

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the Living By of Faith podcast. My name is Josh DeGroot, and this is episode number five. 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**

What do you do when the COVID 19 models being used to steer public policy keep getting it so wrong? It was the model from the Imperial College that was wildly inaccurate with the original predictions of 500,000 deaths in UK and 2.2 million in the US.

Well... models are only as good as the data you put into them. A model is just... well, a model. You have to feed it data in order to get information. And that information will be helpful or not depending on the data you put in. It will be good or garbage depending on what you feed it. In my college computer programming classes, the phrase was garbage in, garbage out. So what should we do when the same people who have been so wrong have updated information based on their models? For instance the IHME model (Bill and Melinda Gates), on April 1 predicted that in Iowa there would be 1300 deaths by April 30. Yes, as of May 3 - 184. But now the model is spitting out updated data with huge numbers.

So what is going on? Why do they keep getting it so wrong? Why do they keep moving the goalpost? Well there are a few options (at least). Maybe they really don't have a clue. Maybe they are finally getting a handle on the situation and this time they are right. Maybe they have ulterior motives and nefarious purposes. I heard one doctor recently say, "Fear is a really good tool to control people's behavior." Every parent understands that. There are certain fearful things we want to plant in our kids' minds so they act accordingly. But of course, the history of the world is full of examples of governments wielding the tool of fear to get their people to do things they wouldn't otherwise do.

But as Christians (and we ought to think like Christians), we believe that God knows what is going on. He has a clue. "Oh the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable are his ways." He sees the hearts of each and every person and knows their intentions and he will judge every person for their actions and intentions (good, bad, etc - Judge of all the earth)... and we can rest assured in that. And he can give us wisdom to make our way through this present malaise with an avalanche of information coming in all directions. Wisdom from his word. In fact, did you know the bible lays out how to handle an epidemic? It includes quarantining the sick and vulnerable - not the healthy. What a thought!

Finally God can comfort and quiet our hearts when there is so much discomfort and noise. Psalm 131:1-2 says, "I do not occupy myself with things too great for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother." So Christian, a little little skepticism (of those who have been so wrong before) would be good. But more importantly, a quieting of our souls before God knowing that he is the all knowing, all powerful God. This will give us stability - steady footing as we make our way through this. Isaiah 33:6 - "and he will be the stability of your times." Stability for our times - now, next year, and at the end of our lives.

## **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.

**Question 5:** What else did God create?

**Answer 5:** God created all things by his powerful Word, and all his creation was very good; everything flourished under his loving rule.

In Colossians 1:16, referring to Christ who is God - the eternal Son - listen to the exhaustive language to describe God's work in creation: "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him."

Let's think about these words just a little bit. All things in the earth - from the massive Himalaya Mountains with its towering Mount Everest to the smallest subatomic particles you cannot see with the naked eye. Everything on planet earth. But also everything in the heavens or beyond the earth. Think about the vastness of the universe. It's staggering. Planet earth belongs in the Milky Way Galaxy. The Milky Way is 100,000 light years in length and has between 100-400 billion stars. And the Milky Way is a tiny galaxy compared to others. And there are billions of galaxies. God made it all by his all powerful word. The opening words of the bible are, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..." and each day's work in creation begins with the words, "and God said..." Amazing!

Our answer also instructs us that it was all good. God was happy with his work. Of course we know that sin entered the world and death and the curse through sin. But creation itself was good. Very good, in fact. And this is made explicitly clear over and over again when after each day in the creation account, God looks at what he made and the biblical text says that he saw that it was good. This leads to our bible passage to go with question and answer 5

**Genesis 1:31** - And God saw everything that he made, and behold, it was very good...

## **Christian History Section**

In the history section, I want to spend a bit of time talking about the printing press and its importance in the spread of the gospel to the nations. I think it is safe to say that we take the printing of books and in particular the bible for granted. But prior to the printing press, copies of books and the scriptures were made the only way they could be, by hand. It would take a scribe or monk up to two years of tedious,

painstaking work to copy the bible by hand. So not many people owned books. Not many owned bibles. Often the bible would be chained to a pulpit or altar in a church because they were so rare.

We know that God is the author of history. It's so important to see in history the outworking of God's plan. And what is the mission and plan of God? For his name to be known, rejoiced in, and praised among all the nations - Psalm 67:2. So... the Gutenberg printing press. In the year 1440, a German goldsmith named Johannes Gutenberg invented a printing press. And this invention transformed the world. That is not an understatement!

Now of course the original scriptures were in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. And at the time, the only other bible the church used was the Latin Vulgate. And of course, almost nobody, sometimes even the priest, could speak or read Latin. Now, the first book produced by the Gutenberg Printing Press was the Latin Vulgate in 1455 or 1456. This set the stage for what God would do next. Because it wasn't long after the printing press came along that the Protestant Reformation exploded on the scene in Europe with its emphasis on the scriptures and the need for everyone to have access to them in their native tongue. Specifically Martin Luther and his work to translate the scriptures into German and William Tyndale's efforts to translate them into English - for which he was burned at the stake by the Roman Catholic Church. So important is the Protestant understanding of the scriptures that missionary efforts ever since have included the translation of the scriptures into the tongues of unreached peoples.

How astounding is it, in God's providence, that shortly after the printing press was invented, efforts to translate the scriptures into common languages took off. In fact, William Tyndale famously is credited with saying to a priest, "If God spare my life, before very long I shall cause a ploughboy to know the scriptures better than you do!" And by God's grace, Tyndale's vision was fulfilled. Christians, we need to know our history. We should praise God for the printing press and for men like William Tyndale who died in order to provide the English speaking world with the bible. More importantly, we should love the scriptures. They are God's very words ("All scripture is breathed out by God"). Without the bible, the way of salvation is unknown and we would be without hope. Listen to how David in Psalm 19:7-10 exalts in the word of God:

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

And no wonder. It is the propagation of the truth of the gospel contained in the bible which will bring the nations into the glad-hearted, eternal worship of our glorious Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **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."