

 IGG Equip

Christianity and COVID-19

17 October 2020



Introduction

Discussion (5 minutes): What motivated you to come along this morning? What questions would you most like to be answered? If you'd like to, write them down for the Q&A later or post them on the Zoom chat.

Understanding the times: why is all this happening?

1. Pandemics are a symptom of the Fall

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it.” Romans 8:20 ESVUK

Question: Is COVID-19 a punishment from God?

Implications:

- a. Pandemics are a normal part of life in a fallen world

- b. Pandemics expose the folly of human idolatry

- c. Pandemics make us groan for the new creation

2. Pandemics are a sign of the End

“For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Romans 8:22 ESVUK

Implications:

a. Hope

b. Readiness

Discussion (15 minutes): How does it change the way you think about COVID-19 to put it into its biblical context? Why is it hard to remember that it is normal for life in a fallen world? What does it look like to ready for the End, and how does COVID-19 remind us to be?

Living by faith: how can we trust God in a pandemic?

- It's hard to have faith in a global pandemic.
- It's easy to have faith in the wrong things in a global pandemic.

1. Faith relies on facts not feelings

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1 ESVUK

- a. The nature of faith
- b. The object of faith
- c. The basis of faith

Implications:

- Faith is not about how you feel
- Faith is about who you trust

2. Faith wrestles feelings with facts

- i. We can tell God how we feel

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I take counsel in my soul
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?” Psalm 13:1–2 ESVUK

- ii. We can ask God for his help

“Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him”,
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.” Psalm 13:3–4 ESVUK

- iii. We can remember God's truth

“But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.” Psalm 13:5–6 ESVUK

Discussion (15 minutes): When have you found it hard to trust God during COVID-19? How does it help you to remember that faith relies on facts and not feelings? What would it look like for us to wrestle our fear, anxiety, doubt and anger with God's truth?

Being salt and light: how should we then live?

One big principle

Radical hope empowers sacrificial service for the good of others and the glory of God.

‘The object of hope is future. The experience of hope is present. And that present experience is powerful. Hope helps people get out of bed and go to work—now. It gives meaning to daily life, even locked-down, quarantined, stay-at-home life—now. It liberates from the selfishness of fear and greed—now. It empowers love and risk taking and sacrifice—now.’ – John Piper

“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16 ESVUK

“Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” 1 Peter 2:12 ESVUK

- The example of the early church of Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity*

Six practical applications

1. Seek to do good

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10 ESVUK

2. Obey the government

“Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.” 1 Peter 2:13 ESVUK

3. Honour your parents

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honour your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Ephesians 6:1–2 ESVUK

4. Welcome the weaker brother

- To the strong—don't stumble the weak!

- To the weak—don't judge the strong!

“...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you.” Colossians 3:13 ESVUK

5. Meet together

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Hebrews 10:24–25 ESVUK

6. Pray for all people

“I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” 1 Timothy 2:1–2 ESVUK

- Rachel Jones, *5 Things to Pray in a Global Crisis*

Discussion (15 minutes): How does the gospel equip us to take risks for the good of others and the glory of God? What would it look like to put into practice in your office, university and IGG group? Spend some time praying and write down any final questions.