
COVID - what lessons can we learn?

Do we need to revisit our involvement with our brothers and sisters in the ecclesia to prepare for the next event of world turmoil?

Over four years ago, in January 2020, reports started to come out about a virus. Two months later it was announced that it was a pandemic, called COVID 19. We were told to take urgent action by detecting, testing, treating, isolating, tracing, and immobilizing people to reduce the risk of catching the virus. In Australia our borders closed, schools and workplaces started to shut down. But on the 23rd of March 2020 in Queensland, Christadelphian life as we knew it changed, when they closed places of worship. On this day they also closed worldly places, clubs, pubs, hotels, cinemas, gambling venues, nightclubs, theme parks, entertainment venues of any kind, and fitness and sporting centers. Life as we knew it had been brought to a standstill, our world had changed.

How did we react to COVID?

We were given an opportunity to reflect and revalue where our priorities lie and our relationship with our Heavenly Father, through COVID lockdown.

We all know that God is in control of everything, even the COVID pandemic. Did it bring us closer to God as we felt a need for His care and guidance, and did we have faith and trust that God was in control, confident that the angels are at work among the nations? Did we take this opportunity to trust and build our faith, believing that this was part of God's plan? Remembering that God can bring about the result he wants for a specific problem when he decides too, He can answer our prayers on the same day, but sometimes he wants us to learn and grow from the trials He gives us. An example of this is that He could have wiped out Jericho on the 1st day rather than the 6th (Joshua 6).

Or did our fear take over? The media played a big role in this. The more media people watched the more fearful individuals became. Did we listen to every bit of news, every death toll, when we were offered a chance to shut out the world, remembering that we are instructed to walk by faith and not by sight?

As brethren and sisters awaiting the coming of the Lord, we were being reminded of the uncertainty of human life and were reminded of how man is powerless in the face of the forces God has under His control, while remembering that God is good, and all powerful. We needed to find comfort that our God is always with us, and He encourages us not to be fearful, as He will uphold us, and hold out His righteous hand, allowing us to stand firm, Isaiah 41:10.

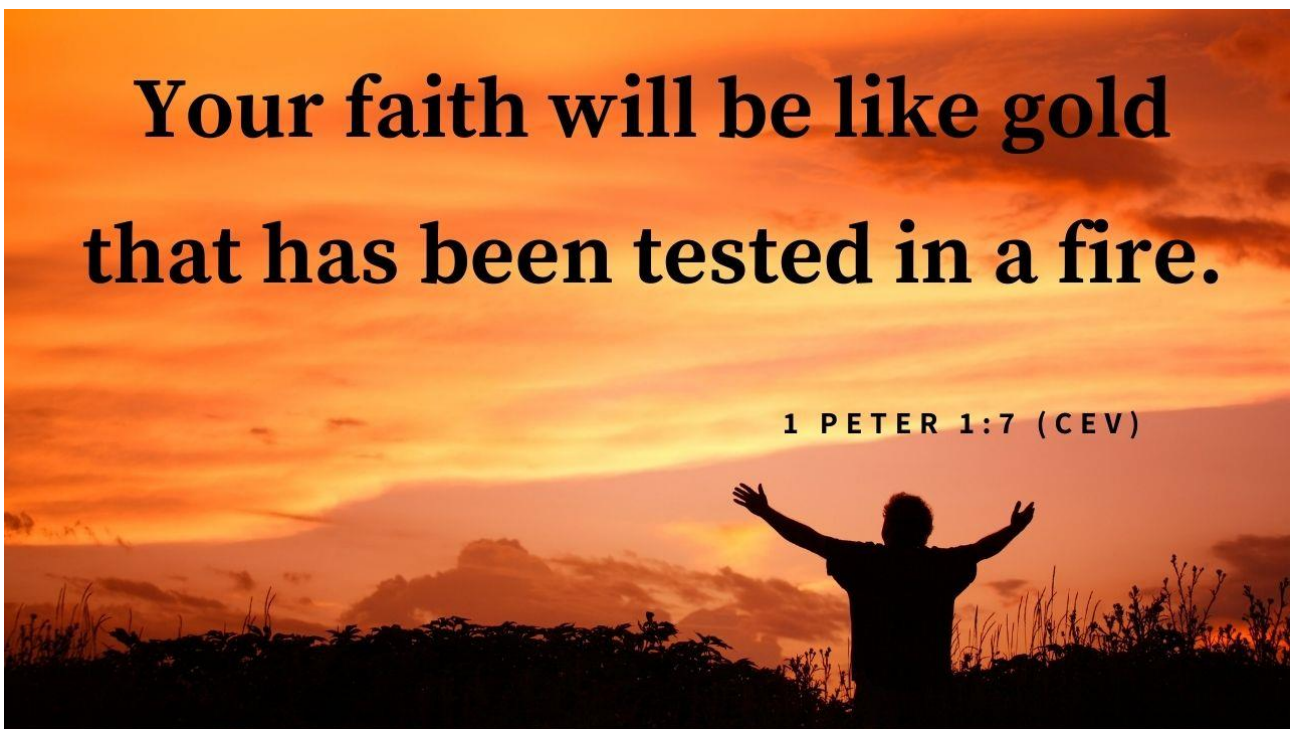
Now that we can once again meet with our brethren and sisters regularly, we should thank our Heavenly Father for this opportunity and do so with every chance we can. COVID seems to have affected the attendance rate of our members for ecclesial activities, as many find it easier to stay home, and zoom or live stream into classes.

How do we spend our time?

Due to COVID shutting down our meeting places, hopefully it made us appreciate our ecclesial life and to remember that we need to put God and our ecclesia first in our lives. Or did we find other activities in our life that have affected our attendance and dedication to attending our

meetings and other ecclesia activities, and being with our brethren and sisters? **Our Father wants us to learn from the trials He gives us**, He gave us a pause and a moment to reflect, He provided us a wakeup call, before his Son's return. He gave us time with our families, our Bibles open, and time to think about our direction, to change things, while He removed the many distractions in our lives, by closing worldly places. We were given a time of isolation, a time to identify what we needed to change before our Lord's return, we needed to ask ourselves how did we stand the test of time?

Our world is designed to distract us by everyone rushing around and being busy, which leaves us little to no time to focus on what is most important. We need to take the time out to consider what we are living for and what our priorities in life are. Our world we live in is dangerous and our greatest trial, is having everything at our fingertips e.g., being able to watch bible class on our TV or phones, while doing other things like, eating, ironing, being on social media, which we have all been guilty of. This is our trial.



We are instructed in 2 Corinthians 6:17, to come out from among unbelievers, and **be separate from the world**. We are instructed not to be of this world and its way of thinking, nor its way of acting, and in Matthew 6:24 we are told no man can serve two masters. James 1:27 tells us to **keep ourselves unspotted from the world**, and the result if we do not heed these words can be seen in Matthew 13:22 which is that our relationship with the world will affect our ability to bear fruit. And in Luke 14:33 Jesus also tells us that those that cannot give up everything cannot be his disciples.

Time is something that we don't have enough of. How often do we find ourselves out of time or not having enough time to do this or that? **How are we using our time**, do we fill our lives with things that do not leave us to have time for God and our ecclesial activities? So many times, we are too busy or have other things to do when asked to take on ecclesial duties or visit someone that needs help or creating time for our Heavenly Father and ecclesia. How we spend our time is what we will be held accountable for, so we need to ask ourselves, are the things I'm doing profitable having eternal results or could I be doing something else with my time that would be

giving glory to God? God has called us to be wise in how we spend our time. The more time we give to God, the more He will strengthen us against weakness and folly.

Time is our most valuable asset, yet we can waste it rather than invest it, and our reward is so valuable - everlasting life in the Kingdom. Let us use our time wisely and invest time in praising God. We get 84,600 seconds each day. **Why waste it?** It doesn't carry over to the next day, we need to make every second count. **Our time is free, but it's priceless**, and once time is wasted, we can never get it back, so we should use it wisely. Remember even though time flies, we are the pilot of our own time, and if time is not found, it needs to be created.

We have the example of King David recorded for us showing us dedication and faith. King David was a busy King with a lot of responsibility, making sure everyone was being provided for and managing many nations. King David was rich and could have filled his life with worldly things, but he put God first in everything he did, and in 2 Samuel 22:2 David says, **"God is my rock"**.

Let us remember what we sing in Hymn 163, **"Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord to thee, take my moments of my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my hands and let them move, at the impulse of Thy love. Take my feet and let them be filled with messages from Thee."**

(A recording of the Adelpian Singers performing this hymn can be found by clicking on this link - <https://youtu.be/QMTI3wyLxZw>)

The importance of Ecclesial life – meeting together and supporting one another. CARING for one another!

We need to remember the ecclesial community is not man's idea, or even a Christadelphian idea, **it is God's idea**. When we are baptised, we become adopted family members (Galatians 4:5) God's children and "joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). God wants us to fellowship with each other, the ecclesia consists of God's chosen. John records the question, that he or she who loves not a brother or sister, how can he love God? (1 John 4:20). Love for our brethren and sisters and their company is a commandment from Christ and is our calling. Acts 2:42 and 46, show us examples of apostles meeting daily in their homes for teaching, fellowship, worship, eating meals, sharing the Lord's supper, and **praying together**.

Paul in Hebrews 10:24-25 instructs us to meet with one another, **so we can spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and all the more as we see the Day approaching**. As we see the day approaching and we stand on the border of our inheritance, we need to meet together and be encouraging one another, and to be walking faithfully, and worshipping God, by speaking about our faithfulness and salvation. In Hymn 360, we sing: "We come around God's word to learn together. How we can help and strengthen one another? To stand firm against the world around us **Christ came and showed us the way"**.

God has given us this opportunity of ecclesial life filled with his disciples which bring enormous blessing, it is a time when we can be refreshed by the Word of God, and refresh others while we wait for our Lord to return. Are we waiting with our brethren and sisters as we are instructed to do, showing our trust in God and His promises? We need to make sure that **we do not take our ecclesia for granted**, making excuses because we are unable to attend, or be there to support our brethren and sisters. The health of our ecclesia and our sharing of fellowship depends on

everyone's commitment to follow God's commandments and seeking every opportunity to meet with our God and each other. **We need to hold to our Lord's exhortation to endure to the end, and walk alongside our brethren and sisters, encouraging and spurring each other on.**

Are we at our workplace great employees, always diligently going to work each day, even if we feel poor or tired, even going the extra mile? **Are we always dependable to carry out our work and do assignments and do it with 100% dedication?** Do we have the same dedication towards our service to our God and ecclesia due to the reward, by God's grace, of everlasting life and a place in the Kingdom? Or do we find excuses not to attend a class or other ecclesial activities due to being tired, needing to do something else? **Do we make excuses**, like the slightest sign of pain or illness, although we understand that at times these are legitimate reasons for not attending? Perhaps we are all guilty of this, due to our busy life schedules. We need to be working endlessly to carry out work in the ecclesia willingly and faithfully.

Many ecclesias have three meetings per week, the breaking of bread, the public address or activity and mid-week bible class. These three activities only come to approximately 6 hours out of our 168 hours each week. Surely, we can give this amount of time to our God and ecclesia, and extra for other ecclesia activities. But since COVID there is a growing trend to not attend these three meetings, either due to being busy or the ease of live-streaming while sitting in your lounge chair at home. Surely it is a small sacrifice to organize the family or ourselves, so that on class night we can go to our hall to meet with our brothers and sisters? We need to make our attendance at Ecclesia activities a priority, which could involve things like getting the children to have baths earlier, making an easier tea, making sure that we leave work on time. Surely these small sacrifices in organising our time are a small price to pay for the privilege of being called to the truth and given the opportunity of everlasting life.

Meeting together brings enormous blessing, but we can feel at times we don't need to attend a class or meeting as we have had other fellowship through the week or are busy with other things. But this is selfish thinking, as we don't attend just for ourselves but also for our brethren and sisters, as when we attend a class, we quite often will have interaction with someone who has had a bad week or do not have others at home and they just need someone to talk to. We also need to remember when we go the extra mile for our ecclesia, we do it for our Lord, Matthew 25:40 NIV, **"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."**

How can we follow in Christ's footsteps?

We need to take time out of our busy schedules for our God, to meditate on His Word and thank Him for our blessing and ask for His wisdom and guidance through our journey. We can engage with God through prayer, attending the meetings, doing the daily readings, participating in bible study, or discussing the word of God with others. We need to be Christ like, and Christ was humble, obedient, kind, courageous, selfless, submissive, full of love, and dedication in His service to God.

We need to make prayer a priority in our life. We are told to pray to have eyes that see the best in our brothers and sisters, a heart that forgives each other, a mind that forgets the worst, and a soul that never loses faith in God. We are also told to pray for our brethren and sisters, for their spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being, and for them to have the strength and be given the comfort to face their journey while giving thanks to Him for the many blessings He has given us.

We need to give God total life devotion and our services, so we present ourselves wholly unto Him. By doing all to the glory of God, in everything we do, in return, by His grace, He offers us an infinite gift of eternal life, which is an endless, everlasting intensity of light and joy. He asks us to choose Him rather than the world upon every occasion, not as a matter of self-denial but of enlightened love and true preference. **We are reminded in 1 Corinthians 15:58, that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.** We need to show our commitment and devotion to God and our ecclesial life, with a positive attitude and love, without complaining or making excuses. We cannot just talk the talk, **we need to live it and give our time to God and our ecclesia**, as actions speak louder than words.

In Hymn 339 we sing, “Be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as we know our labor is not in vain”. This is how we need to live our lives so that we can be granted the privilege of a place in the Kingdom.

We need to separate ourselves from the world, as disciples of Christ, we should be in the world but not of the world (John 17:11,14-15). Separation from the world is an indication of our devotion to God. We are instructed to keep ourselves from evil. We need to show God that we are not part of this world, as we are meant to be strangers and pilgrims of this world, keeping ourselves from evil and unscriptural conduct. God demands our separation from wicked places, practices, and people. In Exodus 20:3 God says, **“Thou shalt have none other gods before me”**. As we know, **a god or idol is anything or anyone who takes the place of God** or keeps us from our ecclesia. It can be anything, an object, idea, philosophy, habit, occupation, sport, or person. God must be supreme in our lives, and our priority, and our way of life. We also need to remember that our God is a jealous God of what takes us away from Him and His ecclesia.

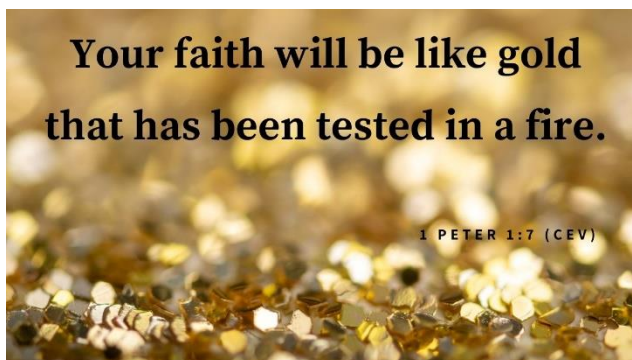
We have the example of Moses recorded for us showing us dedication and faith, Moses came from an Egyptian background; he grew up in Pharaoh's household which was as pagan as you can get. Moses could have access to any leisurely things, but he chose not to have them. (Hebrews 11: 24-26). Moses and David wanted their reward to come from God, a place in His kingdom and everlasting life, and this is something that we must want also.

We need to encourage and build up our brothers and sisters, as this is an important part of loving and caring for them. When we serve our brethren and sisters, we are also serving God. God has said that those who live with Him must love and service His children (Matthew 25:34-40), and Paul encourages us to follow Jesus' example by showing compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Christ also gave his time to heal the sick and to sit and talk to them, we can also spend our time and effort towards helping our brethren and sisters. We all need to take time out of our busy schedules each week to get to know our ecclesial members, by spending time and listening to them, so we can understand and know how to help and serve them. This could be a quick pop in and see how they are doing, or a phone call, picking something up from the shops, doing something to help, or just spending time with them.

Summary of lessons to remember

- We need to put our full faith and trust in God's hands, and let Him direct our steps, leaving our fears and anxieties to God, whatever the situation be. As 1 Peter 5:7 says - give your worries and cares to God as He cares for us. We need to remember to trust God's Word, His ability, and His strength. Just as COVID 19 affected the whole world we live in over the last few years, **so may another pandemic effect to us at some time in the future should our Lord not return soon.**
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- We need to remember that God answers our prayers, sometimes as we desire, but other times He gives us something better, or brings it in His own way or timing with the greater goal of our spiritual growth in mind, with COVID 19 he gave us time with our families and time to study his word. As in Ecclesiastes 3:1 it reports, there is an appointed time for everything, and there is a time for every event under heaven.
- **We need to thank God for our brethren and sisters and rejoice in each other.** We need to appreciate the blessing of meeting together, rather than thinking our ecclesia life is a burden, as when this privilege was taken away from us most of us felt the loss and loneliness. Being involved and part of an ecclesia helps us to grow more spiritually and encourage and help each other on our path to the Kingdom. We have a responsibility to our brethren and sisters, by bearing one another's burdens and serving one another.
- Even though we live in the world we are to be separate and unyoked from it, **the bible tells us even though we are IN the world, that we should not be PART OF the world.** Plus, we need to be free from idols which take us away from us worshiping God, which God gave us this opportunity for this through COVID lockdown, when all worldly places closed. Remembering the world chases after things that are only of temporary fulfillment, and God has a greater plan for us. We need to put God and our beliefs first in everything in our life, by giving God total devotion.
- Showing the unbelievers around us that our God and ecclesia family comes first in our lives, by living to the highest moral standards and being separate from the world and showing others around us that our dedication is to our Heavenly Father.
- We need to learn to use our time wisely, and not get caught up in our busy lives but make time and prioritise our worship and our ecclesia life, which involves our brethren and sisters. **We need to be creating time to surround ourselves with our ecclesia members and work together as one body to bring glory to God.** This involves attending ecclesia activities and checking in and spending time with our ecclesial members.
- We need to make the most of our time together; we need to put aside our selfish ambitions and idols and focus on His will, and His ecclesia, and His chosen disciples.
- **We also need to prioritise time praying to our Heavenly Father, reading His word, and encouraging others to do likewise.**
- **We need to revisit our involvement with our brothers and sisters in the ecclesia to prepare for the next event of world turmoil!**



Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:10-11 (NIV)

Your faith will be like gold that has been tested in a fire. **And these trials will prove that your faith is worth much more than gold that can be destroyed.** They will show that you will be given

praise and honor and glory when Jesus Christ returns. 1 Peter 1:7 (CEV)

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