

Where do we go from here in the Era of a Pandemic?

By
Dr. Erika Hendrix

The start of a new year is always exciting because we have an opportunity to start over again. We have a chance to finish somethings that we started in 2020, but we have felt that we did not have enough time to finish it. Unbeknownst to us who would have imagined that we would be baffled by a 2020 Pandemic COVID-19 or Coronavirus. Have you ever wondered at some point in your life? Am I doing the right thing, making the right choice? How do I know if what I'm doing is the right decision? We have entered into a new normal known as "Social distancing." Below is a direct quote from an internet article from the Center for Disease Control by Katie Pearce.

"To slow the spread of COVID-19 through U.S. communities, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has encouraged Americans to practice "social distancing" measures. But what is social distancing, and how is it practiced?"

For more information on the latest guidance, the Hub compiled data from the CDC and Johns Hopkins experts [Caitlin Rivers](#), an epidemiologist from the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, and [Tom Inglesby](#), the center's director. Here's what they had to say.

What is social distancing?

Social distancing is a public health practice that aims to prevent sick people from coming in close contact with healthy people to reduce opportunities for disease transmission. It can include large-scale measures like canceling group events or closing public spaces, as well as individual decisions such as avoiding crowds." <https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/03/13/what-is-social-distancing/>

I've been thinking out loud what will be the psychological impact and hast-tag **#Alonetogether**; how will this affect us long-term. The meaning of social distancing intends that we must be at least 6 feet apart from each other, and no more than ten people in a gathering. We have accustomed mainly in our church culture to turn to your neighbor, touch your neighbor as a part of our worship experience. I've also pondered over the effect that this will have on our seniors who are not able to get out because they are vulnerable or susceptible to catching Corona due to a weak immune system.

What about our seniors who cannot have any physical contact with family and friends they are accustomed to seeing regularly? I have a Grannie who is 94 years old, but grateful that she does not live on her own, this could be detrimental to her and others'. The other wrenching thing is that hospitals and even Hospice facilities can't have visitors, and many will die alone. I can't wrap my mind around dying alone, especially when I have loved ones who I can only see through a phone or window. Could it be we may have approached a new touchless society, Lord help us? We have to look at the rise of Depression, Anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, suicidal, and even destructive thoughts to rise due to the lack of physical touch.

Now there are two types of people that I would like to expound upon for this article, Introverts, and Extroverts. Introverts like and even embrace social distancing; this is a reprieve for them. Secondly, there are the Extroverts that thrive from physical touch, but social distancing was designed to slow down the spread of the COVID-19. According to the CDC, we have a total of 122,653 cases in the U.S.

and 2,112 deaths, and these numbers are updated daily. By the time this article is written, the numbers would have increased. We must embrace it and digest in small bites and not get so overwhelmed by the news and Press Conferences. At some point throughout the day, we must separate ourselves from what we are hearing and seeing in the news. This pandemic could even bring our minds to the Civil Rights mantra, "Separate but no Equal." The inequality that we are experiencing with this virus is not limited to color, race or ethnicity so it has no end to it, even though we have been given June of July 2020.

Social distancing is not new nor should it seem foreign for us. The Old Testament book Leviticus 13 it addresses the infectious disease of leprosy. A person who was diagnosed with leprosy was examined by a priest; then they were required to implement social distancing from everyone and everything familiar with it. The leper was instructed to an outside camp away from others. If the leper had to be around other people they had to shout out, "unclean" this was to warn everyone. In the book of Leviticus, it also informs us that if a person contracted leprosy, they were cursed by God. The idea of quarantining is not new to us; it was here over 3400 years ago. It was proven that quarantining not only slowed it down, but it stopped the wide-spread of this pandemic.

This pandemic has incited fear because we have not seen anything of this nature during our lifetime, and what is scary is that a person can be a carrier of the COVID 19 or Coronavirus and not even know it. What's alarming, a person could spread it to others and not even know it. So, by marking yourself safe and stay home if you are not an essential worker is imperative.

What my Opportunity in all of this?

We have an opportunity to dig new wells and to uncover those things in us that have been lying dormant. The time of NOW is upon us for your vision to take form and to take flight. The word NOW speaks to the present time or moment, and it draws attention to a particular point. So, I ask the question what is your NOW for 2020?

In the book of Amos, the Prophet shares with us (Amos 9:13-15 MSG), *"It won't be long now." God's decree. "Things are going to happen so fast your head will swim, one thing fast on the heels of the other. You won't be able to keep up. Everything will be happening at once—and everywhere you look blessings! Blessings like wine pouring off the mountains and hills. I'll make everything right again for my people: "They'll rebuild their ruined cities. They'll plant gardens and eat fresh vegetables. And I'll plant them, plant them on their land. They'll never again be uprooted from the land I've given them."*

John the Baptist had finished preaching how the Messiah would come in power and judgment. Now Jesus has come; John has declared Him the Son of God—and, instead of cleaning house Jesus is preaching love your enemies and turn the other cheek. It is a little wonder that John had doubts. The question is where this Jesus that John had been preaching about who was going to set everything right and punish sinners was? Marc Axelrod wrote this: "Instead of punishing sinners, He reached out to sinners. Instead of ushering in a political Kingdom, Jesus preached about a heavenly Kingdom." Rightfully so, John was confused, "Why is Jesus letting the Herods of this world get away with murder? Why is He letting an innocent man sit here in prison? Why is He letting my life come to an end like this? So, he asks the question, are you the one, and where do we go from here?"

To be present at the moment, you have to know how you arrived at this point in life. One of my favorite hymns is ***Hold to God's Unchanging Hand*** there is a stanza that I love, and it says, "Time is filled swift transition naught on earth unmoved can stand to build your hope on things eternal hold to God's unchanging hand." So, this hymn leads us to a time aged questions where do we go from here? Given all that life has thrown our way and the transitions, how do we get to our NOW? The good news is God has chosen us then, he has prepared a place just for with our name on it. God created us in his image and his likeness, so not only are we the ones He has chosen, we are the ones He has called for such a time as this.

So, while you are revisiting your vision for 2020, and yes, I said visiting here are a few things that I believe you should consider these have guided my ministry for 25 years:

1. You must have a vision for yourself, therefore write it and make it plan.
2. Never rely on yourself.
3. You are not the master of your fate; God is.
4. Your life is not your own; it belongs to God.
5. God promised to take care of me without fail.
6. There should be a consistent hunger and thirst for God and the desire to grow more.
7. Know the gifts that are on the inside of you, especially those connected to your assignment.
8. Have at least two people that you are accountable to.
9. Your life is a message.
10. Know Gods voice.
11. Pray fervently.
12. Let God be your guide; remember you are still a student.
13. Enjoy your assignment because the best is yet to come.

I want to encourage you that know saw 2020 shift in the direction it has taken, but many of us knew that it was going to be different than any year we had ever seen. The change has taken place, are you ready? If not, then it's time to saddle up and let's make this ride together. I pray that this will be the most significant year and opportunities and open doors—the best us yet to come.