



tips for youth workers

APRIL 2020

NO CIRCUMSTANCE WASTED

I would like to offer you some encouragement. In 1 Thessalonians 4:18 we are told to encourage each other with 'these words.' The words Paul is referring to is his recent exhortation about the resurrection, and while this is a timely message of hope for the future, I want to take some time to encourage you all with a few other words.

These are extraordinary days we are living in. Days filled with great fear and uncertainty, but at the same time great possibility. Not that we ever should deny the severity of COVID-19 and its affect globally, but can we be challenged to see how God is working in these days?

PATIENCE

I am caused to think about Paul's words to the Corinthian church stating that his light and momentary troubles was achieving for him an eternal glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). And James' words to the church saying that patience in suffering produces fruit within our lives (James 5:7-11). In every trial we face we should be quick to ask the Spirit what He is leading us into and what it is that we are to receive and learn in this season.

Can I encourage you to have *patience* in these days? I think we could all think of areas where we could use more patience, whether it is being partially house bound, or having our children 'learning from home.' But beyond that I want to encourage you to have patience to wait upon the Lord through these very difficult days, to wait on the Spirit and hear His voice. *No circumstance in our lives is ever wasted, God has something great for us.*

PRAYER

Nearly all of us have been caused to disrupt our regular schedule because of circumstances surrounding COVID-19. For some the disruption has been greater than for others, but disruption has hit us all none the less. Can I encourage you to take this disruption as an opportunity to evaluate your schedule and priorities in order to make more time to talk with Jesus?

There are two outcomes of increased prayer that I want to mention. First, spending more time talking to Jesus will quiet and enliven your soul. Prayer is a key to tapping into the wells of living water that Jesus promised would spring up from within those who believed in Him. Prayer accesses the deep anchor of our faith that cannot be affected by the external factors that often rage around us.

Secondly, prayer builds up those who we love and serve. Prayer is one of the bonding elements of the Body, prayer connects us to our brothers and sisters in Christ. In these days when we cannot connect with others in all the ways we are used to, we need to spend extra time in intercessory prayer, especially for our children and youth. In his earlier years Dietrich Bonhoeffer spent a couple of seasons serving as, what would be best described as, a youth worker or youth pastor in a local church in Berlin while he

studied theology. He recounts how when the day came for him to farewell from that church onto other opportunities the church held a worship service and the children there publicly prayed for him. He recounted that the prayer ‘sent shivers down [his] spine,’ and thinking upon that moment in his life he wrote, “Where a people prays, there is the church; and where the church is, there is never loneliness.” That is a profound truth that can find a meaningful home for many of us today. Let the church rise up in prayer to be connected even when separated, and so in turn push back the loneliness that can so easily accompany isolation. This could be a season of discovering new depths of communion with Christ. *No circumstance in our lives is ever wasted, God has something great for us.*

PROGRESS

Noting again the disruption that COVID-19 has brought to all our lives, I want to suggest one other way we leverage that disruption for Kingdom glory. In these days we have been forced to rethink how we do church, and what it looks like to reach the lost and disciple each other. The result of that rethinking has been a well spring of creativity bursting forth from nearly all corners of the Church.

We have been provided with both the impetus and focus to examine and evaluate all our methods to reduce things to foundational elements for maximum creativity and impact. What an exciting possibility to arise from such difficult circumstances! We do not know how long we may be in these circumstances, but for a moment think about the innovation and development that will take place within the Body of Christ the longer it does carry on. I am not simply talking about nifty ideas of how to utilize technology and media (though that excites me very much), but I am also referring to the deep ideological and missiological thinking and innovating that is taking place. I believe that the Church is going to be positioned for impact through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic like rarely seen before in its history. The Church is facing a global reset, there have been many localized resets over the history of the church, often resulting in culture shifting revivals, but rarely global ones, and perhaps never one on this scale. What does God have in mind? God knows! But I am excited to be around in these days to anticipate it.

Can I encourage you toward *progress* in these days? What is your part in this move of God? Where is He leading? Friends, don’t miss this moment, settle into it. The vitality of the Godhead is coursing through the veins of the Church and may we be a people who respond to it. Ask God to give you generous eyes to see the Kingdom realities both now and in the days ahead (Matthew 6:22-23). *No circumstance in our lives is ever wasted, God has something great for us.*

Friends, as you strive for and with children and youth across our territory, may I encourage you toward *patience, prayer, and progress*. I want to finish by saying again that I know that this journey is hard, and there may darker days ahead of us yet where we as the Church will need to bear down and dig deep to be a support to our societies and the light they will so desperately need. But none of this is wasted in the economy of God. His word is going forth through His Church and it will not return to Him void.

To use the perhaps over quoted lines from the Lord of the Rings:

Frodo: I wish the Ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.

Gandalf: So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. (J.R.R. Tolkien)

Stay hopeful, stay holy, and stay close to Jesus. Greatness awaits!

Major Terence Hale
Territorial Youth Secretary