to clutch his Bible and hold it close to his heart. He knew that book contained a message from God. However, since his reading skills were limited, he never really understood that message well.*

*I spent most of my professional life focused on literacy, whether teaching at universities or developing reading curriculum. I wanted people to be able to read. During the past few years, God has brought me back to thinking about the Deaf, people like my grandfather. I don't want to see another generation of Deaf people be so close to the full message of God's Word and yet be unable to really understand it and know God as I do. God has laid it on my heart to use the resources he has entrusted to me to help bridge the gap between Deaf people and God's Word.*

*What is God laying on your heart? Would you consider joining me and others in helping meet this need? I am committing \$165,513.00 in hopes it will be used as motivation to help bring the Sign Language remaining need to zero. Are you the one God is calling to help?*

Recently, this lady asked us to pray for her, as she is having a number of significant physical challenges that are accompanied by much pain. Would you please join with us in prayer for our friend?



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