***Preliminary note from Lanny:*** *Brethren, when I first read this article, I found it to be thought-provoking. But before you read it, I want to put it “in context.” The writer is NOT trying to minimize the danger of the coronavirus; rather, he is putting our reaction to it in the context of much more important spiritual values. Further, the writer admits he struggles with these things, too. So, I just wanted to note these things before you read, lest you think that he or I are minimizing the seriousness of the coronavirus. No way! It is serious! But there are even more serous things to think about. I hope you profit from the article below, written by Gary Fisher.*

**THOUGHTS ON THE VIRUS AND US**

The virus has spotlighted chinks in our armor. I think nearly all of us have caught ourselves thinking in ways that show real weakness. Strengthening ourselves in the Lord is urgent. The virus epidemic isn't over; let us shore up the breaches. *Observation: I will use “we,” but I am NOT indicting all brethren.* I struggle with these things and I think many of us do. If you don't, wonderful! Help the rest of us, gently ... please!

**We are too concerned about what others think about us and our church.**Jesus was popular, *for a while*. The early Christians gained the favor of all the people, *briefly* (Acts 2:47). Even Ezekiel was oddly sought after, during one era (Ezekiel 33:30-33). But mostly they called the head of the house Beelzebub (Matthew 10:25). The early Christians were a sect everywhere spoken against (Acts 28:22). The prophets were rejected and ridiculed. Remember, "you will be hated by all because of My name" (Luke 21:17). Because of the virus, the world sees it as deplorably ignorant and arrogant to go to church, to have brethren in our home, to touch or even get close to someone. It disturbs me that I care so much about what others think about me. Jesus preached one sermon in which He lost thousands of followers (John 6). Our goal is not to be popular or well thought of. The light both attracts and repels (John 3:19-21). I recently read this: Truth all too often dies on the altar of gaining influence. We live in a very politically correct era; we may be despised for our commitment. So be it.

**We (“I”) have been more concerned about physical health than spiritual health.**We have heard many lectures on the irresponsibility of doing something that could cause another to get sick or die. Who is warning of the dangers of our shrinking back from one another and thus causing a brother or sister to *spiritually* weaken or die? I don't have all the answers. But there are some weak brethren with pre-existing *spiritual* conditions who desperately need contact, assemblies, and edification beyond “Zoom.” We don't want to kill anyone physically, but let us all be much more worried about the loss of souls.

**We shrink back too much from risks.** Health professionals are constantly imperiling themselves (and potentially contaminating their families). We applaud them. I love that little story in 1 Chronicles 11:17-19 where 3 men broke through enemy lines to get David water he craved from the well of Bethlehem. They put their life on the line. David saw the water as their blood! Staring down danger showed their love for David. Reaching out to people at this time risks our health. Some of us may die as a result. We should see this as heroic, not foolish (2 Corinthians 11:26).

**We have shown more care to avoid the virus than to avoid sin.**I assume all of us have taken some relatively strong measures to avoid being contaminated. The virus is contagious after all. So is sin. And way more lethal. Think about your pet sin: pornography, impatience, lying, laziness, pride, greed, selfishness ... Do you avoid it like the COVID? Do you keep away from the things, the people, the places, the situations that could contaminate you?

**We haven't trusted God enough.** I fear that we haven't reacted all that much differently than the world. I am sure there must be many exceptions. But for me, I haven't prayed enough, seen my life as being in God's hands enough. My first thought has too often been about what steps I should take instead of first turning to God and seeking His protection. We are not supposed to just walk off the cliff; but when the service of God requires us to work *near* it, we must trust God more than our protective measures. We must not "fear what they fear" (Isaiah 8:12). God really is almighty; we can totally trust Him.

I don't believe these worrisome attitudes have been a respecter of persons. I have not done nearly as well as I should have with them. I fear the virus is taking a larger toll spiritually than physically. May God help us!

--Gary Fisher