Bob: This is Bob Lepine from FamilyLife Today. What we had originally planned to air today was an interview that we’ve done recently with our friend, Mary Kassian, talking about strong womanhood and what the Bible defines as the right kind of strong. I want to encourage you—that interview is available, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; and we’ll be hearing more from Mary this week.

But today, we are preempting our regularly-scheduled program so that we can talk together about what everyone is talking about right now; and that is, the coronavirus—COVID-19. How do we respond to what is going on in our world with wisdom and with faith? That’s our theme today.

I've got the president of FamilyLife, David Robbins, here with us. David, we’ve made decisions in recent days to respond to what’s going on. Some of the events that FamilyLife® holds regularly—we’ve decided to suspend for now.

David: Yes, it was not a decision we took lightly because we love investing in marriages and in families; but a necessary one because we want to be good neighbors and good citizens and do everything we can to help the community and help our nation respond.

We did cancel Weekends to Remember through the end of March. We will be evaluating, this week, how to continue to respond. Really, we're looking at a few things: we’re looking at local authorities and what they are saying in each state; we're looking at local churches and how they’re responding; and communicating with, obviously, venues that we’re at.

Bob: At this point, the concern is that healthcare providers can become overloaded if this takes off; so we want to minimize the exposure opportunities.

David: That’s right. Any event we do, we have people who travel from out of state to those locations. We want to play our part in helping hospitals not have the spread happen so fast that they have to intake too many at once.

Bob: You shared something with staff last week that I thought was significant about what God may be doing in our midst and how we need to stay alert to these things.
David: Yes, we gathered our staff on Friday morning. God had been speaking to me throughout [that] week of: “Listen to Me; seek My face; get on your knees/get on your knees for our nation,”—what He might be doing as, obviously, all of our lives are having to adjust.

Two things He put on my heart that I’ve been praying for—that I invited all of our staff to pray for and I invite you to pray for—one is that, over the next few weeks, there’s an opportunity to reclaim the home as the core operating unit in our society. In many communities, schools are being cancelled; that’s happened here in Little Rock. Travel restrictions are obviously abundant; and people will be around their table more often as kids sporting events, etcetera, are canceled. I think there's a great possibility of what God may want to do inside of a home.

I would just ask you to consider what God may be up to in your home and in the neighbors around you. We still can gather around a table with our neighbors; we can invite people over. I think it’s a moment and a season where, yes, we may not be able to gather in our church services and in events like a Weekend to Remember, but the body of Christ and the scattered nature of the body of Christ could show out for the glory of God. I’m praying that will be true.

The second thing is just I’m praying for a renewal in our country and around the world. In times of personal crisis and cultural crisis, there’s a spiritual sensitivity that is often birthed, and there are opportunities for the gospel. People come face to face with their finiteness, and I am praying that Jesus would make Himself known to many people. I think we have a great opportunity to, not only pray for that, but share the gospel in this moment, where there is both personal crisis and cultural crisis happening.

Bob: Revival does not typically happen in times of comfort and ease.

David: Yes.

Bob: This is not a comfort and ease. Maybe this is the revival many of us have been praying for; maybe this is the opportunity for us to see God do a great spiritual work in our nation and in our world. Thank you for that David.

This past weekend, as you mentioned, a lot of our listeners, who normally gather together in their churches for worship services, weren’t able to do that because services were cancelled. We cancelled our services at our church yesterday. Dave and Ann Wilson are in Detroit where, Dave, you canceled services at your church at Kensington yesterday.

Dave: Yes; we made the decision—as all of the churches in Michigan were mandated by our governor to—if you had a church over 250 people, you had to [cancel]. We did a
livestream to about 10, to 12, to 13 thousand people. Actually, we were able to gather as one big family and really meet with God in the middle of this time.

**Bob:** It’s important for us to stay spiritually connected with one another as we walk through what are anxious times for us.

**Dave:** Yes, I think it’s critical. You know, the passage that hit me was Psalm 46—which, boy, if anything speaks directly to our time—the Psalmist writes: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble; therefore, we will not fear though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.”

It sort of feels like every couple of minutes you get a notification that feels like the mountains are falling into the sea. All the sports leagues are cancelling their seasons; it just feels like the world’s chaotic and spinning out of control. Yet, in the middle of all that, there is a God, who is our ever present help in this trouble. It was a reminder for us—and for all of us in one big family—really, for the world to say: “There is a God; He can be trusted. He’s our refuge. He’s our strength. He’s our help.”

**Bob:** Ann, is this something that you find is personally fearful and you’re having to quiet your own heart?—or do you naturally respond with faith in moments like this?

**Ann:** I was spending time with God this morning, just praying and praying about this whole thing. It’s interesting—I’m kind of a glass-half-full kind of girl. As I was praying, I was asking God, “God, what’s Your perspective?” If we believe Romans 8:28—that “You work all things together for good,”—“Well, how can I make this good?” This is going to be this crazy idea. [Laughter] But I was thinking, “What if we flipped this?” Because we’re the light of the world, as believers, I thought: “What if we had the Corona Love Challenge?” [Laughter]

Because we have our kids home/many of us have our kids home from school, and moms are fearful. They’re feeling like they may go crazy themselves with their kids home. I thought: “This is an opportune time for us to be together, as families, to worship God together/to really Sabbath together.” I thought: “Oh my goodness! If my kids were home, I’d be reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* together.”

Then I thought: “What if we did a Love Challenge that we, once a day, we thought, ‘Who could we love today?’—maybe it’s someone in our home—maybe it’s a neighbor—maybe it’s an elderly couple that needs some help. What if we wrote notes to our neighbors or took cookies? Instead of being fearful, we’re trusting God; and we’re loving the people around us.”

**Bob:** You know, what you’re saying is *so good.* I was reading recently from a book called *The Rise Of Christianity,* written by Rodney Stark, who is a sociologist—who, at first, was not a believer—but the more he studied sociology, he came to faith. The
subtitle of his book was *How the Obscure Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominate Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries.*

Here’s what he said—he said, “There was a time of chaos in 165 AD, and another one about 100 years later, where there were diseases that sprang up in the Roman world; and between a quarter and a third of the Roman Empire died from these diseases.”

But he said: “In response to these epidemics, Christians willingly helped those, who were sick, more often than their pagan neighbors. There was a Bishop Dionysius, who in 260 wrote this/he said: ‘Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves, thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ; and with them, departed this life serenely happy. Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead.’”

I mean, you stop and think, “Why did Christianity flourish?”—because we have no fear in death; and we said, “We’re here to love and care for others.”

**Ann:** Oh that’s so good; see, *Bob,* it’s the Corona Love Challenge.

**Bob:** I think that’s a hashtag about to happen here. [Laughter]

**Ann:** Listen to Proverbs 3:25, that Dave just pulled up: “Have no fear of sudden disaster for the Lord will be at your side. Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to act.”

**Bob:** That’s so good.

I’m grateful; I know you guys have got your hands full, trying to care for a congregation there in Detroit; but thanks for taking a few minutes here and diving in as we’re trying to help listeners know how to navigate this in their own family.

**Dave:** What a day. Obviously, it’s a dark time; but it’s also a time for the community of God/the church. I always say this: “Let’s show up and serve. Let’s show up—let’s be the first ones at our neighbor’s door, saying, ‘How can we help?’ and then finding out what their needs are and let’s serve.” That’s what Jesus would do, and He wants to use us. What a day to extend the gospel in this time.

**Bob:** Yes, there are really three things we ought *not* do in the midst of all of this—these are actually commands from Scripture. The first thing we’re *not* to do is—we’re *not* to fear: “God has not given us a spirit of fear. He’s given us a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind,”—that’s 2 Timothy 1. We are *not* to be fearful people.

There’s a pastor in Wheaton, [Illinois], Mitch Kim, who says: “We’re used to having our lives under control in North America; but here, a small bug is humbling the most
powerful nations in the world. COVID-19 has exposed our illusion of control, and the loss of control is what’s sparking fear.” I think he’s right.

But the Bible tells us [Philippians 4: 6-7]: “Do not be anxious about anything”—this is a command of Scripture—“...in every situation, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” The promise is, when we do that: “The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

If you’re thinking to yourself, “I’m not feeling that peace,” well then, keep praying, and keep trusting, and keep hoping in God. Don’t be anxious about anything. As we’ve already said, we are the people who do not fear death. We sing this in our hymns on Sunday morning—we sing, “No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me.” We don’t fear death because death has been swallowed up in victory; death has no sting for us anymore. “The sting of death is sin. The power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” [1 Corinthians 15:56,57]. So we ought not be people who fear.

We should not be people who forsake one another. Hebrews 10 says, “Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together.” I know, in a lot of situations, we’re not able to gather together in our local churches; but that doesn’t mean we should be forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. We can still be connected to one another as members of the body of Christ. We can still be calling one another and saying: “What do you need?” “How can I help you?” “How are you doing?” We can be praying for one another; and to stay focused on: “How can we respond to this in a way that honors God?”

“Do not fear”; “Do not forsake coming together”; and then: “Forget not the benefits.” Psalm 103:1: “Bless the Lord o my soul; forget not all His benefits.” We should be remembering and rehearsing the goodness of God and the benefits of God in the midst of this situation. Even though things appear dire, here’s how the Bible helps us recalibrate trials and adversity—the Bible tells us that these things are “light and momentary afflictions that are producing in us an eternal weight of glory [2 Corinthians 4:17].” “The sufferings of this present age”—the Bible says—“are not worth comparing to the glory that’s going to be revealed to us [Romans 8:18].” And we need to remember that—in our difficulties/in our trials and our sufferings—God is at work, producing perseverance, and character, and hope.

“Do not fear”; “Do not forget the goodness of God in the midst of all we’re going through.”

Keep in mind that God is sovereign; He’s in control. We are to worship the God who is at work in our world. Colossians 1 [verse 16] says, “All things are created by Him, in heaven and on earth...”—now think about that—that means this virus is something God created. I know that seems like, “Why would God create something that brings illness?—that seems wicked and evil?” R.C. Sproul used to say this—I love this—he
said: “There is no maverick molecule if God is sovereign. If God is, indeed, sovereign over the whole world,”—he said—“there is not one single molecule in the universe that is running around loose, totally free of God’s sovereignty. If there is, then we have no guarantee that any single promise of God will ever be fulfilled.”

The sovereignty of God reminds us: “…all things were created by Him and all things were created through Him…He is before all things; in Him all things hold together” [Colossians 1:16,17]. Even when there are viruses on the loose, God is still in control. He is in sovereign control over the events of our world; and we need to turn to Him, and cry out to Him, and find our hope in Him.

We also need to be suffering together. We’ve talked about the importance of staying connected with one another; Galatians 6 says, “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” We have a responsibility—when there are people in need: when there are people around us who are suffering, whether it’s family members; kids who are anxious or afraid; people in our church, who may contract the virus—we’re to bear one another burdens. If one member suffers, all suffer together.

The Apostle Paul, when he was giving his farewell address to the people in Ephesus, he said, “I’ve shown you in every way by laboring like this that you must support the weak; remember the words of Lord Jesus, ‘It’s more blessed to give than to receive’ [Acts 20:35].” In this time of suffering, we need to be focused on serving and how we can bear one another’s burdens together.

We also need to be reflecting on what God is up to—spending time, like Ann was talking about—in prayer with the Lord, saying, “God what are You up to in the midst of this?” Ecclesiastes says: “It’s better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting, for it’s the end of all men and the living take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter.” These are reminders that, in these kinds of times, we should be pondering/we should be saying: “What’s God up to? ‘There’s a season for everything. A time to be born and a time to die; a time for laughter and a time for sorrow.’ Where do we find God in the midst of this?” This should be a time of reflection.

The good news is we don’t have sporting events to distract us; right? There’s a lot that would normally amuse us, and some of our amusements have been taken away. Maybe, instead of amusing ourselves, we should turn our attention back to the Scriptures and back to God and His purposes in this world.

We’ve been told to maintain social distancing. We’re supposed to keep three to six feet so that we’re not exposing one another to this virus or to risk; but God says, “Draw near to Me and I will draw near to you.” It’s interesting—in James 4:8, where it says, “Draw near to Me and I’ll draw near to you,” the next thing it says is, “Cleanse your hands.” I don’t think that’s telling you to put Purell® on before you draw near to God. Cleansing your hands is a symbolic way of cleansing your life and making sure your life is clean and holy before the Lord. “Purify your hearts”—it goes on to say—“you who are double-
minded.” We ought to be drawing near to God, and we ought to be cleansing our hearts and our hands before the Lord.

Keep in mind, there’s an open door here for the gospel. First Peter 3:15 says, “We should be ready at all times to give a reason for the hope that is within you.” My first question is: “Do people see hope in you?” “Are you reflecting that you’re hopeful in the midst of these dire times, or are you anxious and fearful and troubled?” We should be people, who are hopeful in the midst of this trial. If you find your heart being overwhelmed by fear and anxiety, do what David says to do in the Psalms—he said: “Why so anxious, oh my soul? Why so downcast? Put your hope in God.”

Strengthen yourself with hope; and when others see the hope in you, be ready to give an answer: “Here’s why I have hope in me, because I have no fear in death—because God is in control; because Jesus is on the throne—and I can trust in Him.” As Dave said, “Even when the mountains are falling into the sea, my hope is in God,”—that’s what Psalm 46 says.

When Paul was in prison, he said: “Pray for us that God might open a door for our message that we could proclaim the mystery of Christ. Pray that I might proclaim it clearly as I should [Colossians 4:3].” Pray that God would give you open doors for the gospel with your neighbors, with your kids, with people who need encouragement and hope.

This virus could cause people, who are not spiritually-minded among us, to, all of a sudden, begin to ponder mortality/to ponder whether there is a God, who is in control. When people start to feel out of control, they start to look around and go, “Where do I find hope and security?” We can be people, who are proclaiming the mysteries of Christ in the midst of this season.

I got an email from a friend recently. He’s written to his neighbors, so they’ve got an online—I don’t know if it’s a GroupMe, or Neighborly, or something—but he’s got all of his neighbors’ email addresses. He wrote to them and said: “Hey Neighbors—this Corona thing—it’s getting crazy; right? I’ve been thinking about how some of you, here in the neighborhood, are elderly or maybe fearful of getting out of the house right now, even to go shopping for groceries. If that’s you—if you’re trying to avoid human contact—we’d like to help. You provide the credit card or the cash and a grocery list and my wife and I will run to the store and pick things up for you and drop it off on your porch. Seriously, we’re commanded to love one another; so it’d be a privilege to help you during a time of need. If we can do that, just email me.” Reaching out like that to our neighbors—it’s a great way to connect. It’s a great way to give evidence of the hope that’s in you.

C.S. Lewis, 70 years ago, was writing on the subject of how to live in the atomic age, when people were concerned about the atomic bomb. He said, “I’m tempted to reply, ‘Well, you live the same way you would live in the 16th century, when the plague was
visiting London almost every year; or as you would’ve lived in Viking times, when raiders from Scandinavia might cut your throat at night.”

He said, “If we’re all going to be destroyed by the atomic bomb, let that bomb, when it comes, find us doing sensible and human things: praying, and working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting with our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep, thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies; a microbe can do that,”—interesting that he would add that—“but they need not dominate our minds.”

Here’s the last thing I’ll say: “We should be people who exude joy.” Joy is not an option for Christians; it’s a command—Philippians 4 [verse 4]: “Rejoice in the Lord”—what?—“always; again, I say rejoice.” First Thessalonians 5 [verses 16-18]: “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.” Romans 12 [verse 12] says, “…rejoice in hope; be patient in tribulation; be constant in prayer.”

I saw a tweet yesterday, where somebody said earlier: “I witnessed a woman yelling at a grocery store employee, because there weren’t carts available. Being mean to people in situations like that—who are exhausted, overwhelmed, and overworked—that’s a cardinal sin.” We should be people, who are kind, who are joyful, who are patient. Don’t hide the joy of the Lord under a bushel; be prayed up and then connect with people in our world with confidence, with joy, with patience, with hope.

Remind yourself—we’ve got, online at FamilyLifeToday.com, many of these Scriptures that we’ve shared here on the program today—you can go and download it. Some of the quotes we’ve shared here today are available—things you can share with your neighbors or with people in your family. We’ve also got a link to the message that Dave Wilson gave yesterday at Kensington Church from Psalm 46. If you’d like to listen to Bible teaching on this, you can go and there’s a link available there. There’s a link available to the message I gave to our church, here in Little Rock, yesterday.

We need to be renewing our minds with the truth of God’s Word in the midst of this situation. Again, go to FamilyLifeToday.com; there are links to articles and resources that we’ve made available for you there. We want to help you during this time.

We’re going to continue with regular programing throughout the week. Again, online, there’s a link to what we had originally scheduled for today, an interview with Mary Kassian—a great interview on what it looks like to be a strong woman—the right kind of strength. We will continue that conversation with her throughout the week.

Thanks for connecting with us today; it’s good to be able to visit like this. I hope this has been helpful for you. Let me just pray as we close.
Father, would You comfort the hearts of those, who are anxious/who are fearful? Would You help all of us to have a renewed confidence and strength in Your power, and in Your protection, and in Your provision for us? Help us not to be fearful, not to forsake one another, and not to forget Your goodness and Your benefits.

We trust You and we love You; and we find our hope, and our strength, and our joy in You. We pray these things in the powerful name of Your Son, our Lord Jesus. Amen.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, for his help with this special broadcast. Also, a special thanks to Jim Mitchell, who helped us with today’s program; our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, and our president, David Robbins, I’m Bob Lepine. We’ll see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas; a Cru® Ministry. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

We are so happy to provide these transcripts to you. However, there is a cost to produce them for our website. If you’ve benefited from the broadcast transcripts, would you consider donating today to help defray the costs?

Copyright © 2020 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.