

A Time to...

One of my favorite passages for many years is Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Solomon had seen a lot in life, and he had been on both sides of the fence, with God and ignoring God. Late in life, God taps him to write this inspired book to help mankind see life from both perspectives, under the sun and above the earth... earthly perspectives and God's perspective.

In chapter three, Solomon relates God's message that there are times for differing things - a time to be born, a time to die; a time to plant, and time to pluck up what is planted, etc. In verse 5 we learn there is, "...a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing." Solomon gives a specific context for what those times may be, but we can certainly recognize that during this time of national and world-wide pandemic, this is a time to *refrain from embracing!*

I have always been in hugging families and hugging church families. How sweet it is to "love one another as I have loved you," (John 13:34, 25), expressed with holy hugs and wholesome handshakes! But alas, there is a time to refrain from embracing, *not out of fear but out of love!*

Last week, one New York college student, inquiring about the state's "shelter in place" directives asked, "What is the penalty if I ignore it?" The state official replied, "You might kill your grandmother!" OUCH!

The vast majority of people who contract the COVID-19 virus will live, about 99 per cent, if treatment is sought early. But many will become very ill and require serious hospital care. The dangerous part is that many will never have symptoms, or have very mild symptoms and not recognize they are a "carrier" for several days. During that time they can infect others more vulnerable, like the elderly or infirm or those with compromised immune systems (like cancer patients, as one example).

Love demands that we do all possible to stop the spread of this pandemic and the best medical professionals are telling us that "social distancing" is the single most effective way to stem this tide of increasing infection.

So, we choose to *"worship together - apart."* Sunday is still *the Lord's Day* and we can worship as best we can at home. Whether you choose to take communion alone at home or not (I consider that your choice in such cases), we can and should worship. Many churches of Christ live stream their worship services and/or record them for convenient times across time zones. Or you many choose to have a family Bible study.

Whatever you decide, worship God at home until we can worship Him again in our normal assemblies. *And pray for Sandy - she's stuck at home with a preacher!!!*

Ray Wallace