



SATURDAY - March 14, 2020

First Baptist North Augusta Family,

As I think about the tone of much that I see and hear about the Coronavirus, what I hear is often either fear and anxiety, on the one hand, or dismissive indifference, on the other hand. The truth is, neither of those responses are the best response for the one who trusts in Christ.

Instead of fear, we're called to live by faith; at the same time, as opposed to indifference, we're called to be wise. This, then, should be our response to the Coronavirus: Trust God; Don't Live in Fear; and Be Wise.

### **TRUST GOD.**

The first place we should fix our minds when news reports or conversations or social media posts bring us to the point of fear or worry or anxiety should be on this fact: Our Father is in heaven. That's the basic building block of the Lord's Prayer: "*Our Father in heaven*" (**Matthew 6:9**).

Let us then find rest in this: God is on the throne, and not only is he on the throne, in Christ he's our good *Father*. When it seems like everything is out of control—the truth is that God is still in control, and God loves his people and is committed to our ultimate good.

We don't know what tomorrow brings, but we know the God who goes before us. We don't know what we'll walk through, but we know the One who will be with us, and in Christ we have the privilege of calling him "Father."

### **DON'T LIVE IN FEAR.**

Therefore, we can trust God when he tells us repeatedly "Do not fear."

Do not fear "though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam," **Psalm 46** says.

Do not fear "the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness," **Psalm 91** says, because God is our "refuge and fortress," the One in whom we trust.

"Fear not," God tells us in **Isaiah 41**, "*for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*"

Though many in the world may be overrun with fear, we stand firm on the Rock, our refuge. We fight fear by looking continually to him.

## **BE WISE.**

But there is a difference between not living in fear and ignoring warnings. We're still called to be wise in how we go about our lives. "The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it," **Proverbs 22:3** tells us. While not being at the place right now where we literally need to "hide [ourselves]," the point is clear: see the warnings around us, make plans, and be wise.

When the medical community makes recommendations for safety procedures, we would be wise to heed their counsel. We would be wise to heed the counsel of those whom God has gifted in his common grace with sound knowledge and wisdom, with skills refined by the God-given practices of work and study.

We're called to be wise as we continue to live out the implications of our faith:

- Loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Caring for those in need;
- Giving generously;
- Working to provide for our families and to have something to share;
- And, as we're able, to not neglect meeting together.

There may come a day where we, as a church body, need to take a break from the last of these. There may come a day where we would be wise to pause from meeting together as the church for a short season. But even if that day comes, my prayer is that we can continue to live out these other implications of our faith, as well as all the rest that God's Word prescribes.

For now, here's what we are recommending and what we are doing at First Baptist:

1. If you or those in your immediate family have recently been sick, especially with any fever or symptoms common to the cold or flu in the past 24 hours, please stay home until you are completely well (including being fever-free for at least 24 hours). Even if you feel strong enough to come, please see this as a way that you can love your neighbor.
2. Practice common cleanliness steps to fight the spread of any virus.
  - a. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
  - b. Cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing;
  - c. Use hand sanitizer;
  - d. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

3. If you have traveled out of the country, or to any [high-alert areas within the United States](#), please consider refraining from attending church events until a 14-day timeframe has been observed.
4. It is important that we say that **at this time we know of no cases of COVID-19 in the FBCNA family**. However, if you or someone you know tests positive for COVID-19, please let us know so that we can help you, pray for you, and take any steps needed here at FBCNA to protect our church family.

Additionally:

1. Our church is implementing a new “stop light” system of how we will operate and communicate based upon the threat and spread of the virus in the CSRA. We will be using three colors: green, yellow, and red.
  - **Green** – We will continue to operate normally, but with caution and a few changes to procedure.
  - **Yellow** – Some of our meetings, gatherings, and events may be altered or cancelled.
  - **Red** – FBCNA will gather online. No large groups will meet on our campus.
2. Our church is putting together a task force of medical professionals and church leadership who will meet regularly over the next few weeks in regards to the coronavirus and how we as a church can stay healthy and safe.
3. For the next few weeks, let’s wave, and don’t shake hands, as a form of greeting. Customs are hard to break, but for the sake of neighbor-love, for the time-being let’s refrain from shaking hands. Church members from the medical community have already scripted some information for you regarding COVID-19. You can access it at the end of this document.\*
4. Until the situation changes, we will change how we do the offering time at First Baptist. Instead of passing the plates during the service, offering plates will be held by our deacons or ushers at each exit following our Sunday morning services. Additionally, you can always give online by accessing the [Give](#) page at [www.csrachurch.org](http://www.csrachurch.org). You may also text to give at any time by simply texting “csrachurch” to 73256. Your phone will guide you from there.
5. If you are someone who falls in an [“at-risk” category](#), please use discretion as to whether or not you attend services. While we are taking the necessary steps for precaution, if your doctor advises you to stay at home, please follow their medical advice. If you find yourself in that category and need assistance (groceries, help, etc.), please let us know. We would love to serve you.

6. If you are serving with our children, please sanitize or wash your hands often, and please do not come if you have been recently sick (see number 1, above). We will be happy to find a substitute if needed!
7. As a continuation of our normal practices here at First Baptist, our facilities staff is taking extended measures with sanitizing high-touch areas.
8. Finally, please stay informed. Comprehensive and trustworthy sources of information can be found on the dedicated COVID-19 pages of [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and [WHO.int](https://www.who.int).

With any new development that would affect our corporate gatherings or any events at First Baptist, we will let you know of those changes as quickly as possible via email and Facebook.

In all of this, let's keep our minds fixed above. Our "*help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth*" (**Psalm 121:2**). Trust God, do not fear, and be wise. May we continue to love our neighbors, pray for those making important decisions, and ask God to intervene.

Praying with you,

Pastor Stephen

**\*The following are a few educational insights on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) for the members of First Baptist Church from some of our church physicians.**

What we do know about the Coronavirus (COVID-19):

1) Coronaviruses have been studied and isolated and treated for years. We already know a lot about many of the coronaviruses. The common cold is caused by a coronavirus.

The COVID-19 virus is a new coronavirus which began in Wuhan, China in January, 2020. Over the last 2 to 3 weeks COVID-19 cases have appeared in the United States and we will continue to have an increase in cases in this country. Our government, law enforcement, and healthcare system have prepared for and are continuing to prepare for a potential widespread outbreak of this virus. If a widespread outbreak does occur, we will be ready to provide the necessary care and access to that care. This is not a time to panic.

2) Over 85% of healthy patients who are infected with this coronavirus have minimal symptoms and fully recover in less than 7 days. The majority of the rest of the patients recover over 7 to 14 days. A patient infected with this coronavirus can experience symptoms similar to upper respiratory infections or the flu.

The most common symptoms of coronavirus infection are cough, fever, and congestion. In some cases, the infection can spread deeper in the lungs causing pneumonia. As with any respiratory illness, if a patient is experiencing fever and a productive cough or difficulty breathing, then the patient should see a doctor.

3) Coronaviruses, like other respiratory viruses, are transmitted through close contact with an infected person. There has to be an exchange of respiratory secretions either through close physical contact, being close to someone who coughs or sneezes, sharing utensils or drinking glasses with an infected person, or touching an infected person's face or hand and then touching your own face, mouth, or nose.

Therefore, the best ways to keep from getting the coronavirus and prevent the spread of it is to:

- Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has symptoms of a respiratory illness
- Do not share utensils or drinking glasses
- Wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer
- Wash your hands before touching your face

4) Coronavirus can survive for a limited amount of time on inanimate surfaces such as door handles, shopping carts, cell phones, and computer keyboards. It is very important to clean these surfaces before contact when possible, and wash your hands or use sanitizer frequently throughout the day. A good hygiene habit would be to wash your hands or use sanitizer after you touch or handle any object which was recently handled or touched by another person.