

As we embark on this journey together in a COVID-19 landscape, I hope to reflect each day on what God might have to say in this situation. Today we begin with the idea of "distance".

*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity. - Prov. 17:17*

"Social Distancing" is the new buzzword in our culture and around the globe. The idea obviously is that distance protects us from contagion. Someone next to us can sneeze, spit, or even breath in our mouths, nose, or eyes and pass this coronavirus on to us. Someone 6 feet away cannot. Distance protects.

I'm a strong proponent of physical distancing. I agree that this distance can protect. We are not Jesus to miraculously touch lepers and not worry about contagion. Barring a full on direct call from God to do so, we need to keep physical distance from one another during this pandemic. "Distancing" protects. But I'm curious about the first word, "social". Social's first definition is "related to the organization of society" and this is the meaning implied in "social distancing". But I worry about the second definition, "needing companionship and therefore best suited to living in communities." It is this distancing that is downright dangerous. Physical distancing protects. Relational distancing isolates and wounds.

God has called us to be social animals, to "live in communities". And in times like this when these communities cannot be physically close, we need to work extra hard to be relationally close. Tomorrow we'll talk about why this relational distancing is really hard on the best of days let alone in a crisis, but for today, let's just look at how we maintain safe physical distancing while not giving in to our natural tendency for relational distancing. It's as easy as a phone call. Or a text. Or an email. Or even a note in the mail.

My best friend Greg has been one of my closest friends since middle school. Yet Greg has lived in Mexico for the last 20+ years. And we don't communicate much. So how have we maintained relationship? While we don't communicate much, we DO communicate. Each year we get together for a few days. We email once in a while. We send cards occasionally. Relationships continue and even grow when we take time to communicate.

So during this time in history, please, please, please keep communicating. Practice "physical distancing" without "relational distancing". Call the people you don't get to see regularly. Email friends far and wide. Use Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to actually connect like they were created to rather than just reading every thought every person has ever had. And for Pete's sake write your parents, or your kids, or your friends.

Trust God, everyone. And be wise.

Questions to consider...

1. How have you relationally distanced from others in the last few weeks?
2. Who is the first person you think of reconnecting with?

3. Take a minute right now and write a note to a friend. Then sometime soon, send it in the mail.