

Door of Opportunity

“...I have placed before you a door that no one can shut”... (Revelation 3:8)

In 1994, we in the San Fernando Valley experienced the Northridge Earthquake. During that time, walls came down (literally too) between neighbors. Neighbors were looking to one another for help and assistance. We had neighbors come to our home to use our shower, because their water was shutoff. We also provided sleeping bags and firewood for those who were sleeping in a nearby park, because they were fearful of future aftershocks if they were in their apartments.

Today, with the Coronavirus, we have another opportunity (kairos) to be there for our neighbors. This global crisis is upsetting our normal activities, but I see the Lord in all of this and what He has for us. First, I want to recommend that you read a letter that I posted on the Valley Vineyard Facebook page. The post was from a Christian wife who lives in Wuhan, the epicenter of the Coronavirus in China. They were in lockdown for 48 days at the time. I believe we as Christians need a healthy perspective when it comes to this virus and I believe this woman’s letter clearly offers just that. Here’s a link to the letter [_____](#). (we could also include the letter at the bottom of this letter.)

Second, it is important for us to see this pandemic as a global opportunity for the Church and more specifically for us who are a part of the Valley Vineyard. Many of us will find ourselves, for the next two weeks or so, spending more time at home. This is a great opportunity for us to care for our neighbors. Many of our neighbors will be living in fear and in need, especially the elderly. We can reach out to them in loving concern for their welfare.

For example, on the Nextdoor app, someone in my immediate community offered to buy groceries for any elderly person who was fearful of going to the store or unable to. Many on Nextdoor responded to this offer with high praise for this kind gesture.

The elderly are the most vulnerable with this virus, so they should be the ones we initially care for in our immediate neighborhoods and apartment complexes. I would suggest going to their homes or apartments first to see how they are doing. Here are a few of questions that you might want to ask them:

1. How are you doing with all that is going on with the Coronavirus? How is it affecting you and others in your home?
2. Do you have any needs that I can help you with, like picking up groceries, giving you a ride to the doctor, or anything else?

3. Is there anything I can pray about for you or any family members?

If you don't know them, introduce yourself and let them know that you are their neighbor. This, I am sure, will be very comforting. If they don't have a need or there's no request for prayer, let them know that you will be praying for them. You might want to write your name and phone number on a piece of paper and let them know if a need arises to just give you a call to see if you can meet it.

I suggest that you do something similar with your other immediate neighbors and see what doors the Lord might open for you. Keep in mind, your help during this time should be relevant to the need of your neighbors during this crisis. For instance, if you have extra hand sanitizers or toilet paper that you can spare, you might want to offer them one.

Here are a few suggestions that I believe will be helpful to your neighbors during this crisis:

- I would begin by praying for your neighbors by name. If you are married, pray as a couple. If you have children, pray together as a family. This will bring incredible peace to your family. Plus, your children will become more focused on the needs of others in your community. This could be a great life lesson for them.
- I would encourage you to be more visible and available to your neighbors during this season. People will tend to hang out in their home, but I have found as I walk and pray for my neighbors that He opens doors to connect with them.
- Because market shelves have been emptied out, you might want to ask them how they are doing with food. Out of fear, hoarding has sadly become quite common. Sharing food products is a significant way of saying I care about you and encourages a worried soul.
- Another concern may be financial lack during the crisis. Many may be out of work and they may be coming up short. If you have the means, you might want to help them out. Even a small gift is encouraging to a desperate neighbor. Be sensitive, as it may be embarrassing for them to receive a gift.

These are just a few suggestions that might get you thinking about how you can help a neighbor in crisis or one who is looking for someone in the neighborhood who cares about them. As Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good (beautiful) deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Do not forsake your friend or a friend of your family, and do not go to your relative's house when disaster strikes you-- better a neighbor nearby than a relative far away (Proverbs 27:10).

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. (Ephesian 5:14-17)

It's all about PERSPECTIVE... I just read this from someone in quarantine.

“WUHAN. It's roughly day 48 of the city's quarantine. We've been locked in our apartment complex for many weeks. I haven't eaten out since January 19. We're living in such strange times.

After my last post, which was all about locks on doors and further restrictions, my husband asked me if I've posted any of the good. But...but... well, but nothing. That convicted me.

So, from the epicenter of the coronavirus, here is just SOME of the good we have been experiencing because of the lockdown: (Be warned - there is no way this post could be short.)

Our family life has never been better. Usually one weekend is long enough before I'm ready to send each of us back to school or work. But for SEVEN weeks, we've been home together with very little outside influences or distraction, forced to reconnect with one another, learn how to communicate better, give each other space, slow down our pace, and be a stronger family than ever before.

We've learned how to accept help from others. During this time, we've HAD to rely on others to show us how to get food and other things we need. People here are so good, and they want to help. It's satisfying to accept the help.

Shopping is so much easier now. It comes straight to our complex, and we just pick it up. Simple.

Right now, I hear birds outside my window (on the 25th floor). I used to think there weren't really birds in Wuhan, because you rarely saw them and never heard them. I now know they were just muted and crowded out by the traffic and people. All day long now I hear birds singing. It stops me in my tracks to hear the sound of their wings.

Spring in Wuhan is absolutely stunning. God has been giving us glimpses of the beauty to come with near-perfect weather. Because of lockdown, we get to watch spring slowly unfold right in front of us with no work, traffic, pollution, or other distractions. I have pulled up my chair and am ready for the creator's show.

My cooking has gotten way more creative. I'm cooking like a homesteader. Housekeeping hasn't suffered, either.

We take naps in the middle of the day sometimes.

We've all been reading so much more than before.

I've reconnected with lots of old friends. We've talked with our families more than ever before.

We still work and do school, but all from home and all on flexible hours. It is not perfect, but it is fairly productive and good.

We are exercising more. Because we borrowed a rowing machine from school right before the lockdown, Edgar Franks has been rowing regularly at home and has lost several kilos already. I still walk in the morning as usual, but I do so with no time restrictions and now with friend Erika Carlson.

In my yoga world, I have finally done a forearm stand. I also share goofy yoga photos each day with a local friend/yogi. This keeps us connected in spirit and movement.

I could devote a whole post to the amazing community we've been blessed with because of this lockdown. We live near 4 other staff members, most of whom we didn't know well at all prior to this. Because of this quarantine, we have bonded with and supported each other in ways that I've never experienced in 9 years of living here. (Crowd sourcing for feminine products and coffee, creatively sharing overstock of carrots and squash, etc)

Friday night, we four staff women celebrated Julia Marie Roehrkasse's birthday together. We four have never before been together without husbands, kids, or larger community. But that night, I felt like I won the lottery in the friendship department. Our gathering was genuine in a way that can only be shared by people who are experiencing the same thing at the same time and understand what each other are going through. This bond we have may lessen when our world gets back to normal, but for now I wouldn't trade it for anything. It is good.

My prayer life has never been better, and my study time has been much more real. I have quiet time that is actually (usually) quiet - and I can devote real time to it. Most days I have so much more time to think, to listen, to process, and to discover. I am discovering the good gifts that God has given me and my family. More than anything, I am bowled over by his goodness at every turn. He overwhelms me with his goodness.

We had "church" by Zoom this morning at 10:30, as usual. My husband just woke up from his nap. My kid is reading quietly on the couch. I have the luxury of writing uncensored here on FB. We are about to go pick up a ham that a friend is giving us, taking her our coffee and cranberries to share.

God is providing so many opportunities for good while we are here, and he is showing us his goodness every single moment.

We are at peace in the epicenter of the virus. We are at peace in the epicenter of his will.

Fear is a faithless coward and has no place in the lives of believers. Fear and worry have no seat at our table. We're here because he wants us here, right now, for his purpose.

Coronavirus wants you to isolate and stock up and take care of your own first. Instead, look to him first while you take care of others. In community, we can do so much more than we can do on our own. God is caring for us so richly and showering us with SO MUCH GOOD each and every moment.

And the song just plays nonstop in my head - Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God.
It chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the 99.
I couldn't earn it, I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away. Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God.

Psalm 118:6 - The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Pray.
#wuhanjiayou
#prayforwuhan”

Hey neighbor! I can help.

Since you are my neighbor, I want you to know...

The Coronavirus has brought a lot of stress and anxiety and panic. If you get sick or feel you shouldn't go out due to vulnerability and you run out of toilet paper or any thing else, let me know and I will do my best to get whatever you need. Please let me know if there is anything I can pray about for you or your family members. Just call or text me!

You're not alone! My name and number

My name is: _____

My Number is _____

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