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PATIENCE, PERSEVERANCE, WISDOM

Prayer

- If you look back at what was to be my heavy travel schedule that I shared in my February newsletter, I did make it through about half of the travel I had planned before the COVID-19 pending lockdowns cut things short while I was in Beirut, Lebanon (see 'Praises' below). I made an 'emergency' return from Lebanon on March 12 and have been home in Wisconsin ever since. NAB Gateway ministry prayer at this time largely involves (as I write this):
 - Patience as 'normal' life and travel will not be possible for some time.
 - Perseverance as Zoom calls and a lot of added 'screen time' presents its own challenges with fatigue and mental exhaustion (as I'm sure it does for many of you as well).
 - Wisdom to hear from the Father, Son, and Spirit as to how our ministry will change, what those changes may look like, and when to even consider those changes.
- My parents, who continue to have health challenges.
- Like all of you, praying for so many this crisis has directly affected and for those who are in the frontlines of caring for people and providing for our needs at great risk to themselves.

Praises

- After my February newsletter was published and before the various lockdowns occurred, I'm grateful for:
 - The Short-Term Mission Leader Workshop I was able to lead in Elk Grove, California.
 - The NAB Blue Ocean Spiritual Formation event I could attend in Auburn, California.
 - The NAB Great Lakes Association Mission Conference I spoke and shared at in Detroit, Michigan.
 - The Follow-up and Survey Trip (though cut short) to Lebanon where myself, Kerry Bender, and Dana Goodnough were able to confirm future collaboration and partnership between the Horizons International ministry, Gateway, and NAB International Missions.
 - The NAB Blue Ocean/Bonfire Missional event I attended last week, which was scheduled to be in Chicago, Illinois, and moved to online.
- Also grateful that my wife Shelly (associate pastor at our church) and our son Kameron (flight attendant) are still employed (Shelly is busier than ever) and still working, with some changes (Kameron has taken some 'voluntary time off').
- I'm also MORE than grateful for the way that God has provided for us during this COVID-19 crisis through many of YOU as you continually support my work with Gateway. Thank you!

So that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

EPHESIANS 3:10 NRSV



What a difference 3 months makes. Looking back on what I wrote in my last newsletter was very much like looking back into another world as I couldn't help taking stock of how our lives have changed in such a short period of time. But I think you'll agree, it's not like we don't ever think about the fact that tragedy, hardship, and difficulties many times come suddenly, seemingly without warning and that they surprise us when they do come. We do think about it and, in various measures, we all have experienced hardship, but just not 7 some billion of us at once and for the same reason. This is why I think the words 'unprecedented,' 'novel,' and 'extraordinary' are finding their way into our vocabulary these days. But it's also why ministry and church leaders are also taking stock of 'understanding the times' to discern what this global cultural moment means for the God of Mission (*missio Dei*), who absolutely knew it was coming, and for the global church that God of Mission has in this world, in this time, and for this global cultural moment.

As you'll see in my list of prayer requests for myself and the Gateway ministry at this particular time in the midst of COVID-19 and its effects, 3 things come to mind (feel free to pray them for yourself and your church as appropriate).

Patience – We've all come to see by now that the way out (or through) this is probably not as fast as many of us may have thought 6 to 7 weeks ago. Personally, I've been coming to grips, more and more, that the travel I normally do and was doing (especially international) right up until the lockdowns were first introduced is probably not going to be a primary aspect of my work for awhile. This of course leads to many more video chats and conferences to maintain connections (as I'm sure it has for most of you), which was already a major part of what I was doing, although Zoom calls/meetings have increased dramatically with the elimination of travel.

Perseverance – The increase of Zoom meetings also creates, however, an increase of fatigue

related to the sheer amount of time I find myself online in these days. But I'm also becoming convinced that finding a reasonable expectation of my own capacity to serve, interact, and work online is going to be a large part of being able to walk this out for the long haul, a lesson I was taught through my extended home assignment last year, which I'm continually grateful for now. To persevere through this season, finding a reasonable expectation of my own boundaries, namely my online capacity, will be important for me and many others, I believe.

Wisdom – There are many words, thoughts, ideas, and predictions, as well as numbers, figures, and dates, coming at all of us from all directions these days; it's exhausting. But the ability to take it all in and make the right decisions about the future is going to be found more in the whisper of the Spirit than in the roar of information coming at us day after day. That being said, I'll also be one of the first to say that the relationship between international missions, the local church, and the global church, as well as the individual function of each of these entities, IS being challenged as a result of this crisis; and as a church and ministry leader, I sense a lot of change on the horizon that I also feel challenged to manage well.

Yes, these are novel and extraordinary times to be sure that have our collective attention; the question is how will church and ministry leaders respond (how will I respond) in this global cultural moment.

For the Kingdom, Randy Schmor



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