Bob: And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us on the Tuesday edition. This is the virtual edition of *FamilyLife Today*, as we are not side by side as we normally are; but we’re separated as we’re supposed to do.

Dave, I think this is a time when all of us are adjusting to a new normal. We don’t know how long this normal is going to be the new normal. All of us are having to be reminded, regularly, of what we know is true; because we forget, or we doubt, or we get distracted. Those reminders are important, aren’t they?

Dave: Yes; I mean, I have to tell you—I wake up every morning, and the first thing I want to do—and I usually do this—is go to the Word of God; but my phone opens up and notifications are *waiting* for me, just catch up on what’s happening in the world. It’s pretty much bad news. I have to tell you—I’ve found myself almost depressed. I was very discouraged, scared, fearful, worried about economy, future, the church. I’ll tell you—I’ve *never* experienced anything like it; I don’t think any of us have.

Bob: Yes.

Ann, it’s one thing for us to have to try to figure this out for ourselves—but then, when we’re leading a family and we have kids involved, and we’re thinking, “I have to help *them* make sense of this, and I’m not sure I’m making sense of it myself,”—you’re talking to a lot of moms, who are trying to figure out that new rhythm; aren’t you?

Ann: Yes; I think it’s hard, too, because we may be feeling anxious and scared; and I think our kids pick up on those things.

Bob: Yes.

Ann: They read us; and they see it, and they feel it.

I agree with Dave—even with young kids, maybe they’re around you all the time—but even to play worship music.

The Word for me right now is the most important thing in my life; it’s my stronghold and my anchor. I tell you—when I’m not in it, I can just go to bad places. I think even...
memorizing Scripture with our kids; maybe singing some praise songs together; and teaching them, “This is how I get my mind stayed on Christ.” I think those practices could be really essential, even in this time.

**Bob:** We’re getting some help this week in trusting in the Lord and understanding what God is up to in the midst of the coronavirus from Dr. John Piper. John, welcome again to *FamilyLife Today.*

**John:** Thank you. It’s an honor to be here.

**Bob:** You have spent the better part of the last couple of weeks praying, and meditating, and writing, and thinking about how we can look at and think rightly about our current moment, and about the coronavirus, and all that we’re living through in these days. The audiobook and the e-book of what you’ve written are available on our website at FamilyLifeToday.com for any of our listeners who would like to go and download those; they are available for free. The printed edition of the book will be available here in a few weeks, and there’s information available on our website if listeners would like to order copies of this book.

Let me just say—I think this is a book, not just to get and read for yourself, but this is the kind of thing I want to be handing out to neighbors/I want to be passing on to others, who are asking spiritual questions in this moment in a way that I haven’t seen people asking spiritual questions in the last decade.

John, speak to that. This does seem to be an unusual moment for us to be engaged evangelistically, at least, in America; do you think?

**John:** Yes, I think when people *feel* vulnerable, they are in touch with reality; because they *are* vulnerable. We are not God, and can feel like God when all is well. I would say God is helping people feel lost, helping people feel desperate, helping people feel like they really are; in other words, it’s a reality check.

We’re always vulnerable. I mean, just think of it: I go to bed at night, and I lift up my arm like this, and take my pulse and think, “Boom, boom, boom”—that’s pretty fast right now; I’m excited with you guys—[Laughter]—I take it and think, “Any one of those/any one of those could just be my last, just like that!” I have zero control over that; isn’t that amazing?!”—amazing!

Nobody/who does that?—who pauses, feels vulnerable, feels desperate, knows they’re going to meet their Maker any minute? Are they ready?—no, they’re *not.* Let’s get them ready!—“He sent a Savior.” “I’m going to embrace the Savior. I’m going to sleep in peace and get rid of all my guilt and all my condemnation. Yes! Now, I can sleep!” Who does that?!
But now, you don’t have to take your pulse; you just have to look out the window: “My pulse is gone! This city’s shut down. What’s God up to?” He’s up to a reality check. When we speak to people, I would think it’s the most natural thing in the world to say, “Wow, easy to be afraid; isn’t it? Makes you think about God; makes you think about death; makes you think about eternity; doesn’t it?” So yes, it’s a golden opportunity.

You know, when 1 Peter 3:15 is quoted in good times—you know, “When people ask you a reason for the hope that is in you”—most of us feel kind of weird, because nobody does—

Bob: Yes.

John: —right?! [Laughter] Why don’t they?—because everybody’s fine.

That text was spoken into persecution and suffering. If you’re in the middle of suffering and persecution—or suffering and disease—and your hope is strong, and your joy is undaunted, and you’re serving other people, then people might begin to say: “Hmm; hmm. What are you hoping in?—like you think this is going to turn around in a few weeks? You think the economy’s going to come roaring back and all your 401(k)s are going to be restored?”

You say, “No, that’s really not what I’m thinking.” Then you can say the reason for the hope that is in you.

Ann: One of the things you say in your book, John, is that God is calling us to repentance while there’s still time. What does that look like?

John: Repentance, metanoia in the Bible, means “change of mind/change of heart.” It’s a transformation; it’s a turnaround. Its flipside is faith; or I would say this: since Jesus is the one who used that more than anybody in the New Testament, what were the two big alternatives to that?

One was: “Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength”; and the other was: “Whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is unworthy of Me. Whoever loves mother or father more than Me is unworthy of Me.” Jesus is saying, “Love God with all your heart; love Me more than you love anybody.” Those are the alternatives to unrepentance. I think the answer is, Ann, that repenting means bringing your life into alignment with the infinite value of Jesus.

When people get to the point, where Jesus and His love in their lives is better than health and better than life, they have now come to the goal of repentance. I think that’s the essence of what God is calling for—that’s my prayer. When I bow in prayer, which I did again this morning, I ask God, “Oh, God, grant that millions of people would be stunned out of the slumbers of unbelief and brought into the experience of seeing the
beauty and the glory, the sufficiency, the worth of Jesus Christ, and bring their whole life into alignment with His infinite worth.”

**Bob:** You preached a sermon years ago—I don’t know if you remember—you were preaching on Matthew 6. You said in that sermon, “I wake up anxious virtually every morning. For whatever reason, it’s a very real experience that I hate and have to deal with every day.”

I’m wondering if that’s still true for you—if it’s an increased anxiety that you’re experiencing in *these* days—and what you do with your own anxiety, because we’re all feeling it right now.

**John:** Yes, I think that’s a thorn that I’m going to take to my grave. [Laughter] I think it’s a flaw/I think it’s a character flaw, just like everybody has different kinds of flaws; and one of mine would be a proneness to *feel* guilty or *feel* anxious.

In answer to your question, coronavirus has not made that worse; because that’s just frankly *not* where my anxieties come from. I’m not prone to be anxious about dying, or about sickness, or about the world coming to an end, or about America becoming a footnote in the history of the world—those do not cause me to be anxious.

What causes me to be anxious is the possibility that I may not be a Christian—that I might be *take*that everything I’ve ever done might be a farce—those are *horrible*, *horrible* thoughts; right?

**Bob:** Yes.

**John:** Nevertheless, my warfare is the same, I think, as everybody’s. I take heart from the fact that the Bible says, “When I am afraid, I will trust in You,”—not—“Before I fear, I will trust in You; and therefore, I will never fear.” I mean, we’re not supposed to be afraid; it’s a sin to fear if there’s a promise that we don’t have to be afraid. And yet, everybody’s afraid; and the Bible this is so clear: “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You.” That is a *rhythm* of warfare that happens to every single one of us.

Paul says, at the end of his life—this is just so encouraging to me—“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of glory waiting for me.” And it’s going to be given to everybody else who loves the appearing of the Lord.

Well, I think what that means is: “Till the day he died, he was fighting for faith,”—that’s where the fight is—every day, all day long, we *fight for faith*. I think the *way* we fight is by the Word of God, and the Spirit of God, and prayer. We take promises: we preach them to ourselves; we call down the Holy Spirit by prayer upon those [promises], that the eyes of our hearts would be opened to see what is the hope of our calling, and the greatness of our inheritance, and the *power* at work in those who believe.
God comes/He sweetly comes in the midst of our early-morning or late-night anxieties; and He takes those promises like a balm, and they break over us. They break over us with the peace that passes all understanding.

Bob: That’s so good.

Ann: I wanted to ask you, and it probably goes along with what you just said: “As we talk to our kids, who are fearful or who are anxious—who are/maybe they’re in high school or middle school—questioning God’s goodness, how do we help them understand God’s goodness and love in the midst of this pandemic?”

John: Well, if my grandchildren could visit me—[Laughter]—they came over the other day, but they didn’t come in the house—my answer is: “If I had kids at home, I would be telling them stories from the Bible, and then some from church history, but especially the Bible—stories in which it is crystal clear that God is sovereign; God is good; God is wise; God does not keep us from pain/He does not keep us from hard times—He brings us into them in order to do good.

Then you tell them stories. Here are the stories I would tell them:

I would tell them the story of Joseph in the Old Testament, right? Thirteen years—I would actually graph it—I drew a graph of this one time for my church of how horrible life became for Joseph. Sold into slavery, lied about, left in prison; and after 13 years, the reason becomes clear: he’s going to be made vice-president of Egypt and save the people of God from starvation. He didn’t have a clue that’s what God was doing! For all those years, he had no—I think kids will take hold of that and love that.

Jesus is, of course, the most important one to tell kids. I remember one time somebody asked a group, “Who killed Jesus?” They said: “Pilate killed Jesus,” “The soldiers killed Jesus,” “No, the crowds crucified Him. They killed Jesus.” He says, “No, His Father killed Him,”—I mean, jaws dropped—“Wait, wait, wait.”

“It was the Lord who bruised Him; it pleased Him to put Him to grief” [Isaiah 53:10].

Bob: Yes.

John: When you look at your kids, with their jaws dropped, and you say: “He did it for us! He did it for us! He raised Him from the dead, and He reigns in heaven today! All that horrible experience was planned, scripted by God in the Old Testament, for His Son to suffer and die.”
Then I would bring it right into their lives with Romans 8:32: “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, will He not, with Him, freely give us all things?” You say to your kids: “What are the ‘all things’ that God will give us since He didn’t spare Jesus? He promises to give us all things because He didn’t spare Jesus.”

Then they give out their answers; and you say, “Let’s look at the verse that follows.” The verse that follows is: “What can separate us…? Can tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness…?” And then you get this word, “No.”

“…we are being killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered,”—that’s one of the things He gives us. While your kids are saying, “How’s that a gift?” you say, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” We have to teach our kids the radical understanding of the sovereignty of God in the midst of suffering: that God plans painful things for His children for their good. If they don’t have that category, they’ll probably give up on the faith.

Bob: That’s not just our kids; I think all of us need to be reminded just of that.

John: We’re all like little kids! [Laughter] We’re just desperate little kids: “Please, Daddy; please help me understand what’s going on.”

Bob: Yes.

Dave: John, talk to my neighbor: he’s scared to death; he doesn’t believe in God; he thinks God is the cause of all this evil in the world; and he wakes up, stricken with fear. I get to walk across the front yard and stand six feet away; and I get to share some words; because he’s asking questions, even though he’s mad and he’s scared. What would you say?

John: So much of what I would say would depend on what I know about him, and what we’ve said before, and what he’s looking like and feeling like right now. But I think, since he’s thinking about God’s being a bad God—not denying that He is God—I would probably go to the bigger issue than the world’s issue of suffering and say:

You know, in God’s mind, a thousand years is as a day, and a day is as a thousand years; and eternity is going to be very long. You and I both are going to be there very soon, even if this pandemic goes away tomorrow; we’re going to die, and we’re going to spend eternity somewhere.

God is a God that is just and merciful. He has shown His justice in judgment and He has shown His mercy in sending Jesus into the world. I want to spend eternity with you, and there is one way that we can be together in this; and that is for you to receive Jesus as
your Savior and Lord and the treasure of your life. That’s how good God is—that He would suffer/what [He on] the cross suffered.

I’d go there; and in a sense, I would deflect the other issues. Now, if he wants to circle back, I’m happy to do that; I have all kinds of biblical things to say. I think you can build out from the cross, and from the core of the gospel, to those other things; because God oversaw the crucifixion of His Son, which was worse than the coronavirus. If He oversaw the crucifixion of His Son, which is worse than the coronavirus, than God can be a good God, even in overseeing the coronavirus.

So much of what I would say to people, in a situation like that, is going to depend on every moment: how they’re responding, what they’re looking like, what they’re saying; but that would be my guess of how I would do it.

Bob: John, we have just been through the celebration of the resurrection of Christ, as the church, around the world. This is a unique season to be reflecting on His resurrection and the hope of the gospel. How should this recent celebration of the resurrection encourage us and inform us to live in the midst of the coronavirus this week?

John: Well, the Bible makes explicit the connection between the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of believers. “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also.” I think, at this moment, when we all feel our mortality more than we usually do, it’s perfect to say, “We just celebrated Easter; in Christ, Easter is going to happen to every single person that believes.”

Make that connection for people—and the opposite connection—“If you reject Christ, you enter into eternity without Christ. If you embrace Christ, then your body is raised from the dead; you’re given a glorious body like His glorious body—Peter says in 1 Peter 3:21—and you live with Christ in joy forever and ever. The line between Easter—or the resurrection of Jesus and His triumph over death—that line to our hope and our resurrection is explicit, and clear, and unbreakable in the Bible. We have hope for our resurrection precisely because Jesus was raised from the dead.”

I think it is right to draw people’s attention to eternal hope, not just temporal hope. If you were to ask me, “Should we care about people’s temporal wellbeing as opposed to their eternal wellbeing?” the sentence that I have used now for ten years is: “Christians care about all suffering, especially eternal suffering,” or “Christians care about saving all life, especially eternal life,” or “Christians care about all injustice, especially injustice against God.” I think it’s right to draw people’s attention, in the midst of temporal suffering, to eternal hope.

You know, when Christians back in the plagues, especially the first two centuries, became risk-taking, loving caregivers for those who were dying when nobody else
would, the reason that made such an impact on the world is two reasons, not just one. One reason was they had answers to people's biggest questions, and the other reason was they were willing to risk their lives to bring people some measure of relief.

The answer they had was: “You know, if you die in the next few days, I can tell you how to be happy forever in God. There is a way that God has made for you to come home to Him, not as an enemy and a judge, but as a friend.” That news made a big difference! I mean, people know when there’s no more hope in this world; and if the only hope you have to offer people is this world, then you don’t have a very good message.

**Dave:** That is the reason the Easter story is the greatest story of all time.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dave:** It gives resurrection power to people that have no power, to have joy they could never manufacture in this world, to have life they could never manufacture in this world. What a grace-giving, life-giving message we have to offer! We have the answer, and everyone is looking for that answer; so let’s use this opportunity to bring that to the world.

**Bob:** John, you’ve given us a tool to be able to help do that with this book that you’ve written.

Thank you for the last two days. They have been an encouragement and full of hope for me; I’m sure for our listeners. And thanks for the book. We’re grateful to have you here on *FamilyLife Today*.

**John:** Thank you. I’ll pray that with you—that God will break into many people’s lives.

**Bob:** Let me just encourage our listeners once again: your book, which is called *Coronavirus and Christ*, we’re making that available free for *FamilyLife Today* listeners. You can go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, and you can download the audiobook or the e-book. The print edition of this book is going to be available here in a couple weeks. There’s information on our website about how you can order a copy of the print book once it’s available; but if you’d like to get the audio book or the e-book now, it’s available for free.

Thank you, Dr. Piper and the folks at Desiring God, for making this available for *FamilyLife Today* listeners. We’re grateful for that. Find the link on our website at FamilyLifeToday.com so you can get the audiobook or the e-book for free.

There’s also a link on our website that will give you information about other resources we’re making available, here at FamilyLife®. FamilyLife TV, a weekly presentation that’s available online; you can find that at FamilyLifeToday.com. Our team has been putting
together resources to help your family make the most of this season of confinement and social distancing.

I know, every couple of days, folks are looking for new resources/new things to do to engage with the kids. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com; there’s a link there to what we’re calling “Not Cancelled,” because family is not cancelled; loving your neighbors is not cancelled; there’s a lot that’s not cancelled in the midst of the coronavirus. Again, go to FamilyLifeToday.com; and all the information you need is available there.

Now, tomorrow, we want to talk about the importance of friendships: healthy, thriving friendship relationships. We live in a culture that is chronically lonely. Kelly Needham is going to join us to talk about how we deal with loneliness and how we pursue friendships, which are important now than maybe ever; right? We'll talk about that tomorrow. I hope you can be with us for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

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