Lessons Learned During Lockdown

Luke Hulley 18 August 2020



When God created me, He was not thinking 'long-distance runner', if you know what I mean? But when Covid lockdown regulations eased up in South Africa and we were allowed to go for a run between 6 and 9 am, I eagerly seized the opportunity. I then paid dearly for this liberty in aches and niggling joint problems thereafter, but I also gained a unique perspective from the experience.

> What if God has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see our lives clearly...?

The View

Early one winter's morning, as I was jogging across a bridge that traverses a vlei, I glanced to my left, and what I saw truly took my breath away. There was an incredible vista stretching from my viewpoint. I could see right across the vlei, leading all the way up to the majestic Table Mountain as its backdrop. I instinctively knew that I would never see this view the same way again. This perspective was only possible because the traffic had completely dried up (because of lockdown), leaving the air completely free of smog. This had coincided with the winter season, when we get those crystal-clear mornings with not even a cloud to smudge the sky. It was a

precious moment that I will savour for a long time.

But what if this is an analogy for the season that we are in right now? What if God has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see our lives clearly, with the same clarity I got to see that mountain? I'd like to suggest that He has.

The Ship is Sinking

If you have been a Christian as long as me, how many times have you heard it said (and said it yourself!), 'Don't store up your treasures in this life because this life is temporary and it can all disappear in a moment'? And yet we do it anyway, don't we? 'Don't put your trust in your job, in the economy, in the doctor.' And yet we do it anyway, don't we?

The Loss

And now, overnight, the carpet has been whipped out from under our feet by the Covid crisis. Our freedom to do all the fun things that we love, that make life worth living, has been taken away. No hikes in nature, no holidays by the beach, no visiting our friends, no golf, no surfing – all gone *poof*! Businesses into which people have invested blood, sweat and tears – gone *poof*! Whole economies have crashed, seemingly overnight. People have been dying like flies and there doesn't seem to be anything that our precious health-care systems can do for them.

The Lockdown Lesson

And what has all of this taught us? It has taught us that all the things that Jesus said about this life are all painfully true! This life really is like a flower – here today and gone tomorrow. Jesus taught us to constantly live with this awareness, but do we? Do we really? I don't think we do.

All those seemingly trustworthy boats in which we have put our faith are sinking, just as Jesus said they would. This presents us with an opportunity. We have an opportunity to once again put our trust where it should have been all along: in Christ.

> Our faith is in the fact that the future belongs to God.

Essential vs Non-essential

"Essential services" and "essential goods" are phrases that have become very familiar to us. How our jobs or goods are classified determines whether or not they will be allowed. But let us pause

and ask the question, ‘What does God consider essential?’

Does our value system truly reflect God’s value system? Or have we perhaps put too much value on things with which God does not bother Himself at all? What will last beyond Covid? Indeed, what will last beyond the expiry date of the planet that we live on? Consider these verses,

“Now we see but a dim reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. **And now these three remain**: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor 13:12,13)

Love

Do you remember the first day when we were allowed to go for a walk down the street after weeks of being locked in our homes? The streets were swarming with people and it felt like Christmas. The most remarkable thing of all was how complete strangers started greeting each other and appreciating each other like I have never seen before!

But this has happened in our church services too. We love each other and appreciate each other like we have never done before. Some Sundays felt like it didn’t even matter if we preached or worshipped, it was just so good to be with God’s people.

Isn’t this a little picture of what Jesus dreamed His church would be? Did it take a global pandemic to get us loving one another the way that we should? I think it did.

Faith

When God says that He is looking for faith, He is not just looking for momentary faith but a life lived in faith. But faith in what?

Our faith is in the fact that the future belongs to God. We believe that although this life is temporary, God has got us here for a reason. We believe that one day we will die but it will not be before God has accomplished His purposes through my life. We believe that because God is faithful, the only thing I need to fear is God Himself.

What if it took a global pandemic for the church to realise that we are on this earth to “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33) and that our time really is very short?

Hope

Never in all my days did I expect that in a crisis such as the one we are going through, the first thing people would panic-buy would be toilet paper! But can I say that hope is a resource which has become even scarcer that toilet paper. We have an opportunity right now as a Church to

“give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). Our hope is like a light within us, and people are curious about where it comes from.

And why do we have such hope? We have hope, as the Scriptures say, because we have a “living hope” (1 Peter 1:3). What does that mean? It means that because Jesus died and rose again, we have no reason to fear death because He will make us alive with Him. Our hope lies in the fact that Christ himself will make all things new. So even though this ship is sinking, our hope is in what comes after.

> We have been given a unique opportunity to see our lives within the perspective of eternity.

An Encouragement

My hope for us as a Church is that we will not simply count down the days till the end of Covid. Before we return back to ‘normal’, may we take serious stock of what kind of normal we would like to return to. We have been given a unique opportunity to see our lives within the perspective of eternity. Let us adjust the course of our lives accordingly.

Jesus has been very busy during lockdown, refining His bride and bringing us back to what is truly essential. May we let all of the dead branches that He has pruned off remain dead, and may we treasure and pursue those things that God truly values – faith, hope and love.