

## The Most Important Fear

Based on our Zoom Meeting on Friday, I think the general consensus amongst our youth group is that most of us are not really that afraid of getting sick or of what will happen if we do get sick, but we are more concerned about some of the older people in our lives, especially our grandparents. While the elderly are definitely the demographic at the highest risk of death from this pandemic, they are not the only vulnerable population. As Dr. Steve shared during his message, many of us in the U.S. believed that COVID-19 would not affect us nearly as terribly as it affected China or Italy, but sure enough, we are now having many of our states locking down and scrambling to “flatten the curve” by practicing social distancing. The number of confirmed cases is multiplying by the day, and it seems much more likely that each of us will contract the virus at some point than not.

Today’s sermon was primarily about how to deal with unhealthy fears, but I think maybe an interesting twist on that narrative, especially for young people is our unhealthy *lack of fear*. Psychologists talk about the myth of invincibility, which is a prominent mode of thinking for many young people. We often believe that we won’t be the one who gets caught for breaking the rules or that we won’t get hurt even if we partake in dangerous activities or that we won’t face consequences for poor moral decisions. In the message, Dr. Steve shared the story of a young medical doctor who had a big 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party planned with friends and decided, despite the warnings about this virus, to go ahead with the trip anyway, only to find out upon his return that he and several of his friends who went on the trip with him all tested positive for COVID-19.

*What would you have done if you were in his situation? What might have led someone who had all of the warnings and possessed all of the medical knowledge to be fully aware of the dangers of traveling and partying in those crowds to go and do those things anyway?*

The point though, of course, is not that we should be more afraid of this virus than we are. Surely, youth does not make us immune to the dangers of COVID-19. We may have a much, much lower mortality rate, but young people are being hospitalized and put on ventilators and may end up with permanent lung damage as well. It is not only an “old-people virus.” But again, the bigger picture here, is that this lack of a healthy fear of the virus may also mirror a lack of a healthy fear of God. **We may be just like that young medical doctor who has all of the knowledge of the dangers of sin and living a life apart from God and may have all of the knowledge of the gospel to know the way to salvation but decide to go on our trip anyway because it is more fun, more interesting, more popular, more immediate.** “Without a healthy fear, we can make bad decisions that can hurt us.” This is the truest in our relationship with God.

Dr. Steve closed with the challenge from Pastor Wayne Jacobson, who said that we need to consider the possibility that sometimes maybe our prayers are wrongheaded. We may be praying for God to end our boredom or to get things back to normal or to remove our discomforts due to the self-quarantine and e-learning, but let’s consider what God may be doing here in the midst of this crisis. Perhaps just as Pastor Wayne prayed for that lady who was concerned about her daughter moving in with a boyfriend, we also ought to be praying that in the midst of this, that God would reveal himself to us and that he would let us see clearly the choices that we are making from day to day and what they reveal about what/whom we love, fear, and worship.

1. What does it look like when someone has a healthy fear of God?
2. Do you live with this healthy fear of the Lord? If not, why not?
3. What are 1-2 ways you will respond to this message in this coming week?