

Taking Control During COVID

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More than 100 days into COVID pandemic we continue to deal with unprecedented restrictions and for some of us, self-imposed isolation. For those of us who were accustomed to being in control of our daily comings and goings these adjustments are nearly unbearable. We're increasingly anxious and our frustration is growing.

We've all had to rearrange our lives. We've postponed and changed plans until we're sick of it. Regardless, we're still in a pandemic and people are dying with no cure in sight. The economy is tanking and we're watching businesses go under while our carefully planned retirement accounts evaporate. To top it off, people are rightfully protesting for equal rights they were assured of generations ago.

It feels as though we're watching our world disintegrate in front of our eyes.

There are dozens of similar stories in the Bible – numerous accounts about the children of Israel who were adrift, banished and separated from the protection and love of God. One of the most notable examples is when Moses guided the people of Israel out of their enslavement in Egypt, to the promised land, a paradise flowing with milk and honey.

In Exodus 6:7 God tells the people:

I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians.

In unimaginable ways, God made their freedom possible because the people of Israel were in covenant with Him. They'd agreed to be obedient to Him and His laws. Miracle after miracle enabled them to escape persecution and travel to an amazing place God had selected for his chosen people.

On the journey there, Moses went up to Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 commandments from God. While he was away, the people lost patience. They thought Moses was taking way too long and wondered if he had died. Like those of us enduring the pandemic, those children of God were ready for what they'd been promised – freedom. They were waiting for a long time

without seeing improvement in their situation. They'd been assured of a life in paradise – where was it?

In their exasperation, they made a golden calf to worship, turning their backs on the God who had saved them from Pharaoh.

Their punishment was swift and final. They were to wander aimlessly in the desert for another 40 years until the adult population had died off. Like most of us, the people found all sorts of reasons to complain, frequently disobeying God's instructions. Even during their estranged relationship, God's profound love for his children was shown by his daily provision of food.

God's love never faltered even though they challenged and rejected him. God's greatest desire was to be in a relationship with his children. It is not lost on me that right now, our country is in desperate need of being in a loving relationship with God.

Just as in the day of Moses, God offers his unending, abiding love to those who obey Him. It is our own actions which cause us to fall short of what God desires for us. Thankfully, the scriptures provide detailed road maps with directions on how best to be reunited with the one who first loved us.

2 Chronicles 7:14 offers clear instructions:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

As the days of pandemic drag by and the news becomes even more fraught with despair, we can make choices like those the children of Israel had to make. We can choose to feel lost and abandoned believing that all options are up for grabs. Or, we can decide that we'll obey God's claim on our lives. We can decide to:

- Greet each day with a prayer of thanksgiving that God is in control.
- Thank God for all the good things in life.
- Humbly ask God for direction and intervention.
- Pray for God's guidance and wisdom.
- Seek forgiveness where we've fallen short.

- Pray for people who are different than ourselves.
- Love others more than ourselves.
- See God's love in those around us.
- Be gracious to those who disagree with us.
- Seek a relationship with God every day.
- Pray for our country and our leaders.

These are just a few things you can decide for yourself each day. Perhaps one or more of these will give you a sense of control over your circumstances. Only you are in control of your relationship with God. Only you can decide if today is going to be a day filled with the joy of obedience as you seek his grace.

No matter your circumstance, God is always available, and His love never fails.

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For more of Bobbie's essays, visit her website at bobbiesmithbryant.com



Thanks to Charles Dunleavy (See Numbers 14) 05-01-2006

GOOD NEWS, JUST 40 LAPS AROUND THE WILDERNESS FOR DISOBEYING GOD ... BAD NEWS, EACH LAP TAKES A YEAR