

EPISODE FOUR - Introduction:

Welcome to the Living By of Faith podcast. My name is Josh DeGroot, and this is episode number four. Thanks for checking this out. This is a podcast where we look at current news and events, theology, practical issues, and a little bit of history from the perspective of the Christian's life of faith in Christ - I hope you find it helpful, informative, and encouraging. Let's get started.

Current news and events

As the country continues to deal with the pandemic known as COVID-19, researchers struggle to understand the true spread of the virus. The number of confirmed cases is talked about quite a lot, but of course, this does not account for all who have contracted COVID-19. One interesting line of research has been the results on the coasts from what are called antibody tests. Specifically, in New York and California. These tests draw blood samples from people, looking for COVID-19 antibodies. If the person tested has antibodies, it means he or she has been exposed to COVID-19 at one point and has since recovered.

Stanford University conducted antibody tests in Santa Clara County, California and their findings were eye opening, to say the least. The number of confirmed cases, at the time of the tests, in the county were roughly 1,000. The antibody tests, performed on 3,300 county residents, however, showed that the number of actual COVID-19 cases is probably between 48,000 and 81,000 - or 48-81 times higher than the number of confirmed cases. This means thousands of residents had the virus and either were asymptomatic or got sick, recovered, and went on with life.

In similar developments, in New York, as of Monday, April 20, 3,000 random samples were collected across the state and it showed that 1 in 7 people in New York had antibodies. In New York City, the number was even higher at 1 in 5. Again, this means that statewide perhaps 1 in 7 New York residents had coronavirus at some point and recovered from it. Just to put it in actual numbers, if these results are accurate, in the state of New York alone 2.7 million people have been infected. As more states undertake similar tests, it will be interesting to see what the results show - I suspect a similar pattern.

Obviously, if the data holds true across the country, we should be deeply encouraged. Because it shows this virus is far more widespread and far less lethal than originally thought. Right now the number that most are focusing on is the confirmed cases which is at about 1.04 million in the US. And the confirmed deaths is over 59,000 (as of Wednesday, April 29). So if we take the low factor in the Stanford research of actual cases being 48 times higher, that means almost 50 million Americans have been infected and with the confirmed deaths being 59,000, the death rate is 0.12%. Keep in mind the mortality rate of the flu is 0.1%.

This leads to some obvious questions. How did the experts miss this so badly? And in the wake of shutdown and bailout policies that were made based on a much higher death rate, will anyone be held accountable? Millions of lives have been devastated. My guess is, the original numbers came out (500K in UK and 2.4 million deaths in US and they panicked.) But this shows that making decisions based on panic and fear is always disastrous (personal, family, national). Proverbs 28:1 says, "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion". Christians, let's stand strong.

Catechesis section

The next section is the catechesis section. For centuries Christians gave themselves to the practice of learning the doctrines of the Christian faith by way of a catechism. Catechesis simply means to teach orally or instruct by word of mouth. This is a practice that is sorely missed in our day and I think we would benefit tremendously by taking it up again, and so I want to do my part to promote the practice of catechesis.

All that said, I'm making my way through a modern catechism called New City Catechism. It takes the form of 52 questions and answers with scripture - so one for each week. You can buy the book online or you can download the app on your phone for free.

Today's question and answer (#4) may seem so obvious and silly to even talk about, but it is a hotly contested issue in our society today, and quite frankly the tip of the spear in terms of the culture wars.

Question 4: How and why did God create us?

Answer 4: God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live for his glory.

Why have Christians always thought about human sexuality in terms of male and female? Two options, not 3 or 30 or 100? Why is gender not a spectrum, but simply male and female? And you might be wondering, Why on earth are you talking like this Josh? Did you know, back in 2014, when setting up a user account, Facebook had 58 gender options? Back in 2014. But now we have progressed even more - toward the cliff of insanity that is - and it is commonly accepted that gender is a spectrum - that it is a fluid thing and almost infinitely malleable. But God has created us male and female, meaning there are two options by our Creator's design and he decides whether we are male or female, we emphatically do not!

Because God created each person in his image, the present gender confusion is high handed rebellion against God as Creator. There are people caught in the confusion we should have real compassion toward. But we must see this as a manifestation of the depravity of human beings rebelling against their Maker. And we are made for him - to know, love, and live with him. And to live for his glory. Only when we are wrenched free from our narcissistic love of affair with ourselves through the gospel, will we happily live for God's glory, giving thanks to our good and loving Creator who is also our Savior.

Genesis 1:27 (MEMORIZE) - So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Male and female created Imago Dei, the latin phrase meaning "in the image of God". With so much confusion in our day regarding human sexuality and gender identity, this is a much needed reminder for Christians to think clearly. God is God and we are not. And he is a good and wise and loving Creator, who made us to know, love, live with, and glorify him through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christian History Section

In the history section, I want to talk about a missionary from the 19th century who served as a young man in India and later in Persia. His name was Henry Martyn and with COVID-19 occupying so much space in public discourse, we need stories like this - a man who served thru a plague.

Henry Martyn was born February 18, 1781. He was born into a wealthy family which afforded him many educational opportunities. He attended Cambridge at the age of 16, graduating with highest honors in Mathematics. Henry walked away from God as a teenager, but later in God's providence, a convergence of events brought him to his knees, humbly seeking God. Those events being the death of his father, the prayers of his sister, the counsel of a minister, and reading the Life and Diary of David Brainerd.

When Henry bowed his knees to King Jesus, he rejected a life of ease and affluence in academia in order to become a missionary. Fast forward a few years. In May of 1806, Martyn arrived in Calcutta, India in order to serve as chaplain with East India Company.

Along with chaplain duties, Martyn's main work was bible translation. His main emphasis was the three major languages of the Muslim peoples - Arabic, Persian, and Hindustani. He later died among strangers in a city in Turkey on October 16, 1812 at just 31 years old. But before he died, Martyn was able to translate the entire new testament into both the Hindustani and Persian languages. Again, another story of a committed follower of Christ dying so young.

What is so striking in addition to his obvious accomplishments is how he died and with what confidence in God he died. Martyn died from tuberculosis, a plague that was sweeping through that part of the world. And yet Henry Martyn continued on in his service of Christ, undeterred until it eventually swallowed his life as well. And his confidence lay in the fact that he would live as long as he had work from the Lord to do. As death became nearer and nearer, Martyn wrote: "If I live to complete the Persian New Testament, my life after that will be of less importance. But whether life or death be mine, may Christ be magnified in me! If he has work for me to do, I cannot die."

Henry Martyn believed and lived what Christians have always understood - that death is a necessary part of our life in this world and that our lives are in God's hands. Psalm 139:16 says, "In your book, were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." Furthermore, he lived supremely for God's glory, forsaking a life of lesser things. And when you put those two things together, you see Henry Martyn believed and lived as though he were immortal until the Lord's work for him was done. And of course, he was and so are you. This is the kind of wisdom we need. So, let's pray like Moses did in Psalm 90:12, "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

Conclusion:

Thanks again for listening to the living by faith podcast. If you found it helpful, please subscribe, like, and share. Until next time, "may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit be with you all."