

Quarantine?

Before getting married I lived the life of a bachelor. Many days I spent by myself, cooking meals, eating, watching television, going to the movies, etc. Occasionally someone would ask if I was planning on going somewhere for vacation. Have you ever gone on a vacation or ballgame or movie by yourself? Some may have done those things alone, but they are not as much fun. The human experience of sharing events is powerful and brings satisfaction. That is one reason the call for self-quarantining and social distancing is hard for many to do.

Solomon speaks of the positive benefits of being with someone. "Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12) God, in the Garden of Eden, said it was not good for man to be alone, Genesis 2.18.

There are times Jesus tells us to be around people and use our influence for good. "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16) Salt in the box does nothing except take up space. For it to do anything it must encounter something. Once that happens then it can do a lot such as; enhance flavor, purify, preserve, melt ice, pick up a dropped egg, soothe a bee sting, clean up oven spills, set color (I must admit to googling the uses of salt for some of the things on this list). Light illuminates and reveals what is there.

Christians are to encounter people and be useful for the cause of Christ. We

can be godly examples in speech, conduct, manner of dress, good works, teaching the Gospel. Christianity is not a stay in the box religion. Dorcas was known for her good works in acts 9.36. Widows taken in their number were to be over sixty years of age but also “well reported for good works” (1 Timothy 6.10a). Jesus did not tell his followers to build monasteries and isolate themselves from the world.

At the same time there are passages in the Bible warning us about the influence of others and even telling us to not “fellowship” those actions.

In Leviticus 13 and 14 the subject of leprosy is addressed. There were various types of leprosy and each one was bad. Different tests were given to determine if someone had leprosy. "Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' "He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp. (Leviticus 13:45-46). We can relate to this today due to the coronavirus and the call to quarantine ourselves. They were to isolate the person with leprosy in order to protect everyone else. We can understand that physically, but it also applies spiritually.

One of the problems Israel had was the desire to be like the other nations. They wanted to have a king and eventually they wanted to worship the idols of those nations. God wanted them to be his own special people, but they were influenced by those around them and became ordinary sinners.

There are various New Testament passages warning Christians of the contagious nature of sin. “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (1 Corinthians 5:6). The church at Corinth had a brother living with his father’s wife and was sitting idly by, doing nothing. Paul’s point is others will be encouraged to sin and think it was no big deal.

Jesus warned his disciples of the “leaven of the Pharisees”, Matthew 16.6. Verse twelve specifically mentions the “doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees”. Luke 12.1 the “leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” If

the warning is not heeded, careful we can be influence by bad ideas, doctrines, and practices.

One of the reoccurring themes in the various letters to places like Rome, Ephesus, Colossae, etc., was the influence of idolatry. Many Christians came out of false worship of gods and were tempted to go incorporate some of their previous practices into Christianity.

Still others came out of Judaism and wanted to keep the Sabbath observance, dietary requirements of the Law of Moses, and circumcision. To which Paul said, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9)

The solution in each of these situations was to "quarantine" oneself from those doctrines and practices. It reminds us again of the need to live in the world but not be of the world. Dennis Tucker