



Pause for Prayer

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What are you doing to keep faith?

Every Sunday on our livestream service, our pastor's wife interviews someone in our church over Skype, and every Sunday that's one of the questions she asks them.

It's a great question, I think. It reminds me that though no one can snatch the sheep out of the Good Shepherd's hand, at the same time those who are his sheep will hear his voice and follow him, even when the way is steep or the valley is deep (and, let's face it, the terrain has been hard for many of us these past few weeks).

It reminds me that whenever and however we come out of this era of covid-19, none of us will be unchanged. Faith is a muscle, that can strengthen or weaken—and we'll come out of this time as stronger Christians, or as weaker ones.

It reminds me that I need an answer to that question. What am I doing to keep faith? What are you?

So Little Time

Some of you reading this are feeling your heart sink. You are more strung out than ever before. Maybe you've been ill. Maybe you're worried about vulnerable family members who might get ill. Maybe you're trying to do a job that may not exist much longer while simultaneously homeschooling kids who aren't making that particularly easy.



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Maybe you're tired of social media streams parading all the other families where they're learning Cantonese, raising money for the NHS, and producing artistic masterpieces (and that's just the toddlers) in a pristinely-kept home.

Maybe you can't get out of bed.

You really don't want another blog telling you to do a load of things you can't, or be a person you're not. I'm not doing that.

All I'll say to you is, Hold on. Some days, clinging on to your faith and keeping going through the day is a victory. Your faith-muscle grows stronger as it clings to God's promises when the burdens are heavy.

Plenty of us are facing those days right now. The one thing (bear with me – it's quick and easy) I'd encourage you to do is, whenever you have a shower, tell yourself the gospel, out loud if possible. Tell yourself that you have a God who loves you so much he came to this earth and he died for you and rose for you so that he could live with you eternally. Tell yourself he lives with you by his Spirit, and that every day he is leading you home. Tell yourself that though the way feels steep, he guides your step, and the destination is worth the journey.

A faith that clings on through a hard time is a stronger faith.

So much time

Some of you reading this have a lot more time than usual. Some of us can't do our jobs, can't go and see people, and there's a lot of day to fill.



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And there's only so many boxsets and zoom calls you can cope with. Others of us suddenly find we have evenings at home, and weekends empty of activities. And, in its own different way, that's as hard as having too little time.

But it's different in this way: that there is potential to use this strange season to push yourself spiritually, and the opposite potential of frittering the time away.

So, why not use the time that you have. End this lockdown knowing the Bible better. End it having learned to pray more. End it having read some more Christian books. End it having texted encouragements to more friends and posted evangelistic resources to more people. Your faith-muscle grows stronger when it takes advantage of circumstances to push itself.

I'm not saying that'll make this period easy. But it'll make the time worthwhile. And a faith that seeks to push itself whenever it can is a stronger faith.

Somewhere in between

Most of us, I guess, are veering between the busyness and the emptiness. Some days we feel overwhelmed and crushed. Some days we feel fine and positive. That's where I'm finding myself—up and down, with too little time in some ways and too much time in others.

So some days, we have time only to cling—and that's fine. And other days, we have time to read, to think, to push ourselves—and that's good.



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So, if today you're clinging, please don't read this and feel further overwhelmed. Maybe aim to rehearse the gospel to yourself each day. Try to pray your way through the day.

But if you sometimes have time to be push yourself a bit, why not take some proactive steps to do so? Which book of the Bible will you dig deeper into? Who will you reach out to with the gospel? Which area of Christian life are you going to really get to grips with? Would one of the titles we've got on sale help you to strengthen your faith in one way or another?

Clinging, or pushing, what are you going to be doing to keep faith?