

'10 Ways to Live Well in a Time of Crisis'

Willi Church Online

Pastor Megan Jung

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Galatians 4:8-20

For those of you who are part of our church community, or maybe part of another church community and maybe not able to join your community in person today ... my prayer is that this message would encourage you in your faith, encourage you as you seek to live out your faith well in what is a really challenging and uncertain time for all of us

And for those of you joining us online today, maybe you're not usually part of our church community, hi! Welcome. My hope is that what I share in this time encourages you today and that as you listen, God fills you with hope and power by His Spirit for the challenges you are facing today...

As a church we are in a season of church where we have been journeying through an ancient letter written by one of the early church leaders the Apostle Paul, he was writing to a group of Christians in Galatia, modern day Turkey, he'd gotten them started in their faith and then he had moved on to

share the message of Jesus in other places but he wrote letters to keep in touch with these believers... each letter had a different flavor and tone depending on who he was writing to. And this morning I will be drawing from a passage which was actually planned to be today's passage in our series a few months ago, but of course, has much to say to us in our current context and time... so that will be Galatians chapter 4:8-20 – I will also be drawing on a few other key scriptures as we go...

So, 10 Ways to Live Well in a Time of Crisis

1. **Firstly, be real** – It is an unusual time, it is a scary time. We are living in a time when the world no longer feels safe. And Covid-19 has come at a time when many of us were already feeling vulnerable, volatile. We have had a summer of unprecedented bushfires across our country, many of us are fearful about the ongoing impact of climate change, we're in a time in our world when many of us are losing trust in our leaders... and now Coronavirus. Many of us are feeling fearful, anxious, lonely and isolated. And this past week, we have seen things move and change so rapidly, new rules and guidelines are now in place, for almost all of us our normal day to day routines have been disrupted, some of us

being forced to self isolate and almost all of us now choosing to physically distance ourselves from our friends, neighbours and community. How can we live well in a time of crisis? Well, we can be real, we can be self aware. As a person of faith, it's okay to have questions, it's okay to be human. This year I am reading through the Psalms... psalms is often called the prayer book of the bible - I am struck time and time again - so many of the psalms are psalms of Lament, where the psalmist cries out to God ... real prayers... it's okay to be honest and real about everything we are experiencing. > One tool you may find helpful here is one that Christians have used for hundreds of years, it's called the Prayer of Examen – a way to pray through the events of your day in order to notice how God has been present ... it's one I find helpful and so I commend that to you.

**2. Be joyful** – Gal 4:9 – we know God, but we are also known by God 😊 .... Do something that reminds you that you are known by God, do something that brings you joy... for me this week I have had a lot of time at home but I have been trying to make the most of it, spending time with my girls, being out in the fresh air, we have been getting out for lots of walks, listening

to music, having a dance together in our back courtyard, watching my girls enjoying bubbles.... Smiling and making eye contact with strangers in the street. Because joy is contagious. There was a moment earlier today when I was writing this message in my study and suddenly I heard from downstairs a loud cry, my older daughter had bumped her head and had a cry and our 1 year old then burst into tears, but then our older one quickly felt better and for some reason started laughing – within a second or two our toddler was also laughing!! Be joyful...

- 3. Be expectant** - It is well documented that every large scale revival in church history was preceded by some major social turmoil. Yes Covid-19 is bringing uncertainty, but as Christians we know that God is in it. Our God is a God of love who has shown us in the person of Jesus that He is in the middle of our lives, he is involved in our world, and I believe he wants to renew our world and refresh and renew the church and our surrounding culture in this moment.

Melbourne church leader, author, cultural commentator Mark Sayers writes this in his book *Reappearing Church* – interestingly it was only

released in the second half of last yr:

“Continuing the same things that are not bringing renewal is not going to bring renewal. Lack of commitment is not going to bring renewal. Business as usual will not bring renewal. Accumulating knowledge without putting it into practice will not bring renewal. We need our autopilot patterns interrupted.”

Covid-19 is interrupting our lives in a most unprecedented way for my generation and even the generation that has gone before.

Our church ministry team and leadership team are believing God is going to do something powerful in this time. People are searching. People are asking big questions. People are open spiritually at a time such as this... The grand story of Scripture speaks clearly to us that God is in the business of renewal, renewing us personally, renewing our culture, renewing creation.... Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans chapter 8 writes that in all things God is working for good – we as a church believe and this are called to declare that greater good will come from this present time, from the present turmoil. So let’s pray big prayers, let’s open our

hearts and be expectant for the renewal God will bring through this moment in history

**4. Be in community** – this virus, the nature of this virus, attacks community. But also, and you may have noticed this in your week, people are reaching out – I don't know about you but I have had more actual phone calls and Facetimes over the past week than I have had in months.... we need to remember that we are made for community, the creation narrative which we find in Genesis tells us that we are designed to be in relationship. I love how Paul in his letter to the Galatians in chapter 4 verse 12 there is a reciprocity, mutuality – we need one another. The spreading of the Coronavirus is bringing us together to face a common threat. I believe God is using it to help people experience again what it “feels like” to work together for the common good. We as a church are going to be doing community in new ways... digital Connect Groups, closed Facebook group & Families FB group. Imagine if all of us called one other person at church just to see how they're going.

**5. Be neighbourly.** > if you have ever wanted a reason, now is your time. Neighbour card.

**6. Be transformed.** ‘When you did not know God... but now that you know God how is it that you are turning back...’ When times are touch, when external influences are strong, it’s so easy to return to old patterns. I am a worrier... my challenge is to not convalesce to old habits of worry and anxiety at a time like this.

The truth is, God is not surprised by the current Coronavirus pandemic, God is not scared by coronavirus. And in a time when it seems the world around us is searching for hope and looking for something certain, something solid, we can live out our faith, we can hold fast to our faith. I love how our passage ends... Paul gets personal, he writes that he is going to keep encouraging them “until Christ is formed in you”

Over the past few weeks on our church Facebook page we have been sharing real stories of how Jesus has been setting us free – how Jesus has transformed and changed us. How Jesus has set us free from fear, from anxiety, status, self.

Church, let’s not return to our former ways, fear, anxiety, worry, selfishness.

At times like this I come back to Psalm 46: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea...

**7. Be creative.** This is a moment for us as a church and for us as followers of J to innovate. This is actually who we are as a movement – churches of christ. It's in our DNA as a church family that we are adaptive, flexible, responding to the community around us, this is the journey we have been on as a church with the growing churches program > We are going to be doing things differently for the next little while - willi church online, Facebook groups, digital Connect Groups, new Instagram page. Why not have a go at doing something new in your own spheres of influence? Be creative. Our God is a God of creativity. I have a friend who instead of having a baby shower has asked all of her close girl friends to make two identical friendship bracelets, one for me as her friend to keep, and one that I will give to her – this is being creative in a time of rapid change - Facetime a friend, write something, draw, paint, make music, cook a meal for a friend, leave a pack of toilet paper or

some fresh flowers with a note on your neighbour's doorstep, have some fun with it!

**8. Be generous.** For many of us Covid-19 has already been impacting our work, our income, our financial situation. So a word about finances... if you have been impacted, know that we as a church want to support you. Reach out, if we can help we will. Our newly launched Helping Hand Hampers ministry is just one example of a way we want to support our church and wider community practically at this time. Maybe you are not expecting to be financially impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic, I just want to encourage you, be generous. Be generous with your money, keep faithfully tithing to our church, some of you may even want to give above and beyond, and if you haven't already, now is an ideal time to set up a regular electronic bank transfer to our church. Our ministry team may not be able to lead you in worship in person or visit you in your home right now, but we are more committed than ever to equipping you to live out your faith, resourcing you with tools and teaching for discipleship, prayer, faith in the real world and keeping us as a church community connected with one another. And, be generous to others, support local businesses, spend

money, as one local business put it – splash some cash locally!... buy a voucher, order online, let's be a church that seeks to bless our local community in this time.

**9. Be rested.** This is a tiring time. Decision making. We are needing to be flexible. Working from home with children around. Home education. Doing things in ways we haven't done them before. Changes in routine. Increased risk of illness or of transmitting the Coronavirus, even unknowingly. In all this, we will do well to rest. Take time away from the 24/7 news cycle and social media. We believe God is in charge. Ps 121 God doesn't slumber or sleep – what a promise. > Sleep! Build tech-free time into your day. Walk in the fresh air. Exercise, look after your body. Make a special meal. Listen to music. Spend time in silence. Read the bible... read that Xn book you have had on your bookshelf for months and been wanting to read. For those of us who are self isolating or physically distancing, use your time well. Create a pattern to your day that includes rest and slow as well as engagement and activity.

**10. Be prayerful.** We want to be a church that is praying for one another at this time, praying for

our community, for those who are particularly vulnerable to this virus, for local businesses, for our country, for our health professionals, for our leaders, for our world... and interceding for our world, that this virus be contained. Philippians 4:6 says do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. > we want to be a church that is prayerful. > So, pray. Pray the Lord's prayer, pray honestly, pray often. And we will keep you posted about a digital prayer meeting which we are hoping to get started very soon across the church.

I know it is an uncertain time for all of us. But we can be encouraged.

As we close, let me pray this blessing over us, it comes from the New Testament letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 16-17

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”

Amen.