

NOW WHAT?

What a blessing Easter was! Past tense? Was? Every year I ask the same question, now what? As I thought about this and our current life situation, I couldn't help but wonder about "now what" for 2020 and beyond. As we face new norms for social living, has "now what" changed for those who love God and trust Christ? Now what?

It takes on average 66 days / two months for things to become habits. Well, we are there, thanks to COVID-19. Social distancing, covering mouths, gloves, masks, no gathering, stay home, relationships over a screen, no hugs/handshakes and the list goes on. Some believe we will not return to handshakes and hugs given habits that have formed in the last two months. We have been asked to "keep our distance" and avoid connection. Easter, "now what?"

Acts 2:42-47

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

I am struck by how contrary the habits we are forming are to the church and to our call to share the good news. So in 2020, I believe we are being called to take Easter into our world in a contrary manner to the habits our society is forming because of COVID-19. "Now what," be contrary!

1. Don't Social Distance

"The believers were TOGETHER"

"They devoted themselves to fellowship"

No, I am not asking for a revolution and making a call to break "shelter in place!" I am asking each of us to figure out new and creative ways to be together and devote ourselves to fellowship. Being together helps us to be one and being one helps us to change the world. We must be contrary in our hearts and spirits and never accept social distancing as the new norm. We must hold out the hope of someday soon gathering together to praise, worship, and thank God for the community of believers. COVID-19 might be teaching distance, but Easter teaches us together, fellowship, and family of God.

2. Don't Wear Gloves

Again, not a revolution! But a hope! Michelangelo once said, "To touch is to give life."

A study showed that preterm babies who had 3 fifteen minutes of touch therapy every day for two weeks gained 47% more weight than those receiving standard medical treatment.

Touch also fosters trust and cooperation and safety, togetherness! Touch is economic as those who receive a literal “pat on the back” perform better in workplaces. I could go on with various studies and examples of the power of touch (sometimes, sadly, misused in negative ways) and our human need for touch. We cannot give up on the hope to be able to touch our fellow humans and express our true concern. Facetime meets a need, but not in the powerful need of human connection through touch. COVID-19 teaches gloves. Easter teaches us to reach out and touch somebody’s hand.

3. **Don’t Wear a Mask**

Do I have to say it again? :-) NO, not a revolution! :-)

Believers gathered together and they “praised God with sincere hearts.” Wearing masks cover our joy and stifles our message. We are called to be people who share the good news! We cannot form a habit of covering our mouths. We must continue to speak of the Easter message and the hope that it brings.

We must also be sincere in our message. We often wear masks to cover emotions. We must be honest, sharing our concerns, fears, struggles, joys, laughter, and more. Masks cover the beauty of the human experience and the power of God’s work within us. COVID-19 teaches wearing a mask, Easter teaches us to be open, vulnerable, honest, and share the hope of Christ!

4. **Don’t Hoard**

Do you have enough toilet paper, hand sanitizer, flour, and whatever else seems to bring security? This crisis has seen a lot of taking. A habit of getting what I need and getting 4 times as much, if I can. I don’t want to live in a society where this is the norm. Christ followers GIVE! “They sold property and possessions to give to anyone in need.” Wow, that sounds crazy! Our economy is in the pits, we have lost jobs, income, retirement, and dreams of our next purchase or vacation. All true, but God says GIVE, just as Christ gave it all for us on the cross. COVID-19 teaches us to hoard. Easter teaches us to GIVE!

5. **Connect with HIGH RISK People**

“Enjoying the favor of ALL people!” Who’s high risk in your life right now? I look around and see my mom, friends who have had cancer, senior citizens, homeless, even myself. COVID-19 makes that definition easy and the resulting action of stay away.

Well, the Gospel makes the same definition easy, high risk. Those who are far from God! But the action is the opposite, Go to these people! We are called to find those who are lost, lonely, hopeless and bring them the amazing story of God's love in Christ. I am sure you know who is spiritually "high risk" in your life and you should not avoid them but go to them with the message of Jesus. COVID-19 teaches us AVOID high risk; Easter teaches us seek out high risk.

So, I will say it again, Now what!? I would challenge us to not form COVID-19 habits, but Easter habits. Let's be contrary to this virus mentality and blaze a trail toward a new, creative, open, honest, welcoming, giving community that is Easter at its very best.